

**LATEST UPDATE ON THE SETTLEMENT PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER
ACTIONS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee on the work of the Settlement Project Support Officer since the 31st October 2022. The paper details key findings from community engagement visits across the Repopulation Zones, initiatives introduced by the Settlement Project Support Officer to encourage active relocation, and the proposed actions for the Argyll and Bute settlement project going forward.
- 1.2 To address population retention and growth challenges, the Settlement Project was developed during discussions in the COHI Working Group, with input from the Scottish Government's Population Team. A Settlement Project Support Officer was employed part funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and started with the Economic Growth Team on the 3rd May 2022. After a short period, the post holder resigned. A new Settlement Project Support Officer was appointed and started on 31st October 2022. Initially, the post was funded for 12 months. However, the council can now support the Settlement Project Support Officer until December 2024 following funding from the Scottish Government Islands Team.
- 1.3 The overall aim of the Settlement Project Support Officer is to work with the four Repopulation Zone communities in Argyll and Bute which were agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 14th October 2021. These include the Isles of Coll and Tiree, the Isle of Bute, and the Kintyre and Rosneath peninsulas. The Settlement Project Support Officer aims to work with these communities to support active relocation as well as gather local knowledge and insight on the challenges individuals' face remaining in, and relocating to the Repopulation Zones in Argyll and Bute. The gathered evidence on the barriers to population retention and recruitment across the Repopulation Zones will provide a strong evidence base to enable public agencies, service providers, and communities to address these challenges.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee members are asked to:

- Note the content of this paper and the updates provided.
- Endorse the work undertaken to date by the Settlement Project as outlined in **Table 2**.
- Agree on the proposed Settlement actions going forward as outlined in **Table 3**.
- Note that a further report regarding progress on actions will be reported to a future meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 Between 2018 and 2028, the total population of Argyll and Bute is projected to decrease by -5.9%, from 86,260 to 81,197. A significant proportion of this decline will be comprised of economically active individuals (aged 16-64).
- 3.2 The National Records of Scotland (NRS) Sub-National Population Projections suggest that across the whole of Argyll and Bute, the age group 75+ will see the largest percentage increase (+23.3%), whereas the 0-15 age group will see the greatest decrease (-17.6%).
- 3.3 Looking specifically at the Repopulation Zones, using the NRS mid-year Small Area Population Estimates (2011 Data Zone based), from 2017 to 2021, Bute is estimated to have experienced a -2.0% decrease in total population, the Kintyre Peninsula has experienced a -1.7% decrease, and Coll and Tiree combined have experienced a -0.1% decrease. The total population of the Rosneath Peninsula is estimated to have increased by +3.0%.
- 3.4 Furthermore, looking at the age range 16-64, which gives an indication of those who are economically active, the NRS mid-year Small Area Population Estimates (2011 Data Zone based) suggest that from 2017 to 2021 on Bute there has been a -5.8% decrease in those aged 16-64, on Coll and Tiree combined there has been a -3.7% decrease, and across the Kintyre Peninsula there has been a -1.5% decrease. Across the Rosneath peninsula, there has been a +1.3% increase in those ages 16-64. **Appendix 1** gives a detailed overview of population projections across Argyll and Bute. The 2022 census outputs are scheduled to be released in 2024, following this all population data will be updated accordingly.
- 3.5 With demographic projections across Bute, the Kintyre Peninsula, and Coll and Tiree indicating a declining working-age population, there is a need to address these challenges through a multi-agency approach.
- 3.6 The current Argyll and Bute Settlement Project Support Officer continues to work closely with the Settlement Officers in the Western Isles and Northwest Highland, as well as colleagues from Argyll and Bute Council, HIE, and the Scottish Government Islands Team. Working in collaboration to recognise the place-based barriers to population retention and attraction and support measures to address population decline.

Settlement Interventions: Understanding Population Retention

- 3.7 Initial Settlement work focused on conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing data and developing a structured plan to ensure data was reflective of the barriers to settlement in each Repopulation Zone.
- 3.8 Since November 2022, 20 online interviews have been conducted with Community Councils, Development Trusts, businesses, relocated residents, and key community organisations. All interview data has been analysed and coded accordingly.
- 3.9 Furthermore, community engagement visits have been completed in all Repopulation Zones. Meeting with local development officers from Argyll and Bute Council, local Development Trusts, community groups, residents, local organisations, and key businesses to gain valuable place-based insights into the barriers to population retention and recruitment.
- 3.10 There are several factors impacting the retention and recruitment of populations across the Repopulation Zones. Key barriers include the affordability and availability of housing, transport connectivity, reliable digital provisions, employment opportunities, adequate education services, and suitable childcare. However, as highlighted below, there are place-based nuances across all of the Repopulation Zones. **Table 1** provides a brief summary of the central discussion points raised during community engagement visits.

Table 1: Barriers to Settlement from Community Engagement Visits				
Tiree	Coll	Bute	Kintyre	Rosneath
<p>The availability and affordability of housing is the number one challenge for population retention/growth. 46% of housing is not occupied all year round (TCDT) Connecting fibre directly to properties restricts development. Ferry booking system for residents impacts retention. Employment opportunities are underpinned by housing availability. Further education requires relocation. No pre-3 childcare.</p>	<p>Lack of housing to support job opportunities. 35% of housing is either second homes/ STL (Coll CC). 95% of STL/ holiday homes are owned off-island (Coll CC). Planning is challenging for development. All properties out with Arinagour are on a private water supply. Reliability of ferry, block booking system, and cost of freight impacts retention. Access to dentist. Provision of home carers with ageing population will become a challenge. Secondary education provisions lead to frequent relocation.</p>	<p>The affordability and availability of housing. Restricted elderly/ adapted housing. Need for family homes. The reliability of the ferry is impacting the retention of businesses and residents. Limited on-island support for businesses. Business premises for SMEs. Seasonality of employment/ underemployment. Limited access to on-island training/ education/ skills development. The quality of secondary education. Limited wrap-around childcare.</p>	<p>Limited affordable housing is a significant challenge for recruiting essential workers- HSCP/ Education. High proportion of STL/ vacant homes. Significant number of individuals relocating in retirement, driving up property prices. Delays in planning. Unreliable flight, the ferry is a relief vessel that operates seasonally- subsequent economic impact on businesses. Limited employment opportunities/ loss of industry. Lack of permanent contracts. Seasonality of employment. Limited subject choice in schools. Poor wraparound childcare/ maintenance of children's facilities.</p>	<p>Building standards. Limited affordable housing for families. Fuel poverty. Existing housing is poorly connected. Limited Sunday service for transport. Ferry timetable doesn't allow commuting. Lack of SME business space. Access to the waterfront. Fibre connection directly to properties. Limited apprenticeships. Limited childcare provisions. Poorly maintained children's facilities.</p>

- 3.11 On the back of the community engagement discussions, a skills needs and demand matrix has been completed for all of the Repopulation Zones. The general themes across the Repopulation Zones include the seasonality of employment, limited tradespeople (specifically: building contractors, traditional skills, heat pumps, insulation fitting), supply shortages in education and health and social care staff, limited local training provisions for school leavers and limited access to childcare/ children’s facilities. See **Appendix 2** for community responses.
- 3.12 The release of the Argyll and Bute Repopulation Zone Survey from the 11th of April to the 11th of May 2023 sought to widen participation in the ongoing population research. The survey successfully gathered 411 resident opinions across the four Repopulation Zones. The survey has enabled a more detailed understanding of the place-based barriers and solutions to population retention and growth. Furthermore, the consultation has enabled an understanding of what initiatives would be welcomed by the four Repopulation Zones to support active relocation to these communities.
- 3.13 The place-based barriers to settlement identified for the four Repopulation Zones through the survey have been summarised in **Appendix 3**. The survey found that on both Tiree and Coll the greatest barrier to settlement was access to housing. On Bute and across the Kintyre Peninsula the greatest barrier to settlement was the lack of employment opportunities. Across the Rosneath Peninsula, it was adequate transport provisions.
- 3.14 The data gathered from the Repopulation Zone Survey will be shared fully with the Data Advisory Group by the Senior Economic Growth Officer who represents Economic Growth on this group following final reviews.

Settlement Interventions: Supporting Population Attraction

- 3.15 Working closely with several Argyll and Bute council teams, residents, and communities, the Settlement Project Support Officer has developed and supported the delivery of several new initiatives to encourage active relocation and highlight the benefits of living and working in Argyll and Bute. **Table 2** highlights the key actions and progress to date.

Table 2: Settlement Project Interventions to Date			
Initiative	Aim	Progress to date – 11th July 2023	Partnership Working
Settlement Webpage: Strategic Communications	The creation of a dedicated ‘Settlement Section’ on ABplace2b will provide a central resource to access relocation support, read FAQs, and hear from those who have made the move to Argyll and Bute.	Web updates are scheduled for August.	ABC Web Team/ ABC Communications Team. ABC Graphic Design
Settlement Flyer	To advertise the settlement support available.	The flyer has been developed and distributed amongst several organisations and individuals. The flyer will be incorporated into pending web updates.	ABC Communications Team

Table 2: Settlement Project Interventions to Date (continued)			
Initiative	Aim	Progress to date – 11th July 2023	Partnership Working
Settlement Welcome Pack	Welcome new residents to Argyll and Bute and signpost key community contacts and resources.	The welcome pack has been developed working alongside Settlement Officers in Uist and NW Highland. The pack is currently under review with relevant colleagues. Thereafter it will be passed to relevant teams for distribution.	Settlement Officers. ABC Graphic Designer.
Settlement Case studies	To hear from those who have made the move and highlight the benefits of living and working in Argyll and Bute.	To date, six case studies have been written. These will be incorporated into settlement web resources.	Relocated Residents. ABC website team ABC Communications Team. Business Gateway.
myjobscotland	To better highlight to potential applicants what Argyll and Bute has to offer, abplace2b weblinks have been incorporated. Argyll & Bute Council Jobs myjobscotland	The myjobscotland section specific to ABC has been updated.	ABC Communications Team
Supporting Active Relocation	Proactively respond to organisations and individuals who have relocated or considered relocating to Argyll and Bute.	To date, there have been seven relocation queries received. All queries have been responded to accordingly.	ABC Housing HR Teams.
Relocation Contact Sheets	Connect relocated residents with key community contacts and local service networks.	Comprehensive relocation contact resources have been compiled for all Resettlement Zones.	Economic Growth Team.
Graduate Podcast	To support talent attraction and highlight the benefits of working for ABC, a podcast was proposed with seven graduates working across a variety of services. This is intended to be displayed alongside case studies and settlement resources to encourage active relocation.	The podcast was recorded on the 5 th of April and has been released.	Argyll and Bute Council Chief Executive. Graduate officers working for ABC.

3.16 The actions outlined below in **Table 3** will be taken forward by the Settlement Project Support Officer.

Table 3: Potential Settlement Actions	
Focus Area	Potential Actions
Active Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and expand settlement case studies for the abplace2b website and enhance marketing provisions where appropriate.
Supporting Relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to respond to relocation queries. • Set up a relocation network connecting new and existing residents. • Work with the new Housing Improvement Officer to support individuals relocating to recently refurbished properties.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased energy support and signposting across Argyll and Bute. • Launch the 'make your second home your first home' campaign.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider current empty council-owned (non-residential) properties being used for remote working hubs or creative spaces (working with other council colleagues, as appropriate). • Engage with key employers across the Repopulation Zones to identify in detail the number and nature of recruitment issues they have encountered/ forecast.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with council colleagues to lobby for improved transport connectivity across Argyll and Bute.

3.17 **Appendix 3** and the actions contained in **Table 3** supports the findings of the recent Argyll and Bute Local Outcome Improvement Plan consultation that identified transport, housing, and community wealth building as key priorities for the residents of Argyll and Bute. In addition, the declaration of the housing emergency and the need to accelerate the number of affordable homes together with a number of other strategic interventions being taken forward by the council and our partners. This includes, for example, working with the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership on issues such as transport connectivity, skills, housing for key workers, and how to attract additional people into our region.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Available data from the NRS suggests that between 2018 and 2028, the total population of Argyll and Bute is projected to decrease by -5.9%. The age group 75+ is projected to see the largest percentage increase and the age group 0-15 is projected to see the greatest decrease.

4.2 Looking specifically at the Repopulation Zone communities, relying on NRS mid-year Small Area Population Estimates (2011 Data Zone based), the total populations across Tiree and Coll, Bute, and the Kintyre Peninsula have decreased. The total population of the Rosneath Peninsula has increased. In line with the Argyll and Bute projected

trends, Bute, Coll and Tiree, and the Kintyre Peninsula are all estimated to have seen a decline, while the Rosneath Peninsula is estimated to have had an increase in those aged 16-64 from 2017 to 2021.

- 4.3 Initial findings from community engagement sessions suggested that there are several factors impacting the retention and recruitment of populations across the Repopulation Zone areas. The Repopulation Zone survey further explored these factors and found that across both Tiree and Coll the greatest barrier to settlement according to residents was access to housing. The lack of employment opportunities was the greatest barrier to settlement on Bute and across the Kintyre Peninsula. Across the Rosneath Peninsula, it was adequate transport provisions.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy The overarching vision of Argyll and Bute Council's current Economic Strategy, 2019-23 is that Argyll and Bute's economic success is based on a growing population.
- 5.2 Financial Using funding previously agreed for a staffing resource in the Restart, Recovery and Renew: Delivering our Recovery Strategy and Action Plan paper at the Policy and Resources Committee, December 2021. From June 2023, the Settlement Project Support Officer post has been extended for 18 months, joint funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the Scottish Government.
- 5.3 Legal All appropriate legal implications will be taken into consideration.
- 5.4 HR Funding from the Scottish Government has allowed the Settlement Project Support Officer post to be extended to the end of December 2024.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in April 2018. The duty places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland, such as Argyll and Bute Council, to pay due regard to (actively consider) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions and how this has been implemented.
- 5.5.1 Equalities All activities will comply with all Equal Opportunities/Fairer Scotland Duty policies and obligations.
- 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty All project activities will comply with the Council's socio-economic duty.
- 5.5.3 Islands The activities of the Settlement Project Support Officer covers three islands; Tiree, Coll and Bute.

5.6 Climate Change None.

5.7 Risk None

5.8 Customer Service None.

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director responsible for Development and Economic Growth

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Argyll and Bute's Population Projections

Appendix 2: Repopulation Zone Skills/ Training Needs and Demands

Appendix 3: Place-Based Barriers to Settlement from Repopulation Zone Survey Findings Report

APPENDIX 1: ARGYLL AND BUTE'S POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Argyll and Bute
Projected population profile, 2018 and 2028

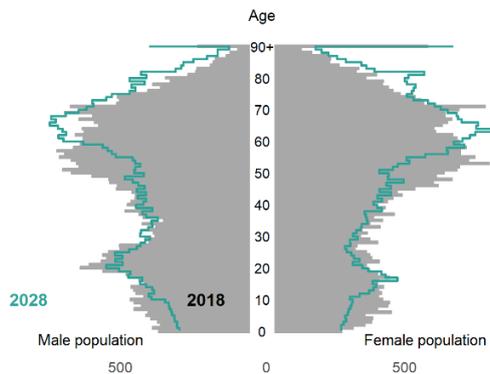


Figure 1: Argyll and Bute Projected Population 2018-28.

Between 2018 and 2028, the population of Argyll and Bute is projected to decrease from 86,260 to 81,197.

The average age of the population of Argyll and Bute is projected to increase.

Source: Sub-National Population Projections (2018-based), National Records of Scotland.

Argyll and Bute
Percentage change in projected population by age group, 2018 and 2028

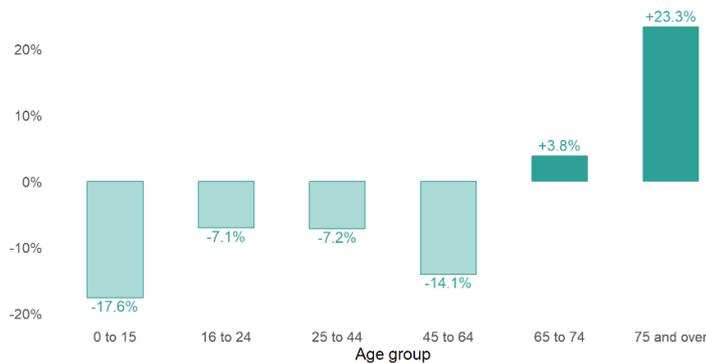


Figure 2: Argyll and Bute Percentage Change in Population by Age Group, 2018-28.

Between 2018 and 2028, the 0 to 15 age group is projected to see the largest percentage decrease (-17.6%) and the 75 and over age group is projected to see the largest percentage increase (+23.3%).

Source: Sub-National Population Projections (2018-based), National Records of Scotland.

Tiree and Coll
Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2017-2021

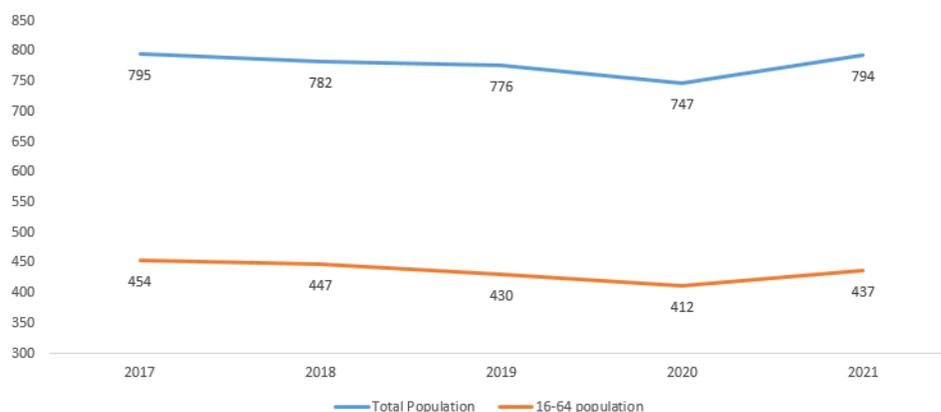


Figure 3: Tiree and Coll population estimates.

Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates (2017-2021)

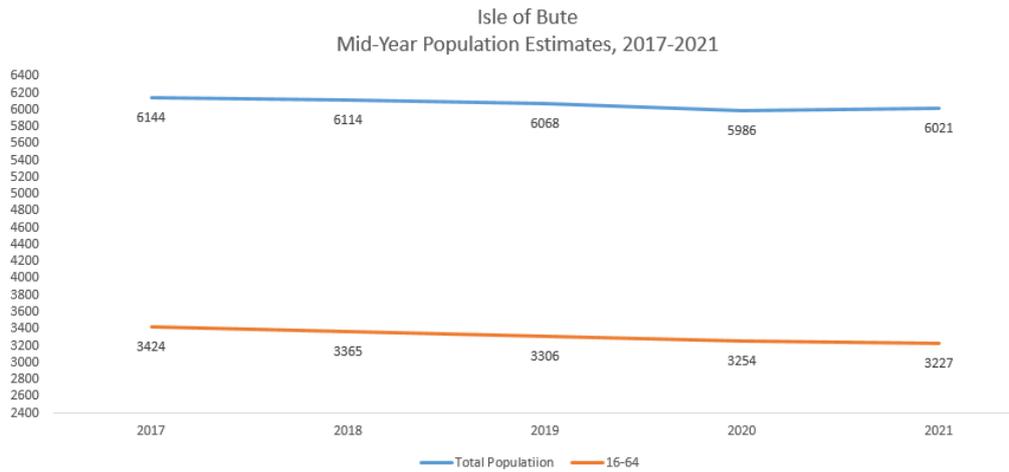


Figure 4: Isle of Bute population estimates.

Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates (2017-2021)

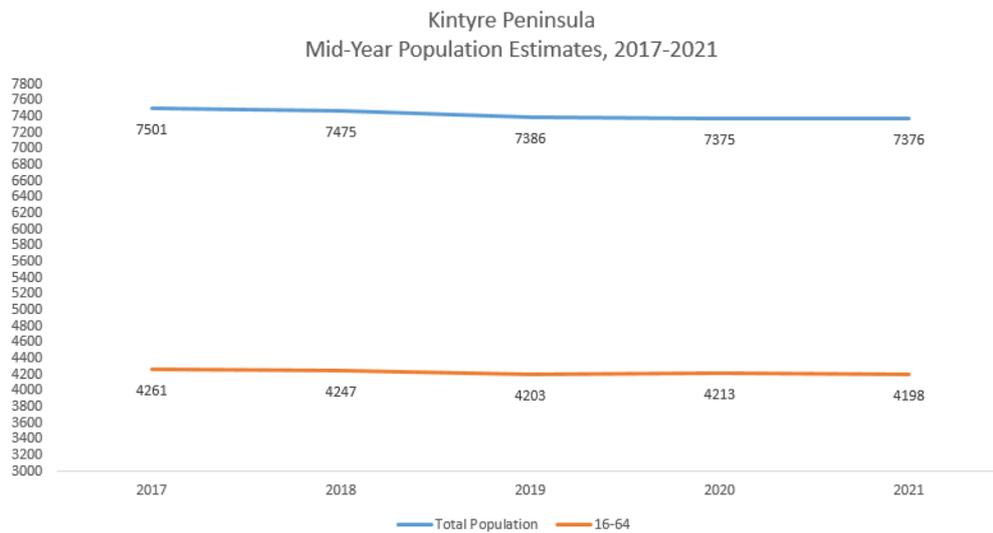


Figure 5: Kintyre Peninsula population estimates.

Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates (2017-2021)

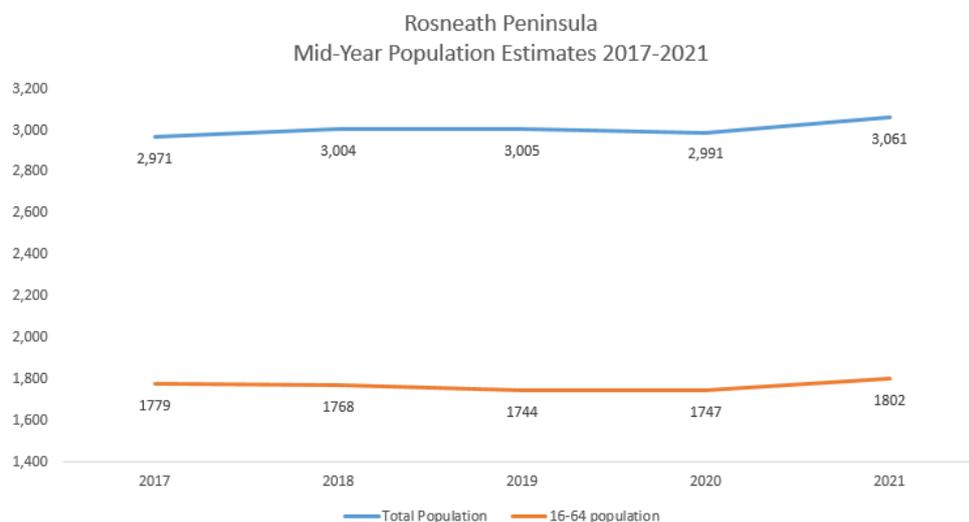


Figure 6: Rosneath Peninsula population estimates.

Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates (2017-2021)

APPENDIX 2: REPOPULATION ZONE SKILLS/TRAINING NEEDS AND DEMANDS

Bute	The Kintyre Peninsula	The Rosneath Peninsula	Tiree (T) & Coll (C)
<p>Skills/ Training Needs Bute is not a dynamic place for employment, with significant reliance on hospitality and tourism. <i>“During the winter tourism shuts down effectively”</i></p> <p>Local tradespeople shortage. Several businesses struggling to recruit apprentices. Concerns were raised regarding adequate geriatric care and childcare; specifically due to the pressures of an aging population and long pre-school waiting lists. Gendered underemployment: <i>“It is not that people are unwilling to work, it is more related to the limited childcare which is impacting particularly new families”.</i></p> <p>School Leaver Prospects Limited provisions for on-island apprenticeships. There are 6 garages on the islands, however, if a young individual wanted to train they would have to relocate to college. <i>“College model for rural areas doesn’t join up and doesn’t provide enough practical training”.</i></p> <p><i>“There is no provision on the island other than in-house. They could go to Dunoon to train, but it is already sending the message that if you want to learn you have to go off of the island”.</i></p> <p>Remote working Opportunities People can, and do work from home if they have stable internet provisions - wasn’t discussed in depth.</p>	<p>Skills/ Training Needs There is a need for building contractors/traditional building skills. Reducing the barriers to taking on an apprentice, without reducing the quality of the apprenticeship on offer was discussed.</p> <p>Loss of traditional businesses in the area: <i>“We’ve seen locally in Tarbert here we lost the fishmonger first of all because there was nobody suitably trained and qualified to actually become a fishmonger. And three weeks later, the butcher closed. Because the butcher had gotten to the end of his working life. He had been there for 40-odd years and there was nobody able to take on the butcher”</i></p> <p>They have lost the fishmonger, cheese factory, abattoir, and greengrocer. A significant number of people relocating are not working age population. The wind turbine factory shut down, many have now applied their skills elsewhere. The health and social care partnership and education services are struggling to recruit due to housing. In-person small business support. Childcare/ children’s activities: <i>“There are terrible wraparound childcare provisions. There are no formal arrangements, mainly people are pulling favours for each other”</i></p> <p>School Leaver Prospects Children have a restricted choice of subjects in secondary school. <i>“We have signed up to the fact our kids will leave home to go to university”.</i></p> <p><i>“I think we need to guide young people into trades rather than just guiding them into qualifications”</i></p>	<p>Skills/ Training Needs Working with the MOD to support the provision of local apprenticeships. There is a need for business units. There are limited rental spaces and no co-working spaces locally: <i>“at the moment you would be hard-pressed to find somewhere if you want to set up a business that you cannot run from home”</i> Limited employment options and loss of industry is a challenge: <i>“There are no major employers other than the MOD, there’s a couple of hotels, and the embroidery factory... there really aren’t many employers. A lot of people live here and work at Faslane and Coulport”.</i></p> <p>Childcare facilities and childcare: <i>“Not enough childcare pre and post-school hours and a lack of infrastructure means there are few opportunities for decent local clubs and there are no buildings suitable for kids’ activities”.</i></p> <p>Transport connectivity, specifically the ferry timings were a significant factor impacting talent retention.</p> <p>School Leaver Prospects <i>“I would say for young people generally it is quite difficult to get into training... apprentices go across the water to Greenock. It is quite a journey for young people to take”</i></p> <p>Remote working Opportunities Limited fibre directly to properties is a challenge for working from home.</p>	<p>Skills/ Training Needs There are apprenticeships and graduate options available, however, the uptake isn’t great due to housing. (T) There is no pre-3 childcare at all on the island. There are families relocating off the island as they cannot work and have a family. (T) Training in heat pumps. (T) Increased capacity in general trades. (T) Insulation fitting. (T) <i>“Contractors often come from the mainland, but the holiday homeowners are often living on the mainland and source the contracts, they do the work on the holiday home and leave the island and the locals suffer”.</i></p> <p>Gaelic language and culture. (T&C) Support for farmers. (C) No care facility. (C) Electrician/plumber are both near retirement age and there is no one to take on the businesses. (C) A number of vacancies, however housing challenges are preventing uptake. (C)</p> <p>School Leaver Prospects There is not a lack of informal apprenticeships and school leavers are snapped up straight away. (T) More opportunities are always welcomed, but the model needs to be specific. (T) There are limited career options for school leavers. Being self-employed provides opportunities. (C) Moving away to Oban for secondary education impacts youth retention. (C)</p> <p>Remote working Opportunities T&C are seeing an uptake in remote working. They need improved fibre connectivity.</p>

APPENDIX 3: PLACE-BASED BARRIERS TO SETTLEMENT FROM REPOPULATION ZONE SURVEY FINDINGS REPORT

Figure 1: "What are the barriers to remaining in your community?"

