

Press Release



23 May 2014

Islands Task Force meet with Minister for Local Government

Argyll and Bute Council's Islands Task Force had an extremely positive meeting with the Minister for Local Government, Derek Mackay MSP, in Rothesay on Tuesday 20 May to discuss the future of our islands.

Mr Mackay revealed that the Scottish Government will be producing a prospectus for all of Scotland's islands by the end of June which will provide a toolbox that communities can draw on that is right for their island's circumstances.

He said: "I was grateful to attend discussions in Bute with the council leadership and the islands task force.

"It is important to get this input into decision-making directly from island communities to complement and inform the ground-breaking work of the Island Areas Ministerial Working Group.

"The First Minister's Lerwick Declaration last July affirmed our commitment to subsidiarity and local decision-making.

"Our hard work with islands partners towards an islands prospectus this summer demonstrates this commitment."

Leader of the Council, Councillor Dick Walsh, said of the meeting: "It was a very positive meeting - the needs of our islands are being considered at national government level.

"We are working to bring focus to the particular challenges of Argyll's islands

"Bute is the first island the minister has visited to gather information to help develop the government's island prospectus, which is very pleasing for us.

"This is good news - any change in legislation at national level will reflect the needs of Argyll's islands."

The task force has considered a number of overarching issues facing our islands that require early action including: digital connectivity; economic development; local responsibility for local resources; marketing and promotion; development of

community renewables projects; healthcare provision; grid connection; transport links and access to public services

These broad general themes have formed a benchmark from which the council is developing an issues framework to inform future discussions.

These discussions will look to drill down in to the issues, identifying concerns for our islands as a whole, as well as particular issues for individual islands.

Chair of the task force, Bute-based Councillor Len Scoullar, said: “The key to developing a successful future for our islands is not just to understand what the problems are but to have a full appreciation of what is driving these particular problems

“Population decline is an issue across Argyll and Bute, both on the mainland and on the islands and arresting that decline is the key focus of our Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), which seeks to grow our population through economic success. In these coming months we will be looking to ‘island proof’ the SOA and focus on the attractions of our islands.”

The task force will be working with key partners such the Scottish Islands Federation (SIF), NHS Highland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to explore the key issues affecting our island communities as well as working to establish relationships with Highland and North Ayrshire councils, who also have islands within their council areas.

The local authority is already taking action to benefit our islands through the SOA key outcomes such as the provision of superfast broadband, increasing mobile phone coverage, developing links between different community projects, improving local peoples’ skills, the provision of affordable housing, regeneration initiatives such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative in Rothesay, improvements to airports and ferry terminals and supporting the SMILEGOV initiative.

Notes to editors

Members of the task force are:

- Cllr Len Scoullar (Chair)
- Cllr Robin Currie
- Cllr Mary Jean Devon
- Cllr Anne Horn
- Cllr Duncan MacIntyre
- Cllr Robert E MacIntyre
- Cllr Isobel Strong

In 2011, 17.1% of Argyll and Bute’s total population (15,105) were usually resident on islands. This compares to a figure of 17.4% in 2011 (15,889). The island population fell by over 5% in this period.

Over the same period Scotland's total island population increased by 4%.
According to the 2011 census there are 23 inhabited islands in Argyll and Bute.

Documents

- [Derek Mackay visit - courtesy of The Buteman.jpg](#)

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