



North Ronaldsay Report



Island: North Ronaldsay

Date: 08/05/2019

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 North Ronaldsay. 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 8 May 2019 a consultation event took place on North Ronaldsay between 7:30pm and 9:30pm. The event was attended by 15 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on North Ronaldsay. 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.

North Ronaldsay as a great place to live

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

- Environment
- Safety
- Health
- Community
- Sense of uniqueness
- Culture and heritage
- Good place for renewable energy



North Ronaldsay is an island rich in history and home to exceptional nature and beauty. The discussion at the consultation event revealed a strong sense of community. It also highlighted how people on North Ronaldsay appreciate living in a unique place where people are challenged by the natural elements and by its geographical position. However, its position also enables people to rediscover themselves and discover what they can do for other people and for themselves.



Challenges on North Ronaldsay

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on North Ronaldsay 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):

- Depopulation
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and well-being
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital connectivity
- Biosecurity
- Protected fishing rights for the island
- Improved access to secondary education
- No penalty or restriction on delivery of goods (island surcharge)





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 prioritisation in the framework of the National Islands Plan.

The areas discussed more in depth were:

- Economic Development
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity

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 North Ronaldsay :

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Depopulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing policy exceptions for islands with low population numbers allowing for ‘gateway’ houses, which means that new islanders have the right to subsidised tenancy/rent for the first year on the island. This would allow them to consider carefully if island life is for them. ▪ Revisal of current housing policy taking into account the specific needs of island communities. ▪ Consider the development of a programme whereby jobs needed on the island will be aimed at families with kids of primary school age (like the Dyke Manager position).



Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Obliging Loganair to better capture passenger data, specifically the amount of seats needed in different seasons i.e. who and how many are on the waiting list▪ Developing a programme that incentivizes the recruitment of pilots for inter-isles flights.▪ Consider different scale of airplanes during the year.▪ Funding to upgrade infrastructure on all Northern Isles (runway landing lights) so that commuting is made possible for night flights.▪ Funding to upgrade island airplane fleet.▪ Consider the feasibility of improved harbor and pier infrastructure on small islands like North Ronaldsay, in conjunction with the possible operation of timetabled commuting passenger only boats.
Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Revisit what amounts to 'periphery' - it shouldn't exclude those on the actual periphery i.e. Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay▪ Improved digital connectivity infrastructure, but starting from North Ronaldsay and then spread to Sanday.▪ Developing minimum legally binding requirements starting from the periphery.
Environment (Waste)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consider specific funding stream to undertake research on recycling on small islands like NR in order to better understand the waste patterns and potential of a circular economy in its disposal.▪ Consider options for on-island recycling to contribute to cleaner environments, create jobs and generate income for the community.



North Ronaldsay 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 North Ronaldsay we have identified the following specific traits to North Ronaldsay.

Firstly, population decline on North Ronaldsay is worrying. With a population of just over 40 people and an ageing population, increasing population levels on the island is a key concern for the island community. While there is, obviously, no easy fix, there needs to be a strong focus on a widespread number of possible policies aimed at increasing population levels on the island. Programmes aimed at attracting families with kids are essential in order for the school to be in operation and for the island to thrive more than what it does currently. Improved access to secondary education could also be of assistance. This would require sharing of flights, but the limitations of the current flight timetables will make potential students late for school.

Secondly, housing, transport and digital connectivity on North Ronaldsay are key to the increase of the island population. Without improvements in these three sectors, it will be difficult to attract families to North Ronaldsay. When it comes to housing a revision of the current “gateway house” policy will allow more people to have an initial experience on the island, allowing them to decide whether to move there permanently or not. From a transport perspective, both air and ferry services need to improve. More joined up thinking and integrated policies will benefit the island community of North Ronaldsay. The possibility of daily commuting (all year round) will enable more people to consider moving to the island. North Ronaldsay's lighting to enable night landings and commuter flights are voided by having to share flights with other islands which do not. Amongst many suggestions from participants captured above, the fact that the airport on North Ronaldsay is equipped with lights, but not others on the Northern Isles is an example of how commuting is made impossible. Also from a transport perspective, North Ronaldsay does



not have a proper pier or harbor, which means not only that ferries cannot properly moor to the island, but also that fishing cannot be encouraged. Digital connectivity also needs to be improved as North Ronaldsay has not been included in the R100 Strategy. In order for this to happen, there needs to be a recognition that the periphery means the periphery and that it does not stop on Sanday and Westray. There needs to be a revision to the current policies focusing on minimum legally binding standards based on an effective outside in approach, where rural connectivity is ensured before it reaches the mainland and urban areas.

Thirdly, North Ronaldsay is home to unique culture, heritage and environment, including a vibrant wildlife. Tourist are attracted to it, but more could be done in order to promote the island and for tourism to increase in a sustainable way. However, tourism requires better infrastructure and services, which will need to be developed and funded.



What now?





First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on North Ronaldsay. 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 North Ronaldsay

<p>-Depopulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Younger population (children) ➤ More available housing ➤ More employment 	<p>-Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of tourism more to create employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More room, more visitors and residents but need adequate transport ➤ Commercial facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seasalt, seaweed, wool mill. ➤ Longer hours for both part time and full time employment ➤ Facilities for small businesses 	<p>-Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More flights dedicated to North Ronaldsay ➤ Roll on/roll off ferries ➤ Better harbor ➤ 3rd runway ➤ 3rd plane ➤ More flights at busy times of year ➤ Marina
<p>-Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better broadband ➤ 4g, 5g, mobile connectivity ➤ Education 	<p>- Environmental protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better recycling facilities (cardboard, plastic, white goods) 	<p>Biosecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Geese & rabbits



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Live lectures not possible without broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved waste facilities ➤ Preserve historical sites 	
<p>-Community empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Island link r.e. business advice and financial assistance 	<p>Health and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dedicated fitness /physio facilities ➤ Better leisure facilities e.g. swimming pool & sauna ➤ More facilities 	<p>Fishing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protected fishing rights for the island
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved access to secondary education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remote secondary school 	<p>No penalty or restriction on delivery of goods (island surcharge)</p>	