

Argyll and Bute Council

Annual Report

2014 – 15



Making Argyll and Bute a place people choose to live, learn, work and do business

Promoting Equality

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to promoting equality

Our key principles are that

- No-one is disadvantaged because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation
- The differences between people are valued and good relations between groups are promoted
- People are treated fairly and with equal respect
- Informed assessments are made on the impact of policies and services
- People are involved in the decisions that affect them and are encouraged to participate in public life

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.

Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh an sgrìobhainn seo ann an cànan no riochd eile, no ma tha sibh a' feumachdainn seirbheis eadar, feuch gun leig sibh fios thugainn.

Gaelic

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeżeli potrzebna jest pomoc tłumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

Polish

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

Hindi

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

Urdu

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Punjabi

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

Cantonese

本文件可以翻译为另一语文版本，或制作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要传译员的协助，请与我们联系。

Mandarin

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Leader of the Council, Councillor Dick Walsh4

Chief Executive Sally Loudon5

Policy Lead Councillors6 – 8

An award winning council..... 9 - 10

Our Single Outcome Agreement.....11

The economy is diverse and thriving.....12 – 13

Infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.....14 – 15

Education, skills and training maximize opportunities for all.....16 – 17

Children and young people have the best possible start.....18

People live active, healthier and independent lives.....19 – 20

People live in safer and stronger communities.....21 – 22

Making it happen

Case studies show our Single Outcome Agreement in action.....23 – 29

Money matters

A summary of Argyll and Bute Council’s financial position during 2014/15.....31 – 32

Celebrating excellence.....

Our annual Excellence Awards.....33



Foreword – Councillor Dick Walsh, Leader

Argyll and Bute Council has much to be proud of – and you will find clear evidence of that throughout our Annual Report for 2014/15.

Our people, our services and our successes will stand us in good stead as we progress delivery of our Single Outcome Agreement. Its overarching aim is to bring more people and more jobs to Argyll and Bute, to see a thriving local economy built upon a growing population, and this is at the heart of everything we do

It is not a task that any one agency can carry out alone. It needs collective working and strong leadership, and that is why we are building on our excellent track record of partnership working through the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership. We are working together on that shared common purpose – a vibrant local economy with more people and more jobs.

We are making good progress and we can tell a number of success stories. We cannot be complacent, though, and along with success comes challenge.

Like all Scottish local authorities, a real challenge for us is finding savings of between £21m and £27m over the next five years. Over the past year we have put in place a robust process called Service Choices. This is designed to make sure that changes to our services are not solely about making savings but are part of a wider journey of transformational change. We are determined to ensure we continue to deliver the best services we can as well as delivering our Single Outcome Agreement.

Argyll and Bute has a compelling story to tell and an economy full of opportunities. As a council, and working with others, we are focused on making sure we harness all of that potential for the best possible outcomes for our people and our communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dick Walsh

Council Leader

Foreword – Sally Loudon, Chief Executive

We are pleased to present Argyll and Bute Council's annual performance report for 2014/5 where you will find information on the Council's finances and the services we deliver to our communities.

On the 29th October 2014, the Council -supported Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) hosted an Economic Summit where the overwhelming message received is that the opportunities to grow our population and our economy will be realised if we collectively focus on our strengths.

Since last year's report the Council has re-orientated its services towards delivering the outcomes of the Single Outcome Agreement. We have been a key player within the CPP in establishing the Argyll and Bute Economic Forum chaired by Nicholas Ferguson, Chairman of BskyB. We completed significant projects within our flagship regeneration programme and we have updated our local Economic Development Action Plans.

The Council's capital investment from 2009 until 2015 totalled £172m and we are committed to a programme of capital expenditure totalling £309m which will see long term transformational change until 2020. In 2014/15 we invested £36.3m in capital expenditure for our roads, our ports and towns, our visitors and our communities.

The Council's multiple award winning services continue to maintain good performance levels and in many instances have been recognised at a national level.

Over the last year the Council has increased engagement with partners to ensure there is focus and strong leadership on the collective overall objectives. With a focus always on progress within the Council, our leadership development programmes have been strengthened to ensure that our senior officers and our talented and aspirational future senior officers are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead our services through a period of transformational change.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Loudon'.

Sally Loudon

Chief Executive

Policy Lead Councillors— work, achievements and aspirations

Island Affairs – Councillor Len Scoullar

- Our Islands Taskforce, with Councillor Scoullar as chair, is moving forward a targeted action plan to develop a vision for Argyll’s islands
- We have ‘Island-proofed’ the Single Outcome Agreement by examining all new policies and legislation which impacts islands
- We continue to work with other island councils, external agencies – and, essentially, with island communities themselves
- Important work is ongoing to improve digital and transport connections for our islands
- We were represented on the Fisheries Management and Conservation group, established by the Scottish Government and which works to maximise the potential of Scotland’s fisheries and seafood sectors
- Our investment in our island communities continued with infrastructure projects including Iona slipway; and the Council’s Public Service Obligation (PSO) provides vital flights to islands from Oban Airport



Roads, Infrastructure and Special Projects – Councillor Ellen Morton

- Our £30m ambitious and forward looking CHORD programme for the regeneration of the town centres of Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon continued with the completion of the Helensburgh investment programme; and work developing public space got under way in Oban; progress is being made at Campbeltown berthing facility; and plans for Dunoon are forging ahead.
- Our £24m three-year capital investment programme continued to improve our road network
- Plans were put in place for the development of an £18.9m Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) project which aims to develop vital infrastructure which will attract new businesses to the Lorn Arc area and create jobs for the people of Argyll and Bute
- We successfully introduced an enhanced recycling service – co-mingled (mixed) waste – in Oban, Mid Argyll and Cowal, reducing landfill and increasing collection of recycled materials
- We kept Argyll and Bute moving through a programme of decriminalised parking enforcement, which ensures effective traffic management

Education and Lifelong Learning – Councillor Rory Colville

- We are pleased that a very high proportion of Argyll and Bute’s school leavers – 91% - go on to further or higher education, training, employment or voluntary work
- Our Education Service continues to focus and prioritise on ensuring our schools maintain high levels of attainment
- Our successful partnerships between our secondary schools and Skills Development Scotland have supported 297 Modern Apprenticeships in Argyll and Bute – including 17 apprenticeships in our own organisation
- We continued work to deliver three new schools and one major refurbishment as part of the Scottish Government’s Schools for the Future project – new schools for Oban, Campbeltown and Kirn, with Dunoon Primary undergoing significant upgrade work
- We continued investment in our schools estate and infrastructure
- We successfully introduced a free school meals programme for P1 to P3 pupils



Economic Development, Renewables, Tourism and European Issues – Councillor Aileen Morton

- We organised an economic summit which heard that Argyll and Bute has ‘an economy full of opportunities’
- The council initiated the Argyll and Bute Economic Forum to drive forward economic change, shape our strategic vision for the future and will be business led
- Tourism, food and drink, and youth and education are three key areas we are working on with the private sector-led Economic Forum
- Our Business Gateway team supported over 100 new business start-ups in Argyll and Bute, as well as providing guidance and support to more than 700 existing companies in the area
- We helped people get back into employment with over 1,500 adults accessing learning and skills to boost job prospects
- We are keeping Argyll and Bute at the forefront of renewable energy and were named Scottish National Renewable Energy League Champions 2014 for wind, solar thermal and hydro power
- We continued to invest in renewables infrastructure including the £12m Kintyre Renewables Hub and £200m Kintyre-Hunterston subsea cable



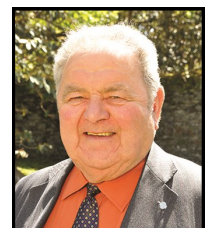
Planning and Historic Environment – Councillor David Kinniburgh

- We are one of Scotland’s top performing rural planning authorities, processing applications above the national average for speed and approval, giving confidence and certainty to developers and keeping Argyll and Bute open for business
- Our planning practices and policies were endorsed by Scottish Government with positive feedback on our Planning Performance Framework
- Our Local Development Plan identifies land for development, including 4,500 housing units and land for industry and business
- The Building Standards team were successfully accredited for the Customer Service Excellence Standard
- The introduction of an Approved Trader Scheme protects consumers and local businesses



Strategic Transportation – Councillor Alistair MacDougall

- Our successful procurement of air services between Oban and our islands saw a 5.5% annual increase in passenger numbers
- Investment in our piers and harbours – as well as improving transport links - contributed to the potential for our local businesses and tourist economy
- We worked with the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership Sustrans, and Scotrail to make the most of new rail links between Oban and the central belt, with a new school train service opening up opportunities for our young people
- We improved our pathways and cycle routes in our towns, villages and island communities
- Our continued programme of bus infrastructure improvements increased accessibility for all
- We established the Argyll and Bute Single Harbour Authority to more efficiently oversee the management of our 39 piers and harbours



Community, Culture, Gaelic and Strategic Housing – Councillor Robin Currie



- Our Strategic Housing Fund has supported the provision of 164 new affordable homes in communities right across Argyll and its islands – including the first new homes to be built on Iona for over 40 years
- Youth arts provision in Argyll and Bute has been boosted by £400,000 of grant funding
- 104 third sector groups were supported by grant awards totalling £217,000.
- The work of our Empty Homes team has seen 500 empty properties brought back to life as affordable homes – and has been nationally recognised for excellence and innovation
- Investment in our leisure facilities supported healthy lifestyles and improved amenities for local people and visitors
- We continued to develop the teaching and use of the Gaelic language in schools and communities – our Furan Gaelic Centre in Oban continues to grow and increase in use

Health and Social Care Integration – Councillor Mary Jean Devon



- We continued to progress the integration of health and social care services for our communities, working with partners in NHS Highland – a significant piece of work and we are making steady progress
- This, along with changes to legislation and consequently our statutory duties in a number of areas, brings challenge; we are rising to that challenge and focusing on the improved outcomes for local people which this work will bring
- Our Children and Families service has taken an innovative approach to service design and has been nationally recognised with a Gold CoSLA Excellence Award.
- We undertook significant activity for Joint Inspection of Older People’s Services, and we expect to hear about areas where we are performing well and will use the findings to drive forward further improvement

Finance, IT, HR and Customer Services – Councillor Dick Walsh



- The Procurement Team has been focusing on supporting local businesses to make the most of opportunities to supply services to the council and was shortlisted for two national public sector awards
- During 2014/15 the Procurement Team awarded 55 contracts to local companies with a total value of £10.1m.
- We are supporting vulnerable people in our communities with benefits through the Scottish Welfare Fund – with over 98% of crisis grants processed within two days, and reducing the time taken generally to process benefits
- Over half a million people visited our website; its increased accessibility provides a fuller service for people at home or on the move
- Web and Customer Service Development/Support teams were shortlisted for Scottish Government awards for excellence in public sector ICT
- We have been recognised nationally for our customer service standards right across the council

An award winning council

Argyll and Bute Council is proud of the achievements of our employees. Every day they are working hard to deliver services that contribute to all aspects of our communities' lives. With our communities and partners, we are working together to award winning standards.

Nationally and locally it is being recognised that our employees and services are winning awards, and that the council is supporting our employees to reach standards of excellence in achievement across all services.

Argyll and Bute is committed to being an exceptional employer of choice.

The annual CoSLA Excellence Awards celebrate the very best in Scottish local government. Their emphasis is on rewarding the most innovative and successful developments, and on recognising projects that are changing lives. Argyll and Bute Council is shown to be setting new standards and sharing good practice.

In 2014 the council attracted these accolades –

- Gold Award for the Children and Families service received at the CoSLA Excellence Awards in the category, Securing a Workforce for the Future
- Silver Award for the council through working with our communities and partners in the category of Strong and Sustainable Communities, in the CoSLA Excellence Awards.
- Silver Award winner for Innovation and Improvement for Trading Standards as one of twelve members of the West of Scotland Notified Body Group (Argyll and Bute) at the CoSLA Excellence Awards. Membership of this body allows our inspectors to provide a full verification service to businesses.
- Winner of the CoSLA Bronze Excellence Award for Outstanding and Innovative Empty Homes Projects, returning over 500 inactive properties into active use.
- Bronze CoSLA Award for Improvement and HR's Argyll and Bute Manager Programme
- Bronze Food for Life Catering Mark for the school catering service from the Soil Association
- Bronze Award for the ArgyllActive Exercise on Referral Programme at CoSLA's Excellence Awards



Excellence in innovation

The council's innovative approach to developing and improving services was acknowledged nationally –

- 539 empty properties were brought back into use thanks to the close partnership working between the council's Housing and Council Tax teams which netted national recognition and a Silver Award from the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuations (IRRV) Performance Awards 2014 in the Excellence in Innovation category
- The Procurement and Commissioning team were finalists in the Government Opportunities (GO) Excellence in Public Procurement Awards Scotland 2014/15 in the category of GO Procurement Team of the Year Award and the sustainability/corporate responsibility initiative of the year

Excellence in improving quality of life

The council's work in increasing quality of life for our communities was widely recognised -

- Building Standards retained the National Customer Services Excellence Award in recognition of providing services with the customer at the core of everything they do
- The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives awarded the council a Bronze Award for its Healthy Working Lives programme which aims to ensure that all employees work in a safe and healthy environment
- Argyll and Bute's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) were awarded the John McCann Unsung Hero Award, at this year's Scottish Youth Parliament Awards. The young people were supported by the council's Youth Services
- Two social workers with the Children and Families service were shortlisted for the Scottish Association of Social Workers' annual Social Worker of the Year award after being nominated for the awards by colleagues and the young people and adults they support

- Campbeltown THI (Townscape Heritage Initiative) was awarded Best Before and After Photo of an empty property back into use, at the Scottish Empty Homes conference, for work done at 13 – 15 Kirk Street, Campbeltown *(photographs right)*



Excellence in technology

The council's website received national recognition –

- It was awarded Four Stars in the annual Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) Better Connected review
- It was a finalist in the Holyrood Connect ICT award for customer contact innovations, judged by experts from within local and Scottish Government
- The council was also one of 11 sites selected by the Department of Work and Pensions to provide training which will help people claiming benefits to do so online—this work being done in advance of the Universal Credit roll out.

Excellence in education

The education service continued to attract accolades for pupils, teachers and school employees -

- Argyll and Bute schools had four finalists in the prestigious annual Scottish Education Awards which celebrate hard work and innovation in Scottish classrooms.
- Four schools were named among the first 15 schools in Scotland to be recognised with a Gold sportsotland School Sport Award for their commitment to providing quality physical education and school sport
- Twenty Support Assistants received certificates for the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Education Support Assistance
- Cardross Primary School brought home software giant Microsoft's Kodu Kup Judges Award, emerging as one of four winning teams in the UK wide competition to design computer games
- Kilcreggan Primary School was recognised at national level as an example of best practice in the field of PE Disability Inclusion Training, as part of the Commonwealth Games Legacy 2014 programme

Growing our population – our Single Outcome Agreement

In 2011 Argyll and Bute was one of only four local authority areas in Scotland to show a decrease in population, and future population projections suggest further reductions. Despite local variances in population change the overall demographic shows an increasing elderly population and a decrease in both children and people of working age. This has significant implications for future service delivery and sustainability of communities and sets out a clear threat to the future success of the area.

The Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023, also known as the SOA, is an agreement between the Council and other members of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) setting out how we aim to work in partnership to address these challenges.

The Community Planning Partnership recognises that the context for delivery is challenging, with public sector reform, welfare reform and poor economic forecasts all impacting nationally and locally.

Six long term outcomes have been identified to support the overall vision which is that “Argyll and Bute’s economic success is built on a growing population”.

These are:

- 1. The economy is diverse and thriving**
- 2. We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth**
- 3. Education, skills and training maximise opportunities for all**
- 4. Children and young people have the best possible start**
- 5. People live active, healthier and independent lives**
- 6. People live in safer and stronger communities**

To achieve these requires significant commitment and effort by all partners and communities in Argyll and Bute.

The Community Planning Partnership has a strong governance structure involving key partners as set out in legislation, and local area groups. Partnership working towards the SOA is published in the CPP’s annual report. As the lead partner for community planning this annual report details the work of council services towards achieving the ambitions of the SOA. Other partners involved in delivery of the SOA include Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Skills Development Scotland, NHS Highland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface, Scottish Natural Heritage and Argyll College University of Highlands and Islands.

The economy is diverse and thriving

- The Kintyre Renewables Hub project completed improvement work at Campbeltown Old Quay as well as upgrading two kilometres of the U59 Campbeltown to Machrihanish road. The project anticipates the on-going development of Kintyre's growing renewables industry, and these schemes are partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund
- With over £800k of partner funding from the Timber Transport Group, the council was able to upgrade the B836 between Sandbank and West Cowal. These improvements have been carried out to help timber extraction and also improve the West -East transport links across Cowal



Environmental Health



- Regulatory Services continued to support businesses by providing them with information about environmental health, animal health, trading standards and licensing standards, enabling them to comply with new legislation and requirements. By telling them about easier ways to get information on the internet and through electronic

newsletters, as well as keeping them up to date with the work of the service, they are working at supporting them to remain open for business

- The council awarded 55 contracts to local companies in Argyll and Bute in 2014/15 with a total value of £10.1m. A total of 162 contracts were awarded by the council during 2014/15 with a value of £24.5m
- The amount of non-domestic rates relief awarded increased from £8.6m to £9.1m showing support to small businesses
- The Business Gateway team provided advice and support to help 112 new businesses get started, as well as supporting 747 existing and developing businesses, more than double the target for 2014/15. The number of new businesses which started and continued to operate for at least a year was higher in Argyll and Bute than the national average; and the number of new businesses which started and continued to operate for at least three years was well above the national average
- Economic Development Action Plans were produced for each of the council's four administrative areas which will identify and tackle local economic opportunities up to 2017-18.

- As a 'film friendly' council we welcome film, television and photographic companies who wish to film or photograph within our area. We provide free and confidential advice and information to film makers about locations, ownership, film related suppliers and services. The Economic Development service works closely with Creative Scotland, Scottish Locations Network and Highland Film Commission. As well as the economic benefit to the area, tourism interest can also be generated through the resultant media coverage

Keeping Argyll and Bute in the picture

During 2014 the council responded to a total of 107 enquiries resulting in 41 productions with an approximate spend of £408,000.

These included television productions 'Stonemouth' for BBC1 and 'In the Footsteps of Tom Weir' for STV.

Photographic stills for international drinks company Diageo, clothing firm Anthropologie and feature films 'Iona' and the romantic comedy set in Dunoon, 'Scottish Mussel', have all used Argyll as a location.



Musicians Florence and the Machine filming on Mull (picture supplied by Location Scotland)

- In Inveraray, work has been going on to move the ambitious £2m conservation area regeneration scheme (CARS) to the construction stage. It is hoped that major work will start on the two priority buildings, Arkland and Reliefland, in 2015/16
- Throughout 2014/15, the European Team has successfully contributed towards the Scottish Government's development of the 2014/2020 European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes, with a view to maximising the accessibility of the various funds to organisations in Argyll and Bute
- IT equipment was installed in all primary school kitchens to allow faster ordering of supplies and payments and to improve record keeping
- Facility Services made arrangements with our external contractors which improve efficiency in responding to emergencies

Infrastructure that supports sustainable growth

Town centre regeneration

Work continued during 2014/15 with the Council's ambitious and forward-looking programme to help regeneration and economic development in five of our waterfront towns - Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon (CHORD). The multi-million pound initiative is bringing major improvements to town centres and waterfronts.

Helensburgh town centre and West Bay Esplanade were transformed, providing easier access to local shops and the town centre, wider pavements, and more parking and street furniture, all brought a better experience for residents, businesses and visitors. More work is planned for the town's shopfronts.

In Oban, Campbeltown and Dunoon contracts were awarded for major upgrading and improvements, and in Rothesay funding was approved for essential repairs to the town's iconic Pavilion

Financial support and guidance

Strategic Finance supported the realisation of the Council's Capital Programme and Economic Development projects by undertaking business case developments, options appraisals and the ongoing monitoring of the progress of capital projects.

Oban to Dalmally train service

A new improved train service between Oban and Dalmally was successfully started with commitment from the Council's Integrated Transport service in partnership with Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership, Sustrans and Scotrail. The service – part of the Oban to Glasgow Scotrail service - helps pupils to travel to and from school as well as allowing them to attend after-school activities or employment, and travel home using later trains. It is also a more environmentally friendly mode of travel as the train can accommodate more pupils, reducing the need for car transport. Station facilities were improved, with new shelters at Dalmally and Taynuilt, and new access lighting at Loch Awe. The introduction of the service has proved to be a success and is popular with pupils.



Oban and The Isles Air Service

Oban Airport is owned by Argyll and Bute Council, and is a vital social and business hub for the area. Regular flights to Coll, Tiree, Colonsay and Islay connect people, places and communities. During 2014 a total of 3,516 passengers were carried on the Oban and The Isles Air Service - an increase on the previous year, when 3,334 passengers were carried

Easier route to housing

To make it easier for people to find housing in Argyll and Bute, the council led the incorporation of HOMEArgyll onto the web, providing an on-line common housing register. HOMEArgyll is a partnership of the Council and social housing landlords focused on providing quality housing advice for everyone

More one-stop-services

New services were introduced by the Customer Service Centre, including accepting payments for a new decriminalised parking enforcement system, and the handling of a range of enquiries relating to co-mingled waste, self-directed support, and community lets.

The number of calls dealt with through the Customer Service Centre increased by 11% from 106,000 in 2013-14 to 118,000 in 2014-15.



Sustainable energy

- Eight schools had solar photovoltaics (PV) panels successfully installed
- A biomass heating system was installed at the Council's offices in Kilmory
- A street lighting inventory was completed to help plan a more energy efficient lighting system

Planning to protect, enhance and develop

- The Council's acknowledgement that valuing and having pride in our historic environment is essential to protecting what makes a place special and capable of strong and sustainable growth, led to the production of the draft Historic Environment Strategy for Argyll and Bute.
- Positive feedback from the Scottish Government on the council's Core Path Plan was received, allowing the adoption of the plan to move forward in early 2015/16. This is the first time that a Core Paths Plan has been produced for the Argyll and Bute Council area.
- The processing of planning applications, particularly at the validation stage, improved. The council's Development Management team determined both local and major applications quicker than the national average.

Waste management

Work was completed with Zero Waste Scotland to develop a future waste strategy for Argyll and Bute.

The introduction of co-mingled (mixed) waste collection in Oban, Mid Argyll and Cowal shows an increase of around 35% in recycled materials being collected through the enhanced blue bin service



Education, skills and training maximise opportunities for all

For our young people

- As part of the council's commitment to nurturing talent in Argyll and Bute, eight Modern Apprentices were appointed during 2014/15 and we are committed to continuing to create opportunities for young people during 2015/16. Comprehensive guidance for managers was put in place and the programme has been advertised widely.



*Customer Services Modern Apprentices
at Kilmory*

- Four schools were named among the first 15 schools in Scotland to be recognised with a Gold sportscotland School Sport Award for their commitment to providing quality physical education and school sport
- Thirteen young people from across Argyll and Bute successfully completed a leadership training programme delivered by the council's Youth Services Team, in partnership with YouthLink Scotland
- The provision of arts to young people across Argyll and Bute was given a boost with £400,000 funding from Creative Scotland
- Pupils continued to perform well in SQA examinations, and further increases in the number of skills for work courses in schools supported young people to move into higher and further education, training and employment when they left schools.
- Schools achieved success in local and national awards through the innovative use of learning technology to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence
- The continued development of Curriculum for Excellence in all schools, including the introduction of the New National Qualifications

For our communities

- The potential to find employment was increased by the 1,678 adults who took opportunities provided by the Adult Learning team, including technology, skills for work and taking first steps into learning
- 403 adults received accredited learning certificates in a range of basic skills, including employability, computer skills and communication
- Opportunities to learn basic computer skills were offered in 24 venues across Argyll and Bute, 18 of which were in rurally isolated locations including some of the smaller primary schools and libraries
- 52 volunteers helped with the provision of adult literacy services, which offers free learning opportunities for anyone who wants to improve their skills
- Tarbert Library was refurbished and re-opened in a new, more central location, with more space to develop an even greater range of services for the community
- Development of a Teacher Training Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) course based in Argyll and Bute was put in place with our education service

For our employees

- The online learning and development materials available to employees increased significantly over the year with an increase in e-learning courses through shared services



Our Gaelic language and culture

The council's commitment to promoting and engaging involvement in the Gaelic language and culture saw the opening of the Furan Gaelic Centre in Oban in January 2014.

During 2014/15 the level of Gaelic related activity in Oban and the wider Argyll and Bute area increased noticeably, involving every age group from pre-school to our older residents.

Gaelic and bilingual Bookbug sessions were established in Oban, Lochgilphead, on Mull, in Strath of Appin and on Islay.

Furan is also involved in other pre-school activities, along with Gaelic for Parents, Speaking our Language, a fortnightly cèilidh and a monthly quiz.

Children and young people have the best possible start

The council is committed to being a good 'corporate parent' - ensuring that looked after children have the best possible chances in life

- Our East King Street Children's Home in Helensburgh received a glowing inspection report from the Care Inspectorate which commended the service for the nurturing environment they provide which make young people feel safe and protected.
In addition, children's houses at Shellach View and Dunclutha maintained 5 "Very Good" ratings across quality indicators when inspected by the Care Inspectorate
- Children and Families have achieved an increase in the percentage of children who were looked after and accommodated for more than a year, and who had a plan for permanence to ensure that vulnerable children have the right support and to secure a forever family
- There was an increase in the percentage of reviews of looked after and accommodated children convened within timescales, to ensure that vulnerable children have the right support at the right time
- All children on the Child Protection Register have a risk assessment to ensure all services are working together to keep them safe
- Increase in the percentage of children on the Child Protection Register with no change of social worker, to ensure children build good relationships with their social worker
- There was an increase in the percentage of Child Protection Review Conferences held on time to ensure partners are working together to protect children. Parenting support groups have been introduced in seven localities to help parents get advice and support

The Early Years and in primary schools

- In response to a Scottish Government initiative, the number of hours of Early Learning and Childcare provided by the council increased from 475 to 600 hours, providing more opportunities for childminders and more flexibility for parents and carers
- Continuing to put in place the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategy (PATHS) programme which helps smooth the development of positive relationships and emotional wellbeing in children and parents
- The Road Safety team continued the successful 'Streetfeet' initiative with schools signing up annually for the three week training programme involving practical training using the road network near the school.
- A review was done of the curriculum design in all primary schools, including methods of tracking and monitoring pupil progress to ensure that each school has a curriculum that meets the needs of all young people
- We continued working with our partners within the GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) approach, including the introduction of GIRFEC advisors

People live active, healthier and independent lives

The council believes everyone should have the opportunity to be as healthy and active as possible

Argyll Sea Kayak Trail

The Argyll Coastal Waters project is a partnership between the council and Stramash, a social enterprise and registered charity which uses the outdoor environment to promote and provide a broad range of opportunities for public participation in outdoor sports.



Together we created the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail with nine launch points. This project has seen a successful apprenticeship programme with twelve apprentices placed with Argyll-based businesses

- The Strategic Transportation unit secured £1.4 million in external capital funding for transportation infrastructure projects across Argyll and Bute, with funding coming from Cycling Walking Safer Streets, Sustrans, Smarter Choices Safer Places and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
- The Health and Social Care Integration Scheme was approved by Scottish Ministers – it aims to improve the wellbeing of people who use health and social care services, particularly those whose needs are complex and involve support from health and social care at the same time.
- 521 people received Enhanced Telecare Packages which are available for those in our communities who need additional support by a health or social care professional, for example a social worker, occupational therapist or nurse.
- There was an increase in the number of people with learning disabilities who moved on to independent living in the community with support from Adult Services
- The number of people getting support in their community from mental health services increased
- People at risk of harm had their circumstances assessed more quickly by the Adult Protection service
- The number of people being referred to Substance Misuse Teams within three weeks increased which means that more people benefitted from treatment sooner
- Development and delivery of the Self-Directed Support (Scotland) Act was introduced in both Adult Care and Children and Families services, with people of all ages given more choice and control over how their support is designed to ensure they receive the help they need
- More people in Argyll and Bute will have their health and social care monitored at home through the use of new technology which will be developed to provide 24 hour, seven days a week access to services

People live active, healthier and independent lives

- We worked with the Scottish Government to make arrangements for the necessary care and support to allow people who are in hospital to leave as soon as possible
- The Welfare Rights service helped people claim £2.818m in additional benefits – the highest amount ever achieved by this service
- People and their families affected by cancer benefitted from an investment of £300,000 from McMillan Cancer Care to roll out provision of information and support within our libraries
- The Argyll and Bute Advice Network on line directory and referral system was extended to 330 system users. Inter-agency referrals increased by 64% in two years
- Bute Community Sports Hub – with funding from sportscotland secured by the Community and Culture service - held a sporting event attended by over 700 people; over 10% of the island's population
- Library visits increased by 8% and the use of libraries by outside agencies increased by 6% from the previous year - libraries are used by many organisations including NHS Highland , Job Centre Plus, ENABLE Scotland, Alzheimers Scotland and Argyll College
- 562 energy efficiency measures, including internal and external wall insulation; cavity wall, underfloor and loft insulation; and draft proofing, were installed in 280 households under the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPS:ABS) improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty



Housing development at Bonawe

Affordable housing for all

Loan and grant agreements were completed with ACHA (Argyll Community Housing Association) and other housing providers to help the development of social housing

- Over 98% of crisis grants were processed within two days during 2014-15
- 91% of all community care grants processed within the 15 days target in 2014-15. All Scottish Welfare Fund allocation fully spent for year
- The average time taken to process a benefits change in circumstance reduced from 8.3 days in 2013-14 to 5.79 days in 2014-15. The average number of days taken to process a new claim reduced from 32.37 days in 2013-14 to 22.09 days in 2014-15

People live in safer and stronger communities

Keeping you moving

Roads Operations successfully completed a £23m four year roads upgrade programme of almost 360 miles or 25% of our road network, including over a third of our 'A' designated roads.

Road paving machine in operation



- The Road Safety Unit, in partnership with Scottish Fire and Rescue, held a young driver initiative with 120 pupils from 6th year pupils in Oban High School, at which the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service delivered their 'Cut It Out' programme and the Road Safety Unit delivered 'The Ripple Effect' about the consequences of road crashes
- There was an increase in the number of individuals subject to a Community Payback Order who have their induction within five days—representing 80.8% against a target of 60%
- 104 third sector groups received financial support totalling £217,000
- We also supported the third sector in achieving £373,200 worth of grant funding via our monthly Funding Alert
- 65 community volunteers received training to increase their capacity to manage village halls and community facilities
- The development of the work of Community Councils was supported, including the provision of a training programme on community engagement, governance, planning and social media
- Three sets of Community Council by-elections were supported, with all 56 Community Councils now formally constituted

People live in safer and stronger communities

- The Council maintained its high performance on safety with reportable accidents continuing the long term council trend of being below the national average
- We complied with the Northern Lighthouse board requirement that all navigational aids remain operational for 99% of the time over a three year rolling period
- We worked with the Friends of Hermitage Park Association and the people of Helensburgh to develop a masterplan for Hermitage Park and a second stage bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People

Food safety

Planning and Regulatory Services successfully completed their Improvement Plan, addressing issues raised by an external audit from the Food Standards Agency Scotland of our shellfish monitoring work.



Argyll and Bute is one of the main shellfish producing areas in Europe, including the largest by volume of purified oysters.

We have a responsibility to protect the health of our communities and shellfish monitoring is vital.

This supports our rural economy and allows local business to trade high quality shellfish locally and internationally.

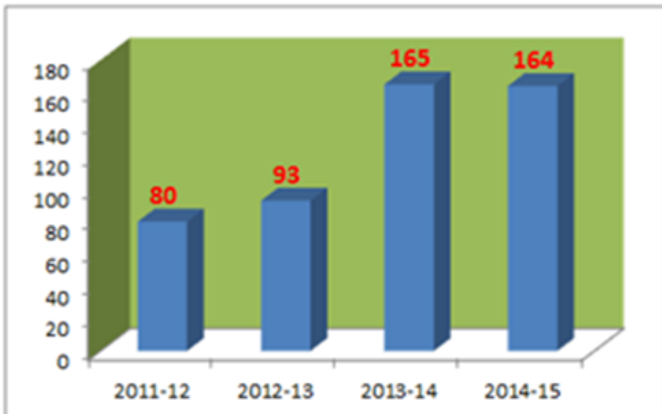
Food Standards Agency Scotland has confirmed that the plan is now complete and the audit has been signed off.

- Facility Services successfully rolled out the *Allergen* legislation in school kitchens and Kilmory by December 2014. This legislation is designed to help food businesses provide information to customers who need to avoid certain ingredients because of a food allergy or intolerance
- The programme of Fire Risk assessments for council premises continued to be met, with priority given to premises where the most vulnerable people are, in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Service

Making it happen—our SOA in action

Increasing the supply of affordable housing

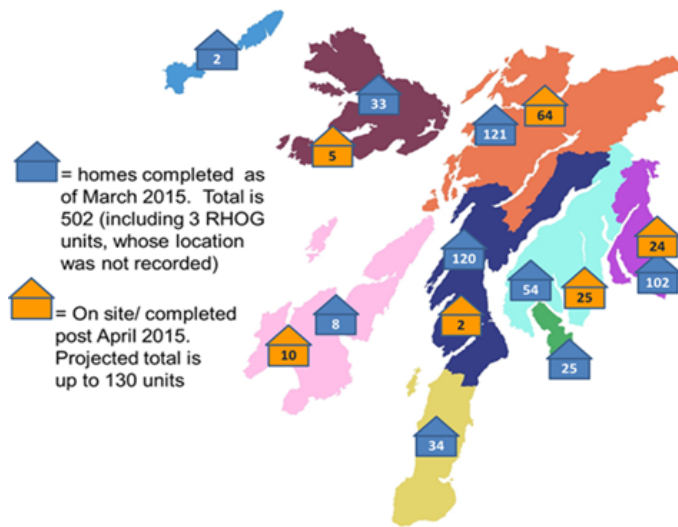
The council, Scottish Government and local Registered Social Landlords continue to work very effectively in partnership to deliver a range of affordable new homes across Argyll and Bute. In 2014/15 there were 164 completed in eight different schemes. This brings the total over four years to 502. We are well on the way to exceeding the target of 550 new affordable homes by March 2016.



Affordable housing units built during the last four years

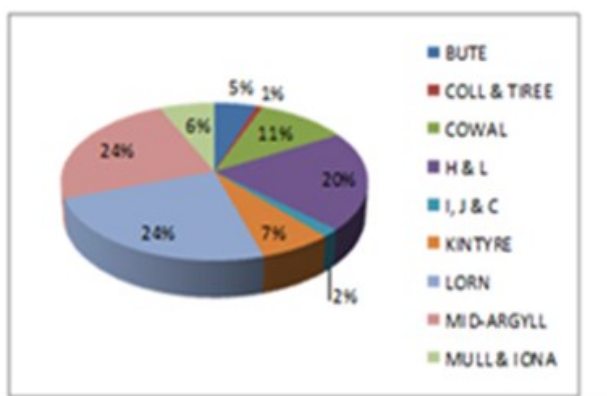


Ardfern—Fyne Homes



Dunbeg—West Highland Housing Association and Link Housing Association

Completions by Housing Market Area 2011—2015



Hermitage Helensburgh — Dunbritton Housing Association

Making it happen—our SOA in action

Macmillan @ Argyll and Bute Libraries; tackling inequalities and improving health

A service providing information and support for people affected by cancer in Campbeltown and Rothesay Libraries has been very successful, and soon will be rolled out across Argyll and Bute. Feedback has shown that people particularly liked the fact that the service was not in a medical setting and in a community space which makes it very accessible, more relaxed and friendly.

The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service (MCISS), or Macmillan @ Argyll and Bute Libraries, was developed in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council, NHS Highland and Argyll Voluntary Action (now called Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface). This partnership provides an excellent opportunity to develop Macmillan Cancer information, support and guidance to people seeking services across Argyll and Bute, all within local communities.

Macmillan Cancer Support believes that this type of service is best delivered in a non-clinical environment and libraries are viewed as the ideal location.

Further funding from Macmillan Cancer Support will see the service roll out to the remaining libraries, as well as two island locations, over the next three years.

Photo—Provost Len Scoullar at the launch of Macmillan’s information service in Rothesay library



Bringing the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) to local communities

The council’s Community Planning team and Area Community Planning Groups have produced a localised version of the Single Outcome Agreement Delivery Plans (called SOA: Local) for each of the four administrative areas in Argyll and Bute.

The SOA: Locals for each of the council’s administrative areas have given the Area Community Planning Groups an opportunity to monitor and comment on local initiatives which link directly to the council’s SOA. They have provided an opportunity for local discussions and development of partnership working and are the start of a joined up approach between strategic and local community planning.

The SOA: Locals are working documents which reflect local activity by the community planning partners on the actions within the plans of the SOA.

Please see Page 8 for our introduction to the council’s Single Outcome Agreement

Providing free school meals to primary school children

From January 2015, over 82% of school pupils in Primary 1 to Primary 3 have chosen to have a free school lunch. We are committed to providing healthy, nutritious, good value meal options to pupils in our primary and secondary schools. School lunches across all primary schools continue to meet the standards required for the Soil Association’s Catering Mark Bronze Award, which supports good quality, high welfare standards and fresh, home cooked meals.

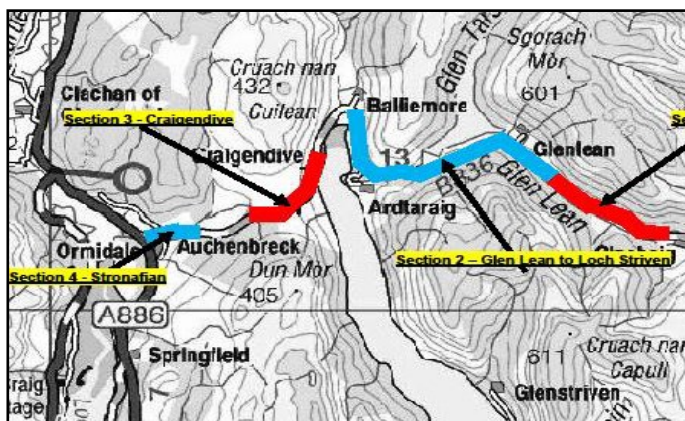
Making it happen—our SOA in action

Improving roads for the transport of timber

The maintenance and support of timber transport throughout Argyll and Bute is vital to supporting the industry, and is promoted by the work of the Argyll Timber Transport Forum.

Four sections of public road were improved to allow timber haulage along the B836 in Cowal. The £1.5m was possible with funding of £780,000 from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (operated by Forestry Commission Scotland).

At the same time, work was done to improve the running surface and lines from Clachaig Village to the A815 at Sandbank, and a 30mph speed restriction was introduced through



Keeping Argyll and Bute open

The council's Roads Operations have responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent snow and ice causing a danger to pedestrians and drivers over public roads, which includes carriageways, footways, footpaths and pedestrian precincts.

During the winter of 2014/15 a total of 19,204 tonnes of salt was used which equates to over 1,745 gritter loads. The gritters travelled over 128,500 miles and treated in excess of 62,300 miles of road – and the highest number of treatments remains consistently the A819 in East Lorn.

We worked with Transport Scotland in treating the southern section of the A83. We do this work with a fleet of 38 main frontline vehicles plus two spare vehicles to cover breakdowns.

Deteriorating weather conditions on the A819 Dalmally to Inveraray Road on 13 January 2015 (below)



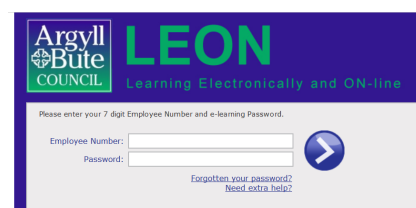
Making it happen—our SOA in action

Providing professional support, advice and training

The council's Health and Safety team provided employees, managers and supervisors with the information they need to improve their management of work related risks. The team also provided specialist training to almost 1400 staff across all council services on a range of topics.

During 2014/15 the council's reactive health and safety performance significantly improved with a 35% reduction in the number of accidents and safety related incidents compared to the previous year. Our RIDDOR reportable incidents (by law these have to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive) were below the national average for large organisations in the UK.

The council's Learning and Development team has offered employees more courses online in order to overcome some of the many challenges we face, both geographical and through pressure on resources. This innovative approach provides quick and accessible learning responses that can be provided to employees at a time and place that meets their needs as well as providing learning or information set in a context that is specific to Argyll and Bute. There are personal and professional development



Maintaining high standards of financial management

Strategic Finance supports services, officers and councillors through the provision of accounting and budgeting services, treasury management, risk management and internal audit.

Specific successes for 2014/15 include the improvement of financial reporting in terms of the summary accounts and a financial summary; completion of the treasury management good practice assessment; development of a new financial monitoring reporting pack for revenue, capital and treasury monitoring; and the prompt issuing of information to budget holders

Effective planning, reporting and management of finance, risk and money and capital market transactions led to the successful completion of core tasks including annual accounts, revenue and capital budget preparation and monitoring, treasury management operations and risk management reporting

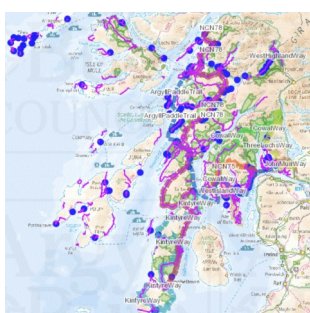
Actively managing our staffing budget to create savings in year and also in preparation for Service Choices

All planned audits were completed

Key areas showing success in providing that financial and management controls are operating effectively, are on track or complete, include a completed audit risk assessment; completed annual audit plan; 100% acceptance of audit recommendations; and compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and improved communication with External Audit

Social, health and educational benefits

Our historic environment is at the heart of our identity. Pride and confidence in the place we live is crucial to protecting what makes it special and improving its ability to adapt and sustain economic growth. Regeneration projects in particular are aimed at encouraging civic pride and community engagement.



Improvements to our core path network and other active travel routes, parks and public spaces encourage people to walk and cycle and to participate in outdoor activities. In an increasingly stressful world opportunities to lead more active and healthy lifestyles are more and more in demand from our communities

Making it happen—our SOA in action

Our core path network and partnership working with other key environment agencies promotes the intrinsic link that exists between the historic and natural environment. Joint projects often involve volunteer participation whether this is to help with practical work, interpretation, or recording purposes, all contribute to promoting building stronger communities and delivering health and educational benefits.

Dunoon pier



The wooden pier at Dunoon is undergoing a major investment programme from the council with help from the Scottish Government's Regional Capital Grants Scheme. This listed structure is probably the best remaining example of a wooden Victorian era pier in Scotland and a key piece of the Clyde's maritime heritage. The project was approved in February 2015 with a £2.8 m investment and a focus on structural improvements, and refurbishing the decking and historic waiting room.

The Lorn Arc Project

The Lorn Arc aims to deliver nine infrastructure projects over the next five years to unlock economic growth in Oban and wider Lorn through a £18.5m investment. This project was approved early in 2015 and work will include the creation of a new business park at Oban airport with private sector interest already established. Road improvements at Dunbeg and the redevelopment of North Pier in Oban are also priority projects.



Helping people to prepare for Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Working Group aims to lessen adverse effects of welfare reform changes for people in our communities. The group bid successfully to be one of 11 national sites for the Universal Support Delivered Locally trials – these will help people who are in receipt of benefits to do so online in advance of the roll out of Universal Credit.

The trial has been very successful in reaching out to those needing support and made a real difference to their preparation for moving to monthly payments and having an online account under Universal Credit. At least half of those assessed had not previously been in touch with the council for housing support assistance.

Since the trial started on 1 September 2014, 1,025 people have been assessed to see if they need support, and of those 568 were referred for further support such as adult literacy and digital technology skills as well as personal budgeting support .

The group comprises representatives from the council, the main registered social housing landlords in our area, the Department of Work and Pensions, NHS Highland, Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice, Bute Advice Centre and other third sector bodies.

Making it happen—our SOA in action

Introducing co-mingled (combined) re-cycling

The council has seen an approximate 35% increase in existing recyclate (material that is recyclable) collected following the successful introduction of co-mingled recycling collections in Oban, Lorn, Mid-Argyll and Dunoon and Cowal. Separate collection services for dry recyclables are now in place in the majority of the authority area.

The introduction of this method of collection helps our communities in encouraging them to increase the amount of household waste that they recycle. A kerbside collection is more convenient for residents and business to recycle plastic and can materials, and is in addition to the existing paper and cardboard collections.



This collection also helps the council to meet the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 by increasing recycling and reducing waste going to landfill.

Guidance and support for services and the community

The Governance and Law service helped put into practice the substantial changes to the council's Political Management arrangements. This included facilitating development days for each of the strategic committees, the introduction of committee work plans to enable forward planning and underpin openness and transparency, and publication of guidance on Committee Reports and Attendance at Committees for officers.

The service supported a demanding and challenging election schedule:

- European Elections May 2014
- By-Election May 2014
- By-election July 2014
- Referendum Sept 2014
- By-election October 2014
- By-election December 2014

Development of community gardens

The Criminal Justice Service Community Payback Unpaid Work schemes are contributing to the development of community garden projects beyond simply being areas of rest and tranquillity into self-sustaining schemes that engage the public, are maintained by volunteers and provide produce and benefit the community.

Over the past ten years, Community Service by Offenders and more latterly Community Payback Unpaid Work schemes have recognised the potential of developing community garden projects. From the early involvement with community and sensory gardens for simple relaxation and pleasure, the scheme has expanded its interests towards providing opportunities for training as a means of rehabilitating offenders, improving skills and employment for volunteers; opportunities for improved use of community lands; opportunities that support community engagement and sustainability; and opportunities to contribute to healthy living.

Making it happen—our SOA in action

All in all the rehabilitation of offenders through paying back to the community for misdeeds is - through a number of activities including community gardens - enjoying positive public interest, assists offenders to gain skills and engage positively in society, and is of benefit to the local community.

Ardentinny Walled Garden

The work squad created a flat space to plant an orchard, created pathways and built three raised beds and a screen for hanging baskets to hide a storage area. They planted vegetable seeds in the polytunnel, the sale of which helps to provide a small income for the garden and fresh vegetables for the community.

The gardens are managed by a few volunteers and have been used by school children to learn about growing, and by students to learn additional horticultural skills.



Protecting people in our communities who are at risk of harm

Donald is a young man with a learning disability. He lives by himself in a small village in Argyll. One day his bank noticed that there were some large withdrawals from his account which was very unusual. They contacted the Police and the social work team who went to talk to Donald. Donald was upset that they were looking into his private business, but explained that a group of local youths were now his friends and kept asking him for money, which he was giving them. They were asking for larger and larger sums and had once told him that they would hurt him if he didn't give it to them. Donald had been frightened but wanted to be friends with them, so gave them the money.

Social work staff explained to Donald that real friends did not ask for money or threaten people. They worked with him on keeping his money safe and on developing new friendships, and saying no to those who were exploiting him.

Preparing for change

With local government funding expected to reduce significantly in future years, the Council has been working in different ways to meet the challenge of making considerable savings while also continuing to invest in building future prosperity for Argyll and Bute. Here are examples of action taken by just one of the Council's many services, Improvement and HR:

- 'BPR' (business review process) support has been provided to various council services in order to deliver improved efficiencies
- As indicated in this report, work to develop the Council as an employer of choice has continued. The HR Team for example achieved the 100% target of issuing contracts to new employees within two days of appointment
- As part of supporting the SOA aims to attract people and jobs, the Communications Team extended the reach of the Council's 'voice' by developing our social media presence (corporate Facebook page launched, targets exceeded for growing use of this and the corporate Twitter site)

Money Matters

Introduction

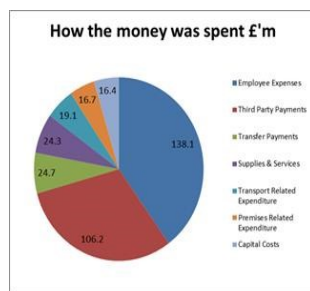
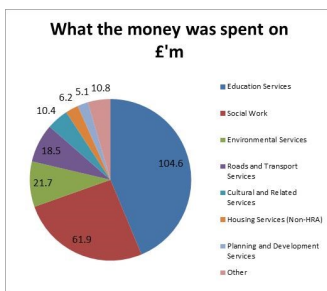
This summary provides an outline of Argyll and Bute Council's financial position during the 2014/15 period, highlighting the key issues over the year. It provides information on revenue and capital income and expenditure for the year, assets and liabilities, borrowing and reserves with a comment on the future outlook. The full set of audited annual accounts for 2014-15 are available on the Council's website at

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-and-government/financial-statements

Revenue Expenditure

This relates to the day to day costs of service delivery. This includes the cost of employing staff, operating and maintaining buildings, the cost of goods and services purchased from suppliers and the cost of financing borrowing. Statutory adjustments are required to ensure the General Fund balance reflects statutory requirements in relation to pension costs and the cost of borrowing.

	Actual 14/15 £m
Net cost of services	239.4
Other operating income and expenditure	0.9
Finance and investment income and expenditure	20.8
Total expenditure	261.1
Taxation and non specific grants	(265.7)
(Surplus)/deficit on provision of services	-4.6
Statutory adjustments	2.6
(Increase)/decrease in General Fund Balance	(2.0)



Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure is the money spent on acquiring or enhancing fixed assets like buildings, land, roads and equipment. It is funded by income from sales of assets, government grants and contributions from reserves and the revenue budget with the balance coming from borrowing. During 2014/15 capital expenditure was £36.3m with capital funding of £17.8m resulting in borrowings of £18.5m.

	Actual 14/15 £m
Gross capital expenditure	36.3
Capital funding	17.8
Borrowing	18.5

Balance Sheet

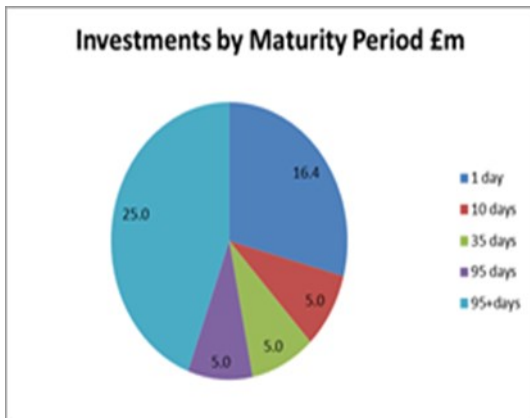
Long term assets include buildings, land, roads and equipment. Current assets are mainly monies owed to the council and cash held in bank accounts or on investment. Current liabilities are sums we are due to pay within the next financial year. Long term liabilities include long term borrowing, future payments for NPDO and pension liabilities.

Net assets (comprising long term and current assets less current and longer term liabilities) is represented by the council’s reserves. The council’s net assets are £161.0m.



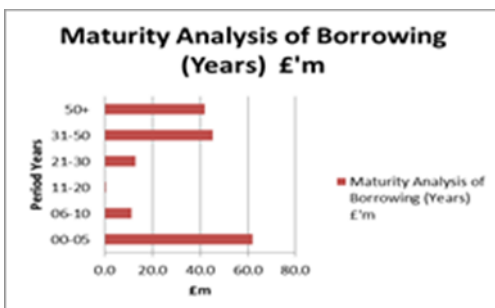
Treasury Management - Borrowing and Investments

Treasury management is taking care of our borrowing, cash flow and investments. We have to make sure that these bring the best possible returns so that the Council can continue to deliver its essential services, while at the same time managing and planning for any risks.



Our investment strategy aims to optimise the rate of return. This helps us to ensure we have money available to make payments when we need to, and also to make sure that the money invested is repaid to the council in full.

To achieve this we place money with a number of different banks for periods ranging from overnight to one year, depending on the credit rating of the bank and the limits relating to that institution and set out within our investment strategy.



Borrowing

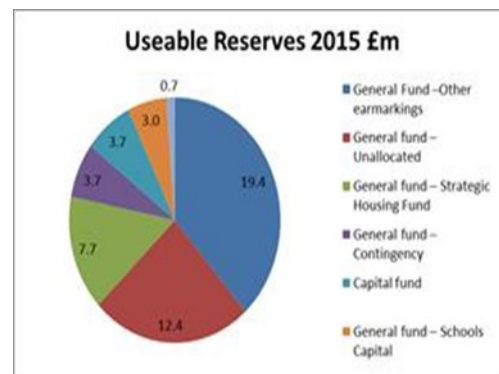
At 31st March 2015, the total sum of money borrowed from external sources was £173.4m. Most of this was financed by the Public Works Loan Board (£100.2m) with the rest coming mainly from the money market.

Reserves

Reserves are the amounts set aside for a specific purpose. Reserves can be usable or unusable. Usable reserves are those backed by actual resources and can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation. Unusable resources are required purely for accounting purposes—they do not represent resources available for the council to use. The council holds a total of £161.0m in reserves. Usable reserves sit at £50.5m.

Unusable reserves have decreased by £15.8m to £110.5m, due to an increase in the pension liability, a surplus on revaluation reserve and a transfer for capital grants.

	31 March 2015
	£m
Unusable reserves	110.5
Capital fund	3.7
Renewal and repairs fund	0.7
General fund – Contingency	3.7
General fund – Strategic Housing Fund	7.7
General fund – Schools Capital	3.0
General fund –Other earmarkings	19.4
General fund – Unallocated	12.4
Total reserves	161.0



Future Outlook

The financial outlook for 2015-16 is one of relative financial stability, the future beyond that is more challenging. The council adopted a two-year budget for 2014-15 and 2015-16 in February 2014. This set budgetary targets of 1% cashable efficiency savings for each of these financial years. 2015-16 will be a year of more intensive planning to review the resources available to the Council and how they are used to deliver on priorities and objectives over a very challenging medium term.

The three-year capital plan has been agreed by the council for the periods to 2017-18, with a capital expenditure of £41.4m in 2015-16, £25.5m in 2016-17 and £51.1m in 2017-18.

Celebrating Excellence

Each year Argyll and Bute Council celebrates excellence in the work of employees – underpinning the council’s status as an employer of choice. The council provides support, encouragement, opportunities, skills and training to enable employees to achieve the highest level of performance.

An annual Excellence Awards ceremony is the highlight of a process which aims to recognise the innovative ways that council staff do their jobs and deliver services - both inside and outside the council – and which all make life better for people in Argyll and Bute.

The Excellence Awards are part of a council-wide employee recognition scheme with five award categories, each one linked to the council’s strategic outcomes.

Our recognition of the hard work, commitment and achievement of our colleagues will be further celebrated from 2015 onwards, with the introduction of Recognition Awards which will be based on nominations from colleagues across five categories including manager of the year, outstanding achievement, team of the year and employee of the year.

The 2014 Excellence Award winners were :

Effective and Efficient Service Delivery

Gold – Animal Health and Welfare Risk Based Market Strategy

Silver – Contacting the Council Made Easy

Bronze – Travel and Accommodation Purchasing Team; Tell Us Once Service; Re-engineering HR Services to Support Council Transformation

Improvement and Innovation in Learning

Gold – National School Sports Award, Argyll and Bute Trailblazers

Silver – Introducing Computer Science at Primary Level

Bronze – EXITE Programme @ Dunoon Grammar School; Roads Annual Status and Options Report; Lochdonhead Forest School

Improving the Potential of Our Communities

Gold – Argyll Active

Silver – Community Based Adult Learning – Improving Employability

Bronze – Lochdon Café Crafts; AB Awards, Celebrating Youth Achievement; Housing Services

Involving and Listening to Customers

Gold – Business Compliant Toolkit for Licensing Standards

Silver – Giving Our Customers the Website They Want

Bronze – Building Standards; iCycle; A Sustainable Future for Community Centres in Argyll and Bute

Working in Partnership

Gold – Community Resilience Project

Silver – Multi Agency Approach to Welfare Reform

Bronze – Argyll and Bute Advice Network Online Referrals and Directory; Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust; MacMillan @ Argyll and Bute Libraries



Winners of the Provost’s Award—Argyll Active

Finally, the **Provost’s Award** was chosen by Provost Len Scoullar from the five Gold award winners. The award was presented to Argyll Active, commending the project for its proactive approach, using an innovative and empowering model which receives high praise from its users.



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