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**OUR ISLANDS: ISSUES**

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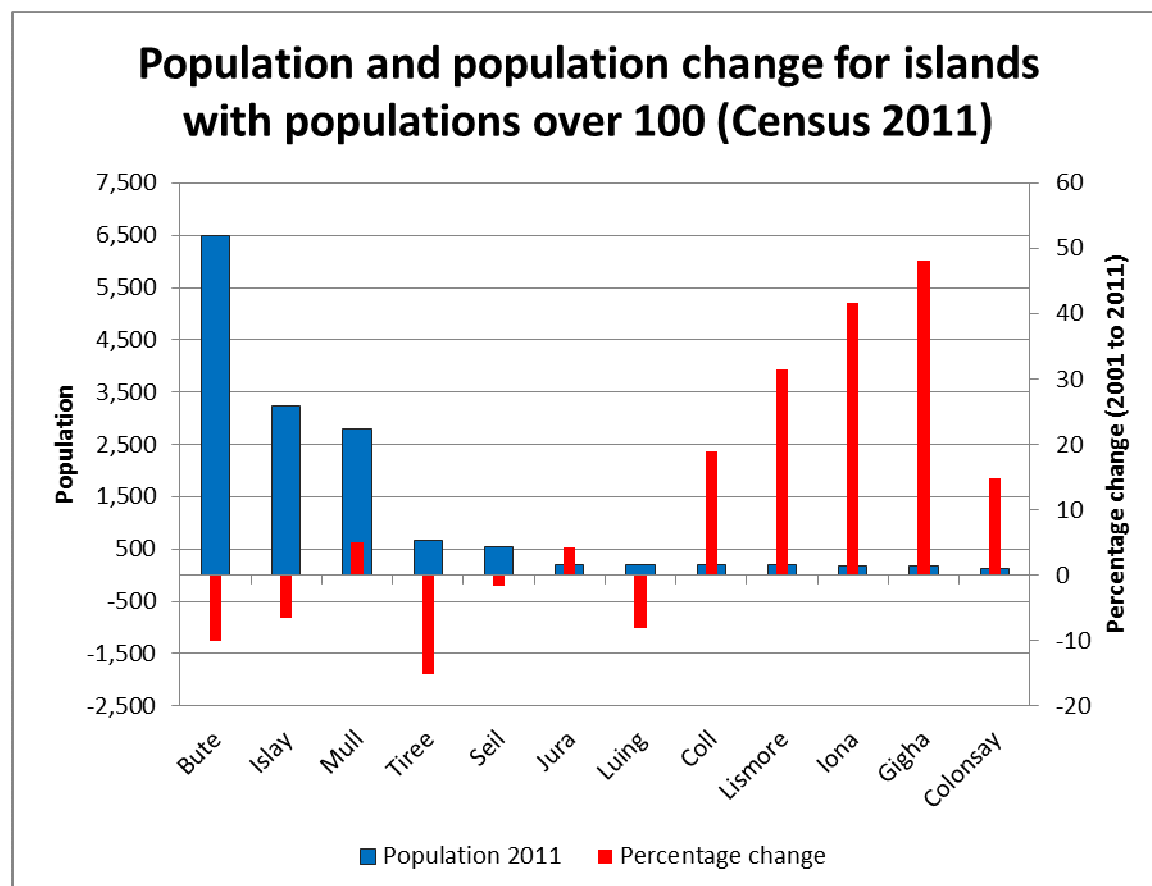
**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 In 2011, 17.1% of Argyll and Bute's total population (15,105 people) were usually resident on islands. This compares to a figure of 17.4% (15,889) in 2001. Argyll and Bute's island population fell by 5% over the period 2001 to 2011. Patterns of population change vary between and within islands.
- 1.2 Over the same period, Scotland's total island population increased by 4%. Western Isles' population increased by 4%, Highland's island populations increased by 8%, Orkney by 11% and Shetland by 5%. Within these areas there are also variations between islands.
- 1.3 According to the 2011 Census, there are 23 inhabited islands in Argyll and Bute. This is a net decrease of two islands since 2001 (see appendix 2).
- 1.4 In 2011, 17.1% of Argyll and Bute's total population were usually resident on islands. This compares to a figure of 17.4% in 2001. The 2001 Census enumerated 15,889 people as being usually resident on Argyll and Bute's islands. The 2011 Census recorded 15,105 people as being usually resident.
- 1.5 Although variations in population trends exist between islands, as a general rule, it is those islands within Argyll and Bute with populations in the hundreds that have experienced the largest rates of population growth (see table 1; Figure 1). An exception is Tiree, where the population has fallen by 15% over the period 2001 to 2011. While these islands show large population changes in percentage terms, the numbers of people involved may be small.
- 1.6 The two largest islands in Argyll and Bute have experienced population decline over the last ten years. Bute's population has decreased by 730 people (-10%). Islay's population has decreased by 229 people (-7%).
- 1.7 Mull, Argyll and Bute's third largest island by population, has shown an increase of 133 people (+5%).

**Table 1: Percentage population change (2001 to 2011) for islands with populations over 100**

Council area and island	Usual residents		
	2001	2011	Percentage change
<b>Argyll &amp; Bute</b>	<b>15,889</b>	<b>15,105</b>	<b>-5%</b>
Tiree	770	653	-15%
Bute	7,228	6,498	-10%
Luing	212	195	-8%
Islay	3,457	3,228	-7%
Seil	560	551	-2%
Jura	188	196	4%
Mull	2,667	2,800	5%
Colonsay	108	124	15%
Coll	164	195	19%
Lismore	146	192	32%
Iona	125	177	42%
Gigha	110	163	48%

**Figure 1:**



1.8 The Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) identifies that there are a number of threats to the future success of the area. Whilst there are a range of social and community challenges by far the most significant challenge

facing the area relates to the economy and population. Unless these specific issues are addressed the scope and capacity to address some of the other challenges facing Argyll and Bute will be greatly reduced.

- 1.9 There is a clear choice between managing decline and committing to creating a virtuous circle based around stabilisation and growth of the economy and population leading to improved social and community factors. The overall objective of the SOA for the 10 years to 2023 is **“Argyll and Bute’s economic success is built on a growing population”**. This outcome is entirely supportive of the 6 national policy priorities set out in the national guidance on community planning and will also see Argyll and Bute contribute to the national outcomes for Scotland.
- 1.10 The challenges facing Argyll and Bute are nowhere more evident than on our islands and it is for this reason that the Council has been giving consideration to the 3 Islands Council Initiative - Our Islands Our Future campaign. Following consideration of the matter the Council has agreed to develop its own islands initiative including a position statement for our islands which outlines the key areas for support, including any increased resources and powers from the Scottish Government and UK Government.

## **2.0 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING OUR ISLANDS**

- 2.1 An initial list of some of the potential key challenges and issues facing our islands has been laid out below to allow the short life working group to consider and add to and amend as necessary:
- Sustainable Transport – effective and integrates road, ferry and air transportation links. PSO’s , travel/ferry costs, RET, timetabling, integration of transport services both on and off the islands to maximise access to and from the islands as well as on the islands – green transport options, commissioned, funded, operated and controlled from the islands to meet island needs
  - Transportation Infrastructure – infrastructure to support sustainable transportation links as well as investment in on island infrastructure including roads, ports and harbours.
  - Broadband, mobile phone coverage and Grid including issues around resilience. Need to consider level of funding for these and the influence of projects coming forward such as the Next Generation Broadband Project, Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP).
  - Service provision – public utilities such as water and sewage, public services such as refuse collection and island charges. Need to examine the investment plans, resources allocated and alignment with development plans.
  - Local responsibility for local resources– including control of the sea bed and any income from the seabed including future renewable developments; MOU with CE and funds such as the Coastal Community Funds may assist in some way towards offsetting this matter but only partially given limited monies involved.

- Economic activities - support to agriculture, crofting, fisheries, food and drink, businesses, tourism, skills, training, education, see greater benefit from key industries such as whiskey going back into our islands.
- Governance issues – including potential changes to fiscal arrangements to allow the islands to benefit more directly from the exploitation of local resources; recognition of the status of islands in the new Scottish Constitutional Settlement (regardless of the result of the referendum) and within the European Union Governance Framework; public sector reform with continued development of the integrated public authority concept; clarification of the role of HIE and any adjustment required to promote greater integration; possibility of extension of the principle of promotion of local legislation to other island areas, or in support of specific developments.
- Culture based – including continued support for the Gaelic language and for the promotion of the strong contribution of our islands to the culture, language, history and natural resource of Scotland.

### **3.0 WHO ARE THE KEY PARTNERS**

- 3.1 Identify other local authorities with islands and who experience similar issues - Some of the issues affecting the three islands councils will also apply to islands within Argyll and Bute but there may also be other issues that are applicable to our islands and it would be advantageous to identify the specific issues relating to our islands (in conjunction with neighbouring authorities which also have islands where appropriate). Once these issues have been identified they could be used as a basis for discussions with the Scottish and UK governments.
- 3.2 Organisation such Scottish Islands Federation (SIF), community planning partners (NHS, HIE) may wish to work with us and may be able to assist in identifying some of the key issues affecting our islands.
- 3.3 Scottish Government, UK Government and European Partners (SIF), and Island Development Trusts are also key partners.

### **4.0 BASELINE INFORMATION AND CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 Information gathered from consultations such as the Ferries Review, Air Services Review, SOA development, including community planning workshops and surveys and information available from HIE and other key organisations, should provide a good baseline to identify the key issues. These should be reviewed by the short life working group prior to any decision being taken in regard to any further consultations that could be done directly with our island communities. This would help to inform the identification of the key issues affecting our islands and from their a plan can be developed covering actions, timetable and resources.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

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| 5.1 | Policy           | The development of a position statement and associated positive policy and resource support for our islands fits with the objectives of the SOA, EDAP and Local Development Plan which seek to deliver sustainable island communities. |
| 5.2 | Financial        | None at this stage   |
| 5.3 | Legal            | None at this stage   |
| 5.4 | HR               | A staff resource will be required to support the short life working group in identifying the issues and taking forward the actions.  |
| 5.5 | Equalities       | None at this stage   |
| 5.6 | Risk             | To do nothing may leave our island communities at a disadvantage as they would sit outwith the 3 islands initiative and potentially any benefit that comes from the Our Islands: Our Future campaign                                   |
| 5.7 | Customer Service | None at this stage   |

### **Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services**

**For further information contact:** Audrey Martin, Development Projects and Renewables Manager