

## Westray Report



Island: Westray

Date: 07/05/2019

*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 Westray. 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 7 May 2019 a consultation event took place in the Old Kirk on Westray between 7:30pm and 9:30pm. The event was attended by 13 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Westray. 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.

## Westray as a great place to live

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

- Sense of Community
- Superb medical care
- Good level of employment
- Great place to raise children
- Good social life for young & elderly
- No longer 'cut off'
- Busy place with good selection of shops & extracurricular activities
- Beautiful scenery
- History and natural history



Westray is clearly on the rise and a great place to live. Of the 600 people living on the island a staggering 100 are young people under S4 age. This makes it a very vibrant island with many opportunities. At the same time the island and its community provide for people of all ages and appears to have found an interesting balance between economic development and sustainability through renewable energy, but not only.



## Challenges on Westray

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Westray 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):

- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Housing
- Education
- Delivery of more services to the island  
by upgrading mainland infrastructure
- Increase capacity of interconnector
- Tourism
- Lack of banking services
- Health and well-being

## 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 Westray:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
<b>Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revise the designated port legislation in order to to permit white fish landings at small island ports, with restrictions on area and time of fishing, to encourage local small local boats (e.g. line or seine net fishing) and local processing.</li> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of providing island fish quotas to communities for release to residents (at administrative costs only and on a non-saleable basis) to encourage the entry into the industry of young fishermen.</li> <li>▪ Consider the feasibility of increased interconnector capacity in order to unleash the transformational potential of renewable energy.</li> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of funding schemes to encourage the development of processing plants on islands (linked to landing).</li> </ul>

<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revision of local transport policy to take into account the potential transformational role that an improved transport system has for island communities.</li> <li>▪ Consider the possibility of developing an island focused/centric transport policy that benefits island communities</li> </ul>
<b>Digital connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Harmonisation of digital connectivity across the island through better infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Consider digital connectivity not just as an economic service, but as a lifeline that island communities require in order to thrive.</li> <li>▪ Developing legally binding standards starting from the periphery rather than the centre.</li> </ul>

## Westray 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 Westray we have identified the following specific traits to Westray:

Firstly, Westray and its community have enormous potentials that can be unleashed if given the appropriate circumstances. Fishing is a key example. Westray crab is a prime product and provides job opportunities and an income to the islands. It has been branded properly and shows the possibilities of a well thought food and beverage sector on an island. However, white fish, abundant as it may be in its waters, cannot be landed because Westray is not a designated port. If this were to change and if funding and infrastructure deployed on Westray for fish processing, the landing of white fish could bring more jobs and more economic development to Westray. A revision of the designated port policies needs to take place to encourage islands like Westray to



fully benefit from the natural resources in their waters. In particular, permitting white fish landings at small island ports, with restrictions on area and time of fishing, will encourage local small local boats (e.g. line or seine net fishing) and local processing. Furthermore, the possibility of providing island fish quotas to communities for release to residents (at administrative costs only and on a non-saleable basis) will encourage the entry into the industry of young fishermen.

Secondly, transport and digital connectivity on Westray are not to be considered just as an economic service, but as an essential lifeline for the community. At the same time, better transport links to the mainland and improved digital connectivity will have a strong ripple effect on other outcomes that need to be improved on Westray and elsewhere. For this to happen, both sectors need to be rethought having islands at the heart of the policy discussion. When it comes to transport, anything from timetabling to ferry and air infrastructure needs to consider the impacts such decisions will have on island communities. There is a strong need to better understand through data gathering and research the travel needs of the population on Westray (for example Loganair needs to have data on stand by passengers in different moment of the year in order to decide appropriately when and if to have more flights).







When it comes to digital connectivity, the community on Westray is not uniformly served with some parts of the island enjoying good broadband and mobile connection and others much less. Furthermore, the island community would benefit from a community space where people can go and have conference calls and set up virtual meetings. This was a possibility twenty years ago, which is not available now. However, for this to work an improved digital connectivity infrastructure and service on Westray needs to be matched by parallel infrastructure on the mainland. For example, if health services are to be delivered (also) on line, GPs or health



boards on the mainland have to have the resources and be trained to operate virtually. Better digital connectivity would allow more people to live on Westray and work remotely, feature that is already happening with some residents working for companies/clients in the UK and in the USA. What all of this reveals is the interconnectivity between better digital connectivity and a wide range of services. Whilst there is an excellent surgery on Westray, not all consultations can currently take place on the isle with the need for referral to the hospitals in Kirkwall or Aberdeen in the main. Kirkwall is manageable as a day return whilst Aberdeen requires two nights away. Where there is no need for a personal attendance, such consultations could take place on the isle by video conference and, through the adoption of advancing technology, more consultations that currently require a personal attendance, may be manageable on Westray. Similar opportunities could arise for Job Centre and benefits through better digital connectivity allowing for such services to be delivered remotely on the isle.

Energy is also a particular important area for Westray and one with an incredible transformational potential. The Community 930kW wind turbine operates at around 50% of capacity annually illustrating the value of this Westray natural resource. Being the first local community project to undertake a wind turbine project, the Community Turbine obtained an unconstrained grid connection (SSE accepts all power produced). Any subsequent large turbine installations in Westray have constrained connections (by up to 50%) or, for a smaller turbine, a connection granted but not activated. Restrictions are due to a lack of capacity in the power interconnector cables to the Orkney mainland and to mainland Scotland. Consequently, further economic development using this resource is currently being restricted in Westray. Against this background, there is an urgent need to upgrade undersea electricity interconnector cables to Orkney mainland and mainland Scotland.

### **What now?**

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Westray. 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](mailto: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 Westray

<b>-Housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More social housing</li> </ul>	<b>-Economic Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Facilitate white fish landings/ processing</li> <li>➤ e.g. design appropriate ports</li> <li>➤ Expand fish farming</li> <li>➤ Decentralisation of OIC, Local Gov. jobs etc.</li> <li>➤ Better job opportunities for women</li> </ul>	<b>-Transport</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More air service capacity</li> <li>➤ Ferries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cheaper fares</li> <li>○ Extra capacity</li> <li>○ Faster</li> <li>○ More frequent</li> <li>○ Based at Westray</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ More joined up transport links</li> <li>➤ More affordable transport links</li> <li>➤ Road repairs</li> </ul>
<b>-Digital Connectivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved Broadband</li> <li>➤ Better mobile signal</li> <li>➤ Better IT links</li> </ul>	<b>- Environmental protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More scope for recycling</li> </ul>	<b>Delivery of more services to the island by upgrading mainland infrastructure</b>
<b>-Community empowerment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Delivery of government promises</li> <li>➤ Local government do not care about North Isles</li> </ul>	<b>-Fuel poverty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cheaper energy costs</li> </ul>	<b>Increase capacity of interconnector</b>

<b>Tourism</b>	<b>-Education</b>	<b>Health and well-being</b>
➤ Lack of accommodation at the height of the season	➤ New school ➤ More support for learning	➤ Improved footpaths in village
<b>Lack of banking services</b>		