



Raasay Report



Island: Raasay

Date: 14/06/2019

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 Raasay. 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 June 2019 a consultation event took place on Raasay between 7.30pm and 10pm. The event was attended by 30 people, and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Raasay. 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.

Raasay as a great place to live

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

- Community Spirit
- Environment and pace of life
- Safety and supportiveness
- Welcoming
- Culture, Gaelic and history
- Superb Education
- Opportunity and quality of life
- Noncommercial with no supermarkets, etc..
- Community ownership
- Good place to raise family



Raasay is a spectacular, safe, vibrant and resilient island. It is rich in culture and history and there is a very strong sense of community. The latter is materialized in community ownership of some of the assets on the island, including a community shop. The economy of the island has been boosted recently by the new distillery and by Raasay House becoming bigger.

Challenges on Raasay

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Raasay 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 Wellbeing
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Land Management
- Fuel poverty
- Local authority should be local
- Gaelic / culture development



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
- Transport
- Health and Wellbeing
- Fuel poverty
- Depopulation

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 Raasay:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a plan aimed at securing the presence of home carers and key medical personnel (nursing 24/7) on all islands in order to allow the elder to continue living on their islands ▪ Develop a housing strategy aimed at securing locally affordable housing for key health workers.
Depopulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Framing a debate around depopulation as critical for specific islands ▪ Develop a plan (and funding) that links housing, transport and economic opportunities (for example promotion and support of



	business hubs) for islands where depopulation is a critical matter.
Fuel poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a feasibility study for small islands to become energy independent relying on a mix of green energy sources available on the island ▪ Establish a fund to which small islands can bid to implement sustainable energy solutions
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop long term (5 year) funding schemes that allow island communities to plan ahead and develop proper security of services ▪ Develop and promote infrastructure related projects (e.g pontoons) to increase marine development and marine related tourism ▪ Promote, develop and fund communal business hubs where islanders or incomers with specific and needed skills can develop their own business ▪ Ensure that the implementation of the National Islands Plan is accompanied by additional funding and a proper implementation strategy
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure community input into transport timetable ▪ Devote funding to transport related infrastructure from roads to ferries ▪ Provide discounts for island residents on ferries ▪ Secure that ferries will come out if there is an emergency ▪ Develop and fund a water taxi service that will operate as an out of hours service

- Develop a platform of communication between transport users and transport providers to ensure that island communities inform transport decisions



Raasay 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 Raasay we have identified the following specific traits to Raasay:



Firstly, almost all of the aspects that have been dealt more in depth are related between each other and require integrated and joined up thinking and policies. Interestingly, housing was present as an enabler both for better health and wellbeing, economic development and tackling depopulation. Transport was also a key factor in promoting economic development and improving health and wellbeing. Islands like Raasay require moving away from a silos approach to effective integrated policies aimed at long term security of services. Only if people on the islands have the security that education, health and the possibility to thrive economically (and not) will be guaranteed for the long term, will islands like Raasay attract more people to live and work there.

Secondly, an improved transport service is not just a petty requirement from the community on Raasay. It is an urgent call for action based on very important essential needs. People on Raasay cannot consider certain jobs or activities on Skye due to the limited ferry timetable. Even worse, the limited timetable on Raasay means that often members of the islands community find themselves “stranded” on Skye. Without support from friends they are asked to deploy finances that they would use otherwise just to stay one more night on Skye. Kids going to school on Skye cannot enjoy the same social extra school activities than their peers on Skye due to the limited timetable. Finally, people on Raasay cannot enjoy social and cultural activities on Skye without spending a night on Skye. In order to address this unbalance a plethora of measures need to take place. There needs to be an elongated timetable and possibly the development of a water taxi for out of hours needs. The ferry should be cheaper for residents on Raasay and quotas for local residents established on public transport on Skye. The waiting room at Sconser should be equipped with “emergency” beds, if a member of the community loses a ferry. More than anything else, transport should not be considered an economic service on Raasay, but a lifeline for its community and should be treated as such when it comes to policies and management decisions.

Thirdly, health and wellbeing is an important aspect on Raasay. The challenge is how to care for an ageing population and how to cater for the younger one. The former is sometimes obliged to



leave the island for lack of medical support and facilities. A renewed investment and policies when it comes to home carers and facilities needs to be linked to housing for essential workers. This is essential to stop situations where members of the island community have to spend days on Skye for medical appointments or attending people at the hospital. Such visits are often traumatic for the current lack of space in Portree at the hospital for people visiting patients, which obliges people to find accommodation sometimes in very distressing situations. The latter (call for more leisure) is calling for more leisure opportunities beyond the possibilities that outside life gives you on Raasay.

Fourthly, the debate on fuel poverty revealed two different matters. On the one hand, there is an urgent need for a new energy approach based on clean and sustainable energy. Raasay features a wealth of different natural resources that combined would allow it to be energy independent and move away from fossil fuels and make its mark on climate change. Situations whereby an electric ferry needs to recharge its batteries through a diesel generator should not exist on Raasay. A feasibility study should be followed by a concrete plan to implement an energy system for Raasay based entirely on renewables, which would have a positive effect also on fuel poverty. On the other hand, the fact that 44% of the population on Raasay lives in fuel poverty reveals both hidden poverty and unsuitable housing.

Finally, businesses have been present and have opened on Raasay recently (Raasay House and the distillery, for example). However, more can be done in terms of communal business space. Marine tourism can be further developed as well as businesses identified by the community as needed, such as a mechanic. For sustainable economic development to flourish even more on Raasay funding needs to be long term. Projects and strategies cannot be considered if funding bodies and budgets related thereto operate on 6 months timeframe.



What now?

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

<p>-Depopulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the empty houses used • Affordable housing • More affordable housing (rented) 	<p>-Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanic living here • Marine tourism • Pontoons • Seafood bar • Community workshop space 	<p>-Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport, ferries lining up with busses and frequencies – eg 9PM ferry daily • Reduced ferry fares for residence • Elongated ferry times • Ferries and public transport links • Better Roads and local authority support • Better transport links • Infrastructure including deliveries and roads • Community minibus
<p>- Community Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • k 	<p>- Environmental protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replanting native trees in felled areas • Scrappy! Social enterprise • Sustainable energy 	<p>-Health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 hr nurse and doctor available for longer or 2 sessions a week • Pub • Recreational facilities • Healthcare • Improved medical facilities and nurse including 24hr ferry • Robust healthcare • Local care home and day centre • Fitness and wellbeing



-Land management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater self-sufficiency• Remove sea eagles	- Digital connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved internet connection for whole island	-Fuel poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative energy• Help with fuel costs
- Local authority should be local	- Gaelic / culture development	

