

Economic Summit – Addressing our Population Challenge

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership hosted an Economic Summit at the Queens Hall, Dunoon on the 29th of October 2014. The Summit included a number of distinguished speakers that helped to identify the issues we collectively face in growing the local economy and addressing our population challenges. In addition to the speeches there were a number of question and answer sessions led by the Summit Chair Mark Stephen that dealt with topics such as our tourism offer, the need to retain and attract young people to live in our communities, the impacts and potential benefits of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), transport and digital connectivity and the need for housing to meet our needs.
- 1.2 The Summit attracted nearly 200 delegates drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors who in addition to hearing the speakers on the day also took advantage of the networking opportunities during the day. An Expo consisting of 15 stalls from the Council and our community planning partners was also a key feature of the event which helped to showcase current work streams. Catering was also provided by Food from Argyll that helped showcase the outstanding food products from Argyll that are enjoyed all over the world.
- 1.3 A number of key messages were heard on the day with the main announcement being made by Depute Leader of the council Ellen Morton with regard to the establishment of the Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum (ABSEF). These key messages have triggered a number of next steps and key actions that have been identified in the body of the report for Members to amend if required and subsequently approve.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To note the contents of this report, including the key messages of the summit, and move forward with the identified next steps and key actions identified in **Table 1.2** of this report to address the Summit's key messages in paragraph 4.1 including the implementation of the Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum (ABSEF).

Feedback on Economic Summit – Addressing our Population Challenge

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report reports back the main points that arose during the Community Planning Partnership Economic Summit that was held on the 29th of October in the Queens hall, Dunoon. The event was attended by nearly 200 delegates drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors who heard a range of distinguished speakers and contributors to the debate including the Secretary of State for Scotland, Alistair Carmichael and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney, MSP, who was our key note speaker. The main focus of the Summit demonstrated what has already been achieved in Argyll and Bute, what was being planned and the need for genuine partnership working to tackle the issues we face and deliver sustainable economic growth for Argyll and Bute. The report goes on to identify the next steps and key actions arising out of the Summit.

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4.0 DETAILS

4.1 Key messages

- Focus on working together to deliver our key economic priorities.
- Build on our strengths and opportunities through better promotion and marketing of our area both internally and externally.
- Establish a specific rural policy focus with detailed action plans for different areas of Argyll and Bute.
- Need for a rural growth fund to allow rural areas of Scotland to better compete with our cities and better realise development/economic opportunities.
- Establish the Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum (ABSEF) to help guide our strategic direction with the economy and addressing our population challenges.

- Main issues of concern are transport and digital connectivity, building housing to meet our needs, creation of additional employment opportunities including better paid jobs, better communication with businesses, facilitating community led regeneration and the further development of genuine partnership working.

4.2 The Summit consisted of a series of speeches and discussions that highlighted the issues we face, what we have done to address them, what is planned to tackle the challenges we face and what needs to be done to deliver economic growth and address our population challenges in terms of a falling and ageing population. A summary of the main points raised during the summit is detailed in Table 1.1.

4.3 The Summit also contained an expo with 15 stalls that showcased work that Council and our Community Planning Partners are collectively doing to help stimulate the economy and make Argyll and Bute a better place to work, invest, visit and live in. The expo helped facilitate networking between all the delegates at break out periods and another important feature of the event was the catering provided from Food from Argyll that helped draw attention to the outstanding food products that are currently available in Argyll and Bute and sent to many parts of the world.

Table 1.1

Name of person presenting	Title of presentation	Key points
Dick Walsh, Leader of Argyll and Bute Council	Overview/Argyll and Bute Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current population projections highlight risks, especially with population size impacting on the distribution of grant from Scottish Government under the current model. • There are many examples of investment by the council including improving schools, housing and transport links. • Need a rural perspective on national issues, perhaps the creation of a rural growth fund from the Government or civil servant jobs created in Argyll and Bute.
Paul Connelly, Vice Chair of Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership	Overview/Argyll and Bute Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOA was created in partnership and with engagement across Argyll and Bute. • Many examples of good partnership working to build on. • Although population change has been experienced differently across Argyll and Bute there is consensus in key priorities for improving the economy and growing the population, these are reflected in 6 SOA outcomes.
Dr Tracy	Doing Business in Argyll and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to invest, need to build on all

Shimmiel SAMS	Bute	<p>strengths in Argyll and Bute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more investment on transport connectivity, housing and digital.
Amanda Brown, Scottish Food and Drink	Doing Business in Argyll and Bute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build and grow high quality products. • Year of Food and Drink in 2015 is a key opportunity for Argyll and Bute.
James Sprint, Bute Fabrics	Doing Business in Argyll and Bute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of his business a key strength in the market place. • To grow businesses need cash, and cash reduces when businesses grow. • Highlighted the benefits of procuring local services on Bute for the economy of the island even though this is often at extra cost.
Campbell Shirlaw, Loch Fyne Oysters	Doing Business in Argyll and Bute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector needs to understand local business better and communicate more regularly. • Business need to have conversations and integrate more with the local community to learn how to improve. • Housing is absolutely essential. • Need good mobile reception. • Freight costs in Scotland need to be addressed. • Need true partnership with community and government.
Alex Paterson, Chief Executive, HIE	Growth Opportunities/ Regional Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build on existing business and realise new opportunities. • Need graduate opportunities for “reluctant leavers”. • Community Development/ grassroots growth is vitally important. • Better is measured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More high value jobs ○ Broadband take up rates ○ Travel times between key/main settlements • Ideas are needed and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Oban as a university town ○ Do more with broadband (in health, education, communication) ○ Consider changing established vehicular routes and potentially create a new east/ west route across Argyll from Dunoon to Lochgilphead. • Need to take a holistic approach.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better profiling and promotion for Argyll and Bute. • Committed more senior staff resources to Argyll and Bute HIE.
Linda Hanna, Managing Director Strategy and Economics	Scottish Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scotland's success depends on the greater sum of the parts. • Need to identify specific areas in Argyll and Bute to focus on and build on the area's strengths.
Dr Mike Cantlay, Chairman VisitScotland	Tourism Growth in Argyll and Bute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build on the momentum from 2014 tourism "high point" through events such as the commonwealth games. • 2015 is Year of Food and Drink which opens up opportunities for Argyll and Bute. • Need to encourage developers to come and invest on identified sites (through development plan and supporting services) • Need to better understand our visitor economy. • Need to make tourism everyone's business in Argyll and Bute and a positive experience for communities.
Calum Ross, Vice Chair Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative Ltd		
Alistair Carmichael, Secretary of State for Scotland		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Carmichael called the event a "magnificent conversation." • Would like to pick up momentum of the day and work with Argyll and Bute to deliver economic prosperity. • Called for the Council to contribute to the Smith Commission on additional devolution powers that could benefit the Council including our island communities. • Should encourage young people to reach their potential and attend out of area education facilities if best for that young person. Key is attracting back. • Population growth is essential for economic opportunities.
Dr Jane Atterton, Manager and Policy Researcher, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	Academic Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting statistical analysis highlighting, although with a cautionary note, that the vulnerable/ most deprived populations are prevalent in the south west of Scotland. • Dunoon and Campbeltown are two of the most vulnerable/ deprived towns in Scotland based on 4 indicators.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key message Rural Scotland is different with a high level of self-employed that needs a specific policy response. • Challenges of fuel poverty, where statistics show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 in 3 older people (over 65) in Argyll and Bute suffer fuel poverty. ○ 1 in 4 young people suffer fuel poverty.
Young person's panel	Chaired by Mark Stephen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life with strong family connections. • Good quality of life for those seeking specialist careers. • Low wages is a significant issue • Difficult to access affordable housing of the type needed by young people. • Questions over the sustainability of schools important factor in deciding whether to live there.
Ellen Morton, Depute Leader Argyll and Bute Council	Introducing Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to make most of finite resources • Emphasised the need for partners to work together in a coordinated and focused way that makes things happen In Argyll and Bute with positive assistance from both the UK and Scottish Governments. • Announced the provision of a dedicated promotion and marketing budget to highlight compelling aspects of economic opportunity within Argyll and Bute. • Main announcement of the day to establish Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum (ABSEF) which will feed in to the CPP and inform where to prioritise.
John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed the discussion today • Expressed caution in using population projections as these can often be wrong. • Focus should be on economic opportunities. • Referendum has left aspiration of individual communities being more in the driving seat and this needs to be followed through. • Removal of ring fencing gives local authorities flexibility to spend on their

		<p>priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each area of Argyll and Bute will require a tailored plan to boost the local economy. • Community Planning Partnerships are now stronger and more focussed on delivery. • SOAs are making progress and Audit Commission is publishing a report on progress this year.
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5.1 Next Steps and key Actions

5.2 Taking account of the key messages from the Economic Summit there is a need now to move quickly forward with the next steps and key actions.

Table 1.2

Next Steps and Key Actions
Continue to implement the agreed key outcomes of the Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement and cross reference its action plan with the key messages coming out of the Economic Summit
Write to the Smith Commission and express the views of the Council and our island communities as per the request called for by the secretary of State for Scotland at the summit. (already been implemented)
Publish the speeches and key messages of the Economic Summit and place the edited video of the day on Argyll and Bute Council's web site.
Establish an officer working group to take forward ABSEF with a first meeting scheduled in January 2015 with regular updates to the Leader of the Council and the Depute Leader.
Identify a promotion and marketing budget/resource to highlight current successes, our compelling economic assets and further economic/investment opportunities within Argyll and Bute
To continue to maximise external funding opportunities for Argyll and Bute provided targeted funds help address the identified key outcomes of the Single Outcome Agreement

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The Summit was a highly successful event that attracted nearly 200 delegates drawn from a the public, private and voluntary sectors that helped identify a number of key messages that now require actions to be taken forward through genuine partnership working. The first speaker of the Summit was Council Leader Dick Walsh who highlighted the issues we were collectively facing and the investment the Council and our partners were already making. Councillor Walsh also highlighted a number of opportunities that could assist with Argyll and Bute's economic growth including the establishment of a rural growth fund and relocating civil servant jobs to Argyll and Bute. Other speakers highlighted a number of issues from their own perspective with the main announcement of the day coming from Councillor Ellen Morton, Depute Leader of the council, who introduced the Argyll

and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum (ABSEF). ABSEF aims to give a strategic direction to driving forward economic growth and work will now commence in identifying initial Board members to help identify the specific remit of the forum. The Depute Leader Councillor Morton also emphasised the need for partners to work together in a coordinated fashion that makes things happen In Argyll and Bute with positive assistance from both the UK and Scottish Governments. It is intended that subject to Member agreement the listed next steps and key actions be taken forward to help implement the key messages of the summit.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1	Policy	This report supports the outcomes of the Single Outcome Agreement
6.2	Financial	None directly arising from this report
6.3	Legal	None
6.4	HR	None directly arising from this report
6.5	Equalities	None
6.6	Risk	There is a need to address the need to grow our economy and help address our population challenge and this remains a clearly identified risk for the Council
6.7	Customer Services	None

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

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