

**Short Life Working Group – Our Islands Our Future – Change to name and update on progress**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council at its meeting on 23 January 2014 agreed to the setting up a short life working group – Our Islands Our Future to develop its own islands initiative including a position statement for our islands outlining the key areas for support.
- 1.2 This paper seeks agreement from the Council for a change to the name of this short life working group, to update the Council on the work undertaken to date and to seek approval of the proposed priorities and actions.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Members agree to the following:
- That the name of the short life working group be changed to the Argyll Islands Task Force Short Life Working Group.
  - That Members agree to the proposed priorities and actions as contained in this report.

**3.0 DETAIL**

- 3.1 The short life working group has met on two separate occasions to discuss the issues affecting the Argyll islands. These discussions have been centred around the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and how we can assist our islands to ensure that over the next 10 years we deliver on the overall objective which is **“Argyll and Bute’s economic success is built on a growing population”**.
- 3.2 Work has been undertaken to analyse and better understand what is happening on each of our islands and what the key issues and challenges are. Whilst the Argyll and Bute’s island population fell by 5% over the period 2001 to 2011 the patterns of population change vary between and within islands. In regard to the variations in population trends, 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. 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.

- 3.3 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%). On the other hand Mull, Argyll and Bute's third largest island by population, has shown an increase of 133 people (+5%).
- 3.4 All islands are showing an ageing population. However there is a recognition that further work is needed to differentiate between islands to show the proportion of ageing in one island relative to the other. (See Table 1 & 2 attached)
- 3.5 The work to date has allowed the Group to examine in more detail the issues and threats to the future success of the islands. There are a range of social and community challenges but by far the most significant challenge facing the islands relates to the economy, connectivity and population. Unless these issues are addressed the scope and capacity to address some of the other challenges facing Argyll islands will be greatly reduced.
- 3.5 To inform the work of the Group an analysis has been undertaken of the information gathered from the SOA consultation events which took place on five islands: Bute; Islay; Colonsay; Mull; Tiree and key issues identified. These have been included in Table 3 attached. In addition information from the Ferries Review, Argyll Air Services Review and PSO consultations are also excellent sources of baseline information. It should be noted that comparable information will need to be gathered and checked for those islands that were not directly part of the SOA consultation.
- 3.6 From initial work undertaken a number of overarching issues have been identified as being common to all our islands. These are as follows:
- Climate change impacts
  - Digital connectivity (mobile phone and broadband)
  - Economic Activities
  - Governance Issues
  - Healthcare provision
  - Island Culture – language, history and natural resource
  - Island specific skills and training
  - Local responsibility for local resources
  - Marketing and promotion – highlighting successes and opportunities
  - Public services
  - Secure and adequate electricity connections
  - Transport connectivity (integration between ferry, bus train and plane)
  - Ferry services that are fit for purpose, support the needs of the islands and are reliable - mainland to island as well as island to island
  - Transport infrastructure and costs of travel and fuel
  - Agriculture/crofting –local food production and added value – auction marts, slaughter facilities etc

3.4 The next step has been the identification of key actions, short, medium and long term that will need to be taken forward if these issues facing our islands are to be addressed.

3.5 The short term and medium term actions are as follows:

- Further analysis of the population census data to determine the demographics for each island.
- Gather further information relating to those islands that were not directly part of the SOA consultation
- Meet with Highland Council and North Ayrshire to ascertain if there is an appetite to work collaboratively on areas of common interest.
- Give further consideration to the “island proofing” of the SOA and all new polices and legislation (EU, UK and SG) coming forward that have a relevance to the Argyll islands. Consider the development of a template to inform the “island proofing”.
- Invite the Leader of Western Isles Council to a future meeting of the Group.
- Take part in the Smilegov Sustainable Energy Action Planning for Scottish Islands project and to work with Scottish Islands Federation and other partners including Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council.
- Maintain a watching brief in regard to the Three Islands Partnership.
- Maintain a watching brief in regard to new legislation and policy and future EU funding that may have an impact on Argyll islands.
- Develop a vision statement for Argyll Islands.
- Meet with Minister for Local Government and Planning.
- Work with and support island communities including Tiree, Kerrera and Iona.

3.6 The long term actions are;

- Lobby for changes to issues covering RET, Ferry services, funding, policy and legislation, infrastructure investment, the development and management of island resources including renewable energy, agriculture, fisheries and the Crown Estate.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

4.2 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, is providing a good baseline to identify the key issues affecting Argyll islands. The review of this information by the Group has assisted in the identification of the key issues affecting our islands and has in turn informed the actions and timetable detailed in this report. Once the work has been fully completed this will provide a strong basis from which to hold discussions with and lobby Scottish and UK governments.

## **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 finalising the analysis work and in taking forward the key actions identified.  |
| 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