

**POLICY LEAD REPORT – SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH / EDUCATION
AND LIFE LONG LEARNING**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is my third report as Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning and covers the period from 8th November 2014 to 23rd April 2015.

This is also my first report as Policy Lead for Sustainable Economic Growth (Economic Development, European Affairs, Renewables and Strategic Tourism) and covers the period from 23rd April 2015 to 31st May 2015.

Strategic IT Services is covered from the period 8th November 2014 to 31st May 2015.

It is recommended that Members note the Report

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

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3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of this Report.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 EDUCATION

4.1.1 Schools

As previously advised, I have visited a number of our schools during my time as Policy Lead as the schools in Argyll and Bute reflect the very different communities they sit within – visiting them allowed me to meet Head Teachers and see the different challenges each school is meeting and the opportunities they are progressing. Since my last Policy Lead report I have visited: Dalintober Primary; Glenbarr Primary; Innellan Primary; Inveraray Primary; Luss Primary; Southend Primary; Toward Primary.

4.1.2 School Estate – Maintenance/Improvements Schools For The Future

The Council is delivering three new schools and one major

refurbishment as part of the Scottish Government's Schools for the Future project. The schools will be delivered through a partnership with hubNorth Scotland Ltd (hubNorth). Taking these projects forward will require nearly £74million of public funding, with the Council having committed £32million capital funding.

Campbeltown Grammar and Oban High school are progressing as a single new project request and are currently going through an evaluation of the Stage 1 submission by hubNorth. Financial close for this project is programmed for September 2015 with construction of each school starting shortly thereafter. The Council's project team is now engaged with the hubNorth design team, and through consultation with the schools, developing the design of the individual school room layouts and the specification of furniture, fittings and equipment to be delivered through the project.

The other two schools in the programme are Kirn Primary School and Dunoon Primary School. Both schools will go through a similar Stage 1 and Stage 2 design development process. Contractual close for the Kirn project is estimated as September 2015 with the demolition of the existing school taking place before construction of the new school can commence. The design solution, as developed by hubNorth, will see the retention of the existing 1881 Kirn Primary school building. Initial design work for Dunoon Primary is being developed by hubNorth's design team following Council approval in April 2015 to submit the new project request to hubNorth. The redevelopment of the school will take place in two key stages but the full details of the construction programme have still to be received from hubNorth.

4.1.3 **Meet the Buyer Events/Local Engagement**

Three 'Meet the Buyer' events were held across Argyll and Bute during January in Oban, Dunoon and Campbeltown. I attended the Dunoon event and all local businesses in the construction industry were invited to attend. There was a good turnout across the area and Tier 1 Contractors for the project - Morrison Construction - provided information at each event on the projects and explained how local businesses would be able to tender for work packages. Feedback was positive and it was excellent to see so many local businesses involved in the process.

Where possible, hubNorth and Morrison will maximise the use of local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). However, in identifying subcontractors and suppliers, hubNorth must apply objective criteria that balance the benefits of local procurement against the advantages of national purchasing agreements and category management. The engagement/use of SME's will form part of the formal reporting that hubNorth will be required to make against Key Performance Indicators for the project.

hubNorth/Morrison will seek to enhance the educational experience and provide opportunities for children and young people to learn more about the construction industry, raising aspirations and improving social inclusion through:

- Work placements - short, medium and long term placements will be offered to students from Oban and Campbeltown on site, in a range of different trades and departments subject to agreement with the Head Teachers and permissible Health and Safety requirements
- Work placements - short, medium and long term placements will be offered to students from local colleges and universities on site in a range of different trades and departments
- Apprenticeships - helping young people make their first step on the career ladder, or help those who are out of work to return to work. The targets set are: Oban High School – 4 apprentices; Kirn Primary, Dunoon – 1 apprentice; Campbeltown Grammar School – 3 apprentices.

4.1.4 **Additional capital programme works**

Council approved the capital programme on April 23rd. Investment in the infrastructure of our schools continues and the asset sustainability programme reflects a risk-based approach to address the condition and suitability of our school buildings. In addition we are continuing with our planned investment in our school houses to bring them up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

There will be a total spend of £2.3million in our other schools and pre-5 settings in 2015/16. Most of this work relates to asset sustainability: rewiring; upgrading heating; roof improvements, etc. Some of the work is funded through Scottish Government funding for Early Years expansion and upgrading of kitchens to meet the requirement to deliver free school meals to P1-3 pupils. Most work will be undertaken during the school holiday periods, however a small number of projects will – where necessary - include working taking place while schools are in session.

In addition, the solar schools project is now well underway across Argyll and Bute. The project, which aims to help the council achieve its commitment to reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuel reductions, also provides a number of educational benefits for school pupils. The company installing the panels are visiting each school to discuss a wide range of green energy solutions with pupils such as electrical vehicles, solar PV and Solar Thermal. It is intended that this will introduce the prospect of working in the renewable energy industry as a potential career opportunity. Within each solar school there is also the opportunity for pupils (and the wider community) to view the contribution the panels are making to the school's energy requirements through an electronic panel that displays the energy produced from solar, energy consumption of the school and carbon emissions.

4.1.5 **Insight – Exam Results Reporting**

INSIGHT is the new statistical information system now used by Secondary Schools across Scotland. It is used to analyse and compare the performance of pupils entered for Scottish Qualification Awards (SQA) and is designed to provide data on four measures carefully selected to support Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and Numeracy; Candidate Destinations; Improving Attainment for All; and Attainment versus Deprivation.

INSIGHT is expected to be easier and more intuitive to use than the previous system (STACs) and will also include a wider range of SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) credit-rated awards and programmes. Work is underway by Scottish Government to align national courses to provide recognition for a wider range of courses within the overall tariff scores. INSIGHT includes commentaries to aid interpretation and prompt a “closer look” by subject teachers and departments, secondary schools, local authorities and Education Scotland. It also allows the education authority to provide a level of challenge and scrutiny to the performance of subject areas in schools and whole school attainment.

The new system was introduced in Academic Session 2014/15 and reflects the revised approach to National Qualifications for all learners in Argyll & Bute (as well as Nationally). The Community Services Committee has been provided with a number of reports on INSIGHT. Going forward, it is hoped that the information provided by INSIGHT will be of use to schools when reporting to elected members locally.

4.1.6 **ICT in Schools**

At the Learning Festival last year a number of the stalls showcased new technology which generated a lot of interest. Following this event, the learning technologies team continued to provide schools with additional computer science related learning opportunities for young people. This has included Kodu, a visual computer programming language written by Microsoft which provides a fun and engaging introduction to computer programming.

Last year Cardross Primary School won the 2014 Scottish Kodu competition and also won the judge’s choice award in the UK final at Microsoft HQ in Reading. Cardross Primary School has now been awarded the title of a ‘Kodu School’ and is one of only 30 schools in the UK to be awarded this status. Cardross will be defending their Kodu crown this year against schools from across Scotland.

Dunoon Primary School is planning to submit a Project Spark computer game to a national competition. Project Spark is a new and significantly more advanced programming environment and it is understood that very few young people in other schools across Scotland will currently have the opportunity to learn this type of

advanced computer programming. Dunoon Primary have also led workshops for pupils and parents at a recent technology event held in Dunoon Grammar School.

Lochdonhead is our first primary school to have successfully made an App for an iPad. They used resources created by a company called 'Apps for Good'. We have a number of schools considering using these resources as part of the curriculum. The learning technologies team are in discussions with Apps for Good about how we can provide more schools with the opportunity to make apps.

A project has commenced to provide schools with the opportunity to upgrade and refresh their school website, using the same website content management system used to manage the Council's website. Over 50 schools have already registered interest with the project which is being managed by the Council's Web Team and approximately 12 schools have gone live with a refresh of their website. The project should run for the next 18 months until all the schools are complete.

Last year saw the start of a pilot project at Tarbert Academy to introduce MS Lync into schools. Progress has been ongoing with the system established as the primary method of communication for the school and some promising use of Lync in Education. The pilot is in the process of being extended to include 2 additional secondary schools and 4 primary schools (2 shared headship schools) with the aim of evaluating Lync as a system that can work beyond the telephony requirements of a school by supporting a number of uses including collaborative working between schools, travel reduction and supporting moderation and verification work.

4.1.7 Employability/Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

I attended a meeting of the Employability Partnership in Inveraray on 17th December. The Employability Partnership includes representation from a wide range of organisations including: Argyll and Bute Council; Department of Work and Pensions; NHS; HIE; Argyll Voluntary Action and Argyll College.

During the meeting an overview was given on the £6.5 million to be distributed to local authorities from the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce: Early Implementation Fund. There was also discussion around the fact Argyll and Bute has changed the way it delivers work experience. The focus is on the potential to offer focused and suitable work tasters/vocational training to school pupils in the last year before leaving school, plus early career advice and guidance from staff aligned to the needs of the local labour market. The Education Service is looking to develop a work experience recognised qualification that allows young people to progress round their senior phase with support and endorsement from employers. Education Scotland has put together a team of 10 individuals who are looking at the recommendations from the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce report.

The key ongoing issue is to ensure timely updates of the in-year Youth Employment Activity Plan (YEAP) by council officers and partners to the quarterly updates to Skills Development Scotland – who are managing this process on behalf of the Scottish Government.

In partnership with Argyll College and local businesses, we have also launched Foundation Apprenticeships in Engineering and Health and Social Care – initially in three secondary schools. Featuring work experience placements with local businesses in those sectors, the apprenticeships will assist pupils attain positive destinations whilst addressing skills requirements in the local economy.

4.1.8 **Teacher Recruitment/Development**

During a period of difficulty in teacher recruitment in both Argyll and Bute and nationally, it has been essential to ensure there is opportunity to enhance the profession by providing opportunities to “Grow Our Own” teachers. From August 2015 a partnership with UHI / Argyll College will see the introduction of a Post Graduate Diploma in Education being taught via Argyll College in Oban and its online facilities.

Developments are also taking place with the Scottish College of Educational Leadership which was set up in 2014. These developments focus on the Fellowship Programme and the impending new Specialist Qualification for Headship. The Council’s Education services will be working closely with SCEL to take forward these new initiatives. The Scottish Government have reinforced the development of the new Headship Programme and announced on the 23rd of February 2015 that the new Headship qualification would become mandatory for all new head teachers from 2018/19.

The Shared Headship policy in Argyll and Bute has provided further opportunities for enhanced development in leadership skills. Having one Head Teacher oversee more than one school has reduced duplication of management duties and has led to more effective use of existing resources and time in addition to the benefits to pupils and parents. Being a class committed head teacher can be challenging. Attraction to, and competition for, class committed head teacher posts is posing significant challenges for our small schools. Shared headship posts are seen as more attractive and offer career progression overcoming difficulties with recruitment and retention.

The Education Service has made use of an unused annexe of Glencruitten Hostel, Oban to support newly appointed teachers in the area with accommodation, and address barriers to recruitment. Reflecting the relative scarcity of accommodation in the area during the summer period which encompasses the start of term, it was noted that this had an impact on the ability of local schools to recruit new teaching staff. The accommodation has been successfully used by a number of

teachers in the first year of use, many of whom have subsequently moved into more permanent housing.

Further, in conjunction with local housing associations, vacancies in Campbeltown and Rothesay are accompanied by information on available social rented housing in both areas that may make the vacancy more attractive to candidates whilst potentially addressing surplus housing held by the local housing associations.

4.1.9 **Education Scotland**

Education Scotland has responsibility for supporting quality and improvement in learning and teaching across Scotland. Argyll and Bute's Area Liaison Officer was Maureen Mallon, but since the end of last year it has been Ken McAra. I have met with both Ms Mallon and Mr McAra to discuss Education in Argyll and Bute, and how Education Scotland are able to support ongoing improvements. Items that have been discussed have included: education pilots undertaken in individual schools; delivery of Education across all levels; and how to use inspection reports to improve the Education Service as a whole.

Mr McAra attended meetings of the Community Services Committee in December and March, and it was agreed at the March meeting that he would provide a short presentation on the school inspection model at a future Committee meeting.

4.1.10 **Argyll College**

I attended Board meetings for Argyll College in December and March and am now also a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. I will continue as a member of the Argyll College Board due to the recognised importance of skills development in improving economic outcomes. I also met with Fraser Durie, Principal of Argyll College, on 6th January 2015 to discuss a number of areas where partnership working could be further enhanced.

As previously reported, the Council have entered into a partnership with Argyll College and UHI to deliver a PGDE (Primary) based in the Oban Campus. Ten students will start in August 2015, with 8 students undertaking the course in English and 2 undertaking the course in Gaelic medium. The course is designed by UHI and meets the criteria required for Initial Teacher Education – it will be delivered by VC and face to face tutorials.

Argyll College UHI is now working in partnership with Hermitage Academy to deliver Skills for Work qualifications, which means all 10 Argyll and Bute secondary schools are now benefitting from working with Argyll College. Argyll College, in partnership with local schools and employers also launched the new foundation apprenticeship courses in Health and Social Care and Engineering noted earlier. It is hoped that this will encourage more young people to enter into a career in these industries, and with national recruitment issues for the care sector

impacting on Argyll and Bute it is hoped this will help our situation locally. A business breakfast meeting was held at the end of March with a number of local social care employers in attendance.

4.1.11 **Early Learning and Childcare**

As members will be aware, as of April 2015 the Education Service has responsibility for Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC). This is an outcome of decisions made in relation to Health and Social Care Integration but also reflects the work that was done in 2013 regarding the Education Management restructure which recommended the reintegration of early years into Education Services.

In response to the implementation of the Children and Young People Act 2014, there has been a focus on ensuring all statutory requirements are being met, as well as ensuring the council is prepared for the secondary legislation due for implementation in August 2015:

Parent and Carer consultations took place in each locality between January and April 2015 to identify preferences around Early Learning and Childcare provision. Results were varied within each locality, with some parents looking for increased flexibility around how to use their 600 hours of funded ELCC, whilst other parents wished provision to remain the same. As a result of this consultation and in response to the Children and Young People Act requirements for increased flexibility, the local authority is planning to pilot increased flexibility of funded hours within three local authority settings across Argyll and Bute. Currently over 50% of Partner Providers offer flexible use of funded hours to parents.

The local authority will continue to work in partnership to ensure there is increased flexibility for parents within each of the areas of Argyll and Bute. There were 6 Partner Childminders recruited to deliver ELCC for eligible 2 year olds across Argyll and Bute by the end of April. The Early Years Service is delivering a recruitment drive to register more partner childminders and partner providers to accommodate increased numbers of eligible two year olds following secondary legislation in August 2015.

By April 2015, 93% of ELCC settings within Argyll and Bute had achieved a grade of 4 (good) or above from the Care Inspectorate, with 47% of settings currently graded 5 (very good) or 6 (excellent). Whilst recognising this significant achievement, the local authority will continue to strive to increase the number of settings graded 5 or above through effective training and professional development opportunities.

In order to increase confidence and capacity in practitioners and increase parental engagement, the Early Years Partnership (NHS/ Police/ Council/ Providers) has launched a 'Developmental Milestone Tool', with training for practitioners being offered within each of the

areas of Argyll and Bute. By April 2015, training had been delivered within Mid Argyll and Kintyre, Oban and Helensburgh and Lomond, with 100% of settings represented at the Helensburgh and Lomond training event. The Developmental Milestone Tool will also gather relevant data in relation to the Early Years Collaborative stretch aim 3: 90% of children will have achieved their developmental milestones by the time they start primary school by the end of 2017. The Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland have given positive feedback on the Developmental Milestone Tool.

4.1.12 **Audit Scotland – Education Report**

With school education accounting for a significant proportion of local government spending, and with a number of important policy developments taking place in recent years, such as the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, the Accounts Commission requested an audit was undertaken to provide an assessment of attainment over the last decade.

The audit found that councils in Scotland spent £4.8 billion on education services in 2012/13, of which £3.8 billion was spent on primary and secondary education. Around two-thirds of this expenditure (68 per cent) was on staff costs. A paper outlining the key findings was presented to Community Services Committee in March 2015, with a representative from Audit Scotland in attendance.

The Education Service has agreed a number of approaches in response to the recommendations made by Audit Scotland. These include the revision of Secondary and Primary performance information to be included in standardised reports to Area Committees, and targeted discussion between Central Education and Senior Management Teams in each of the ten Secondary Schools with, a specific focus on performance of individual subject departments, examination results and the increasingly effective use of Insight.

4.1.13 **Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT)**

The LNCT met on 26th November and 25th March. Items on the agenda for these meetings included:-

- Partnership Agreements (presented for discussion by the EIS Union)
- Disciplinary Procedures and Codes of Practice
- Devolved Scheme of Management
- School holidays 2016/17

Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) circulars that were adopted included Class sizes guidance, distant islands allowance, allowances for teachers in remote schools, family leave, shared parental leave, SNCT website, Report of Supply teacher Review Group and Pay and Conditions Agreement 2011 – conservation arrangements.

The March meeting also agreed that at the next LNCT a programme for Education Policy reviews will be presented for consideration, as well as enhanced hours and the duties of nursery/early years teachers following the changes to the Children and Young People Act. The next meeting of the LNCT will be at the end of August 2015, with Cllr Rory Colville taking over as chair.

4.2 **SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

4.2.1 **Renewable Energy**

I attended All Energy, the UK's largest renewable energy exhibition and conference, which was held in Glasgow on 6th -7th May. Argyll and Bute Council exhibited together with Highlands and Islands Enterprise under the banner of the Argyll and Bute Renewables Alliance (ABRA). The stand also hosted a number of Argyll-based businesses operating in the renewables industry. In addition to our standard listing in the show catalogue, a news article was included which highlighted the achievements of Argyll and Bute in the Scottish National Renewables Energy League and the investment made to Campbeltown as part of the Kintyre Renewables Hub (Page 44 of the Show Catalogue which is available at <http://view.pagetiger.com/All-EnergyCatalogue/issue1>).

I also attended the ABRA meeting during May where it was agreed that I would take on the role of Chair. The meeting received updates from a number of partners, including the Scottish Government, and we were also informed about the ongoing work in relation to skills and training for the renewables sector within Argyll. A presentation on the £2.5m ACCESS project, a pilot seeking to match electricity demand with use, was also received. We will now circulate a questionnaire to all partners with their views to be used to formulate an action plan which will form the basis of a refreshed Renewable Energy Action Plan (REAP) and a work plan for ABRA. Ahead of the action plan, Skills Development Scotland will work with developers and contractors to confirm training requirements for workers in Argyll.

4.2.2 **Film & TV Productions**

Many people will have been aware of recent filming in the area on the Rest and Be Thankful but there are a significant number of TV and film productions being aired this year, showcasing a wide range of Argyll and Bute locations.

TV shows filmed in the area include:

- Stonemouth (BBC 2 Thursday June 11th at 9pm) filmed at Rhu. This is the first TV adaptation of Iain Banks' work since his death in 2013 and stars Christian Cooke, Charlotte Spencer, Peter Mullan and Gary Lewis.
- From Darkness (BBC1, due to be broadcast Autumn 2015) filmed around Tayvallich and Ellenabeich. This is a new

psychological crime drama starring Anne-Marie Duff, Johnny Harris, Richard Rankin and Luke Newberry.

- STAG (due to be broadcast before Christmas) filmed at locations in Helensburgh and Lomond and at Inveraray Castle, is a dark comedy thriller about a truly horrific stag weekend.

The Edinburgh International Film Festival this year will feature two films made in Argyll:

- Scottish Mussel is a romantic comedy filmed in and around Dunoon and involved many locals as extras. The film features Line of Duty star Martin Compston and also stars Marianna Palka, Eamon Elliot, Russell Kane and Rufus Hound. This will be shown on 26th and 27th June.
- Iona was filmed on the islands of Mull and Iona and stars Ruth Negga and Douglas Henshall. This film will have the honour of closing the Festival on Sunday 28th June.

4.2.3 **Local Economic Development Action Plans/Economic Profiling**

The Council, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) recently agreed to undertake a detailed economic profiling and analysis of Argyll and Bute and each of the four sub-areas, with a particular focus on skills development issues. This study will provide an evidence base on the local employment opportunities, skills gaps, education and training provision, and the unique selling points of each of the four administrative areas and for Argyll and Bute as a whole.

These findings and proposed solutions will assist in developing 'compelling' propositions/promotional action plans for Argyll and Bute and each of its four sub-areas. The report will also be used to inform the curriculum planning in our secondary schools and Argyll College UHI to ensure that the curriculum we deliver meets with economic aspirations and opportunities for local individuals, businesses and communities.

EKOS Ltd submitted draft final reports on Friday, 29 May 2015, which will be discussed and finalised at a final Steering Group meeting on Thursday, 25 June 2015. Reports will then be compiled for the Council's Strategic Management Team and then onto the relevant Council Committee(s). The Steering Group comprises officers from the Council's Economic Development, Education and Community Planning teams as well as representatives from SDS, HIE and Argyll College.

John Kelly, Director, EKOS Ltd, provided a short overview presentation on the study findings to the Youth and Education sub-group of the Economic Forum on Friday, 29 May and also attended the four meetings held recently regarding the ongoing development of local Economic Development Action Plans.

4.2.4 **Economic Forum**

At the inaugural meeting in March it was agreed to focus initial efforts on existing local strengths and build the opportunities for economic growth. The forum established three sub groups to focus on:-

1. Tourism (the sub group had a teleconference in April)
2. Food and Drink Production (the sub group had a teleconference in April)
3. Youth and Education (the sub group had a meeting on 29th May which I attended).

The second meeting of the Economic Forum was also on the 29th May, where updates were provided from each of the sub group meetings. A key outcome from each sub group meeting was the identification of strengths and weaknesses in each area of focus. Whilst still in its infancy, the forum has moved quickly to establish key areas of consideration and secure the support of additional persons of specialised knowledge to support the forum.

The Economic Forum has been focussed on gathering information and the insight of specialists but some of the topics of discussion have been around:-

- Promoting Argyll and Bute and its tourism and food
- Improving mobile and broadband coverage
- The potential to develop innovative seafood production methodology
- Harnessing the expertise in Argyll and Bute to mentor young entrepreneurs and small businesses

The next meeting of the forum will be at the end of August when it will further develop its thinking around the identified areas of focus. In the intervening period considerable benefit will be derived from the members of the forum who have agreed to use their specialist knowledge and position within the business community to pursue issues identified during the various session.

4.2.5 **Europe**

I attended the West of Scotland European Forum (WSEF) meeting in May. Included in the meeting was a presentation on the EU Funding Portal, given by a representative from Scotland Europa. The portal is a result of a Scottish Parliament European and External Affairs Committee inquiry into the future of European Structural Funds in Scotland. This established a need for a clear understanding of the range and diversity of European Funds available, in addition to the European Structural Funds.

As a result, Scotland Europa together with funding from WSEF, and the East of Scotland European Consortium (ESEC), funded the

development of an EU Funding Portal. The Portal is now live and provides a database of EU funding programmes searchable by theme, as well as a database of historic EU funded projects which involved Scottish based organisations. Users have to register to use the portal, which can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.funding-portal.eu/>

In terms of European Structural and Investment Funds, local authorities have been charged with the delivery of three of the fourteen Strategic Interventions (SIs), namely:

- (i) the CPP Enhanced Employability Pipeline;
- (ii) Social Inclusion and Poverty; and
- (iii) Business Growth Accelerator (to be delivered by Business Gateway)

The Council's Economic Development Service (Employability Team, Business Gateway Team and the European Team) are leading on the development of the bids for these Strategic Interventions.

In addition, Argyll and Bute is one of 5 Local Authorities chosen as part of a Big Lottery application for European Social Funds (ESF) under the Social Inclusion and Poverty Strategic Intervention. The Big Lottery are applying to be a lead partner for the delivery of up to £8m European Social Funds (alongside £10m Lottery resources). Funding for projects will be providing match at source thereby reducing bureaucracy for partners delivering the work on the ground. The five local authorities were chosen based on those which are anticipated to have the greatest strategic impact. The others are Dundee City, Glasgow, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. It is anticipated that each area will be awarded between £2 and £5m, depending on population size, level of need and range of existing services. This will be through a procurement process rather than a grant model and it is envisaged that the third sector will be strongly involved in delivering the model.

Following submission of the LEADER/EMFF Local Development Strategy on behalf of the Argyll and the Islands LEADER Local Action Group (LAG)/ EMFF Community Actions Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG), feedback has been received by the Scottish Government. The European Team have responded to this and are awaiting finalisation of the SLA between the Scottish Government

The indicative allocation is £4,886,126 – which is £1,160,283 less than the £6,046,409 applied for. It is of note that the allocation is indicative and allocations will be revisited during the 2014-20 period. As a result of the allocation being less than anticipated, the current proposal is that a delay should be built in to the recruitment of 2 of the development and compliance posts until later in the programme which will reduce our admin costs.

4.3 STRATEGIC IT SERVICES

4.3.1 Broadband

Work continues on the rollout of next generation broadband with the subsea cables completed in November 2014 and an announcement early in 2015 that Campbeltown, Rothesay and Lochgilphead were all expected to get coverage 12 months ahead of originally planned. Whilst there have been delays in the programme in some areas, it is expected that our main towns should be connected by the end of 2015 with coverage rolling out into the rural areas from these centres.

Community Broadband Scotland continue to work with local communities including through the Giga Plus Argyll project which is being used as a pilot to test a large-scale community broadband solution, it is expected that they will appoint a contractor during the summer.

I met with Highlands and Islands Enterprise on 21 November 2014 to press for further coverage across Argyll, we have been assured that they are aiming to reach as many premises as possible with the funding that they have available. An action arising from the meeting was that the Council should press for additional funding for next generation broadband within Argyll. This action, together with an update on the digital infrastructure projects occurring across Argyll, was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 February 2015 and following their agreement a letter was sent to the Deputy First Minister seeking equality of coverage so that provision of next generation broadband within Argyll matches that across the rest of Scotland.

As more communities are connected to the new infrastructure we need to start to get the message out to people that next generation broadband is available to order. The first stage of this was the distribution of information to all households alongside the annual Council Tax bill. With coverage now available in Cardross, I also attended a Digital Scotland publicity event in March aimed at raising awareness that next generation broadband is available to order in that community. It is hoped that similar events will held elsewhere within Argyll as the rollout progresses.

4.3.2 Pathfinder North 2

The Council are awaiting the details of a review of current bandwidth carried out by Vodafone during May. This information will then be used to confirm the bandwidths being requested under the new contract.

The West of Scotland eHealth leads carried out a workshop in March to look at how the SWAN network could help to support and deliver integrated working across Health and Social Care Partnerships. There

are a number of technical options which all parties could link into to allow sharing. The next steps were agreed to be on information sharing, education, awareness and communication. Whilst this is helpful, unfortunately no further activity is being progressed at present so the Council may therefore need to address these issues locally without waiting for a more co-ordinated approach nationally.

4.3.3 Mobile Telephony

Unfortunately the Mobile Infrastructure Project (funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport) has failed to make any progress in delivering the locations proposed for Argyll and Bute however improvements in mobile coverage have been achieved on Coll where the Demonstrating Digital Pilot went live in March and provides 2G, 3G and 4G coverage on the island.

In addition, Vodafone were searching for 100 communities across the UK in which to install their Open Sure Signal product, which can provide a 3G mobile service where broadband connections are sufficient. Seven communities across Argyll have been successful including the Isle of Luing, Isle of Seil, Crossapol on Tiree, Ardfern, Port Askaig, Dunbeg and Ormsary.

4.4 SKILL DEVELOPMENT

4.4.1 Higher Education

The importance of Higher Education as a driver of economic development is well-recognised. Both Argyll College and SAMS (Scottish Association of Marine Science) have a number of HE students. The Council is currently working in partnership with HIE to carry out a study into what the characteristics of a successful University town are. As part of this study visits have been made to Falmouth, St Andrews and Aberystwyth to conduct interviews with academics, students, council and university staff and elected members. Imani Developments consultants based in Oban are coordinating the work with a full report on any implications and opportunities for Oban expected by the end of June.

5.0 CONCLUSION

As this is my last report as Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning I would like to thank all officers who provided support, assistance and professional advice throughout my time in the role. I would also like to thank all the head teachers, staff and pupils who always gave me a warm welcome when I visited our schools and allowed me to see our policies in action.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial - None
- 6.3 Legal - None
- 6.4 HR – None
- 6.5 Equalities – None
- 6.6 Risk – None
- 6.7 Customer Service – None

Aileen Morton
Policy Lead for Sustainable Economic Growth (Economic Development,
European Affairs, Renewables and Strategic Tourism)
31st May 2015