



Muck Report



Island: Muck

Date: 14/05/2019

This report has been produced by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) and Scottish Island Federation (SIF) in the framework of their collaboration with the Islands Team of the Scottish Government. The goal of this report is to capture the essence of the discussions that have taken place at the consultation event on Muck. The report will be sent out to participants who authorised us to do so in order to receive further comments and feedback. The report is not to be considered as an indication of what will ultimately go into the National Island Plan, but it will inform the latter. The report is also not to be considered as an indication of the position of Scottish Government on any of the points mentioned therein.

Introduction

On 14th May 2019 a consultation event took place on Muck between 10am and 12.30pm. The event was attended by 10 people, and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Muck. The consultation is required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, as a means to inform the National Islands Plan that Scottish Government will be presenting to Scottish Parliament on 4 October 2019.

Muck as a great place to live

The consultation highlighted the following things that make living on Muck great:

- Community Spirit
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Health Service
- Economy
- Environment
- Digital Connectivity
- Uniqueness
- Transport



It is evident that there are many things that make Muck a fantastic place to live. The list above only affords a glimpse, but it does highlight that there is a true sense of a close knit and supportive community on the island. The participants also enjoy the natural environment of the island, and include the current school, health service and access to digital connectivity (as provided by HebNet) as positive aspects of living there.

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Muck and the main concerns of the island community. The following are the main issues that were shared by the participants at the event (see Annex for more details):

- Increasing Population Levels
- Economic Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Land Management
- Retention of Professionals
- Government Understanding of Remote Living Costs



The National Islands Plan and the Response from the Participants

During the consultation, several key challenges were discussed in greater detail. We wish to make it very clear that a more in depth focus was undertaken for the purposes of the face-to-face consultation, and should not be considered as any indication of prioritization in the framework of the National Islands Plan.

The areas discussed more in depth were:

- Economic Development
- Connectivity
- Health and Wellbeing

For each, participants were asked to provide more details about the challenge, their proposed solution, next steps, who should undertake these next steps and when. The following are the suggestions that we believe stemmed from the participants present at the consultation on Muck:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise current transport services and infrastructure with a focus on island community needs and particularly, ensuring joined up timetabling between services. ▪ Ensure that current business/sporting rates are island proofed and are revised to take into consideration economic earning potential rather than geographical area. ▪ Consider a targeted media campaign to promote the smaller, often overlooked, islands. ▪ Recognise that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies such as, for example, housing, transport, digital connectivity.
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise current connectivity policy (both transport and mobile) with input from Transport Scotland & mobile phone providers to ensure that it 'island centric' services are provided. ▪ Revise current transport services with a focus on island community needs and particularly, ensuring joined up timetabling between services.
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise current healthcare policy to ensure it takes into account the specific needs of island communities. ▪ Revise childcare legislation regulation to make sure it is appropriately island proofed. ▪ Develop remote and rural health care as a specialty in its own right.



Muck Vision

Island communities know that good governance requires an integrated and holistic approach to policy. We wish to stress once again that the National Islands Plan and its implementation will not address specific issues in isolation, but rather will consider all factors together whilst taking into account their crosscutting nature. In addition, each island has its own unique character and its own unique challenges. From the consultation on Muck we have identified the following specific traits to Muck:

Firstly, it is apparent that Muck is reliant on tourism as the main base for its economy. However, the economic potential of Muck as a tourist destination is not yet being fully realised due to numerous infrastructure and transport issues. This is partially a result of the current lack of appropriate parking infrastructure, poor public transport links and expensive accommodation in Mallaig, which acts a bottleneck for tourists wishing to travel to Muck. Consequently, whilst an improvement of infrastructure is required on many of the islands themselves, it is also essential to ensure that areas of the mainland which support transport links to islands are similarly improved to support travel to the island for both residents and visitors.

Secondly, the transport sector, and particularly the current ferry timetabling, highlights the discrepancy and ineffectiveness of policies adopted and sought by non-islanders. There is a need to revise this sector to ensure that they are driven by island communities, and that they are recognized as being a 'lifeline' service for islanders rather than just an economic service. Specifically, participants highlighted that whilst the current timetable affords decent travel for those wishing to stay over on the island or on the mainland, it fails to provide adequate timings to support day trips (both from the island and to it) which would boost the local economy and allow residents to make more frequent trips to the mainland for essential items and services. On that note, recent changes to the CalMac health and safety policy have resulted in islanders being unable to order frozen food from the mainland based Co-op, which has significantly reduced what they are able to purchase without actually being present at the shop themselves. It should be noted that the Co-op should be applauded for its flexibility in facilitating the needs of the



island community, but that dialogue must be opened with CalMac to try and resolve this issue to ensure that islanders are able to receive both fresh and frozen produce through the ferry service.

Additionally, an appropriate balance has to be struck between increasing tourism and retaining the unique identity of the island, with the objective of extending the current tourist season. Consequently, it would be pertinent to include Muck as part of a targeted promotional campaign by the Scottish Government, with the aim of boosting tourism and therefore providing scope to increase economic infrastructure on the island. However, such a campaign has to be sensitive to the fragility of the island environment, to prevent an influx of high impact tourists.

The current healthcare services on the island are also a main concern for participants, specifically in relation to a lack of childcare due to the current 1140 policy, which fails to take into consideration the uniqueness of the island situation, and a current lack of elderly support which means that older residents are eventually forced to leave the island for the mainland unless they can afford private care. In general, it is crucial that the current health service is revised to ensure that it is 'island proofed' for local communities. However, specific attention should be paid to improving the current standard of elderly care, and revising the current 1140 childcare policy.





What now?

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Muck. We encourage you to fill in the on-line consultation at <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-communities/national-islands-plan/>. You can find the consultation document that provides background information about the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the National Islands Plan and the Islands Communities Impact Assessment at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-islands-plan-islands-communities-impact-assessment-guidance-consultation/>.

More importantly, please send us any comments/feedback on this report at n.crook@strath.ac.uk

The National Islands Plan will only be useful if it is truly informed by the island communities and by all those who have an interest and a stake in Scottish islands. Thanks to your participation in the consultation event and your comments and feedback, we are confident that the work being undertaken towards the National Islands Plan is capturing the voice of island communities. We are also sure that this is only the beginning and that, together, we can make sure that the National Islands Plan is not just “another” plan, but “The Plan” that works for island communities in Scotland.

Useful links:

- *On-line consultation* - <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-communities/national-islands-plan/>
- *Consultation document* - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-islands-plan-islands-communities-impact-assessment-guidance-consultation/>
- *Islands (Scotland) Act 2018*
- *Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG)* - <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/>
- *Scottish Island Federation (SIF)* - <http://www.scottish-islands-federation.co.uk/>



- *SCELG portal on the consultation -*

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/eilean/islandsscotlandact/consultations/>



Annex

Challenges about living and working on Muck

<p>Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business/sporting rates • Tourism development • Diversification assistance • Faring & Brexit • Mainland infrastructure • - Parking, transport links, etc. 	<p>Health & Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Assisted Living 	<p>-Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RET to include commercial/livestock vehicles • Ferry timetable <p>- More time for day passengers on island</p> <p>- Day trip off island for islanders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferry service improvements
<p>Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phone coverage • Health services video linking 	<p>-Land Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity 	<p>-Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of professionals • Government understanding of remote living costs etc.

