

# Public Document Pack

## Argyll and Bute Council

Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal Agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry



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16 November 2023

## NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of **ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL** will be held **ON A HYBRID BASIS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS** on **THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2023** at **10:30 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry  
Executive Director

## BUSINESS

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

### 3. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

Argyll and Bute Council held on 28 September 2023

### 4. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

- \* (a) Policy and Resources Committee held on 12 October 2023 (Pages 15 - 22)

The above minutes are submitted to the Council for approval of any recommendations on the items which the Committee does not have delegated powers. These items are marked with an \*.

### 5. LEADER'S REPORT (Pages 23 - 34)

Report by Leader of the Council

### 6. POLICY LEADS REPORT (Pages 35 - 78)

Report by Policy Leads

### 7. WARD 1 SOUTH KINTYRE BY-ELECTION RESULT (Pages 79 - 80)

Report by Returning Officer

### 8. POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS (Pages 81 - 86)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

**9. DRAFT PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2024-25** (Pages 87 - 90)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

**10. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023/24** (Pages 91 - 114)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

**11. POLICY FOR EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF FOR NON-DOMESTIC RATES** (Pages 115 - 128)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Financial Services

**12. CHARGING OF DOUBLE COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES** (Pages 129 - 158)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Financial Services

**13. ROYAL NATIONAL MOD - OBAN FUNDING REQUEST** (Pages 159 - 162)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

**14. STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN (SHIP) 2024/25 TO 2028/29** (Pages 163 - 224)

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

**15. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13**

The UNCRC is an international treaty made up of 54 articles that aims to articulate the 'civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to', as well as the steps that governments must take to secure these rights.

The UK ratified the UNCRC in 1991, and legislation has been enacted by the Scottish Parliament which will see these rights enshrined in Scots Law.

The Council, as a body, who has responsibilities for children and young people should act consistently with the UNCRC, and as a forward thinking body, reaffirms its aspiration and responsibility to continue to try to 'Get It Right For Every Child' in all aspects of its business. It acknowledges that it is not only in Education that Children's Rights are important but that all parts of the Council business can impact on our children and young people and that they should be considered in all decision making processes.

Therefore, Council agrees to add 'The Rights of The Child' as a field to be completed to the Implications section at the end of all Council and Committee reports.

Moved by Councillor Forrest

Seconded by Councillor McFadzean

**16. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13**

It is almost a decade since Scotland's last appearance in golf's prestigious Ryder Cup tournament. This year, though, a young golfer from Oban gave the traditional home of golf an opportunity to be part of it and to celebrate again as he played his part in Team's Europe's Ryder Cup victory.

Robert MacIntyre is undoubtedly one of golf's most amazing young talents on an international level and is certainly one of the finest players that Scotland has seen in

many years. At the age of 27, his list of sporting achievements is considerable and inspirational. Despite his amazing success, his commitment and attachment to his home town of Oban remains as strong and enthusiastic as it was when he first started his golf career at Glencruitten Golf Club, where he is still a member.

He is a tremendous ambassador for Scotland and for Oban in particular, and the town is especially – and rightly - proud of its famous sporting son.

In recognition of his sporting success, and his commitment to his local community of Oban, Council is asked to consider awarding the Freedom of Argyll and Bute to Robert MacIntyre and, if so minded, to request that the Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support makes the necessary arrangements in this regard.

Moved by Councillor Jim Lynch

Seconded by Councillor Robin Currie

#### **17. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13**

Argyll and Bute Council, already home to refugees from across the world, calls on the UK Government to fully support a cease fire in Gaza and support the immediate establishment of a humanitarian corridor for the displaced and the distribution of essential supplies of food and life saving medication.

The people of Argyll and Bute will continue to support refugees in our communities in a caring, peaceful, just and fair society.

Proposed by Councillor Gordon Blair

Seconded by Councillor Mark Irvine

#### **EXEMPT REPORT FOR DECISION**

#### **E1 18. COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF ABSENCE (Pages 225 - 226)**

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

The Council will be asked to pass a resolution in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public for items of business with an "E" on the grounds that it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 7a to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The appropriate paragraph is:-

**E1 Paragraph 1** Information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee of, or a particular office-holder, former office-holder or applicant to become an office-holder under the authority.

## **Argyll and Bute Council**

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**MINUTES of MEETING of ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Maurice Corry (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Jan Brown	Councillor Tommy MacPherson
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess	Councillor Ian MacQuire
Councillor Garret Corner	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Robin Currie	Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Gary Mulvaney
Councillor Daniel Hampsey	Councillor Gemma Perfold
Councillor Graham Hardie	Councillor Dougie Philand
Councillor Fiona Howard	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Willie Hume	Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Mark Irvine	Councillor Peter Wallace
Councillor Andrew Kain	Councillor Andrew Vennard
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy	

**Attending:** Pippa Milne, Chief Executive  
 Douglas Hendry, Executive Director  
 Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director  
 Fiona Davies, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership  
 David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support  
 Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services  
 Jennifer Crocket, Head of Education – Life Long Learning and Support  
 David Gibson, Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Children, Families and Justice  
 Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth  
 Stuart McLean, Committee Manager  
 Morag Brown, Business Improvement Manager  
 Matt Mulderrig, Development Policy and Housing Manager  
 Martin Caldwell, Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee  
 Alan Morrison, Regulatory Services and Building Standards Manager  
 Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager

The Provost, on behalf of the Council, congratulated Oban golfer Robert MacIntyre on being the first Scot to make the European Ryder Cup Team since 2014. He advised that Mr MacIntyre was an exceptionally talented golfer who had done Oban and Argyll proud. He wished him well and all of the Team the best of luck in the Ryder Cup.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Julie McKenzie and Iain Shonny Paterson.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Reeni Kennedy Boyle declared a non-financial interest in relation to item 11 of the agenda (Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022-23) due to her occupation as General Manager of Fyne Futures which was a subsidiary of Fyne Homes and a delivery partner in the Inspiralba Social Enterprise Consortium for Bute and Cowal area No One Left Behind Programme. She advised as this was a report for noting she would remain in the meeting during the consideration of this item.

## 3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Argyll and Bute Council held on 29 June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

## 4. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

### (a) Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 August 2023

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 August 2023 were noted.

Arising from item 4 of these Minutes (Financial Reports Monitoring Pack – 30 June 2023) the Council approved -

1. the revenue virements over £0.200m during April to June 2023; and
2. the revenue virements over £0.200m outstanding from 2022-23 year as per paragraph 2.6.3 of the submitted report.

Arising from item 6 of these Minutes (Capital Investment Strategy 2023-2038) the Council approved the Council's new Capital Investment Strategy contained at Appendix A to the submitted report.

### (b) Community Services Committee held on 24 August 2023

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 24 August 2023 were noted.

Arising from item 9 of these Minutes (ASN Service Provision 2023), the Council agreed the recommendation by the Community Services Committee to -

1. approve virement of the phase 1 capital costs of £1,255,000 from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1,
2. approve virement of the phase 1, revenue costs of £495,560 as appropriate, up to £495,560 from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1, and
3. agree in principle the viring of revenue and capital funding within the Education Service, in accordance with the Council's Financial Security Regulations paragraphs 3.14 to 3.16, for phase 2 of the proposals, with the necessary report(s) being submitted to Council at the appropriate time and subject to the Council's overall financial position at that time.

(c) **Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee held on 31 August 2023**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee held on 31 August 2023 were noted.

Arising from item 9 of these Minutes (Provision of Floral Displays) the Council agreed the recommendation by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee that as implementation of these measures was estimated to require additional revenue funding of £7,500 within 2023-24, that this was funded from the unallocated General Fund and built into the budget outlook estimates for future years.

Councillor Tommy MacPherson joined the meeting during consideration of the following item of Business.

**5. LEADER'S REPORT**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the activities of the Council Leader, Councillor Robin Currie for the period 12 June to 8 September 2023. The report also included noted on activities relating to the Leader's Policy Lead portfolio of Strategic Development.

**Decision**

The Council –

1. noted the content of the report; and
2. noted that any reports, briefings or copy correspondence referred to in the report could be requested as appropriate through the Leadership Support Manager, noting that some confidential reports provided by external organisations such as COSLA may be restricted.

(Reference: Report by Leader of the Council dated 8 September 2023, submitted)

Councillor Kieron Green joined the meeting during consideration of the following item of Business.

**6. POLICY LEADS REPORT**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. The report aimed to provide updates from all Policy Leads to ensure that all members were informed, up to date and able to engage with current issues.

**Decision**

The Council noted the content of the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Policy Lead Councillors dated 8 September 2023, submitted)

## **7. POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Political Composition of the Council and the various arrangements which would be required following the resignation of Councillor Donald Kelly as a Councillor for Ward 1, South Kintyre. The Council was invited to note the Political Composition of the Council as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report; to give consideration to the current vacancies on Committees and other organisations; and to note that arrangements were being put in place for a by-election in Ward 1, South Kintyre.

### **Decision**

The Council –

1. noted the updated Political Composition of the Council as set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
2. noted the current vacancies on committees and other organisations, noting that area-based appointments would be dealt with at the appropriate time by the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Area Committee;
3. noted that arrangements are being put in place for a by-election in Ward 1, South Kintyre; and
4. agreed to delay filling the vacancies on the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee and A83 Task Force Group until the November Council meeting and following the by-election in Ward 1, South Kintyre.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 5 September 2023, submitted)

## **8. COUNCIL CONSTITUTION REVIEW 2023**

The Council gave consideration to a report proposing changes to the Council Constitution addressing issues arising since the last review of the Constitution in September 2022.

### **Decision**

The Council agreed the adjustments to the Council Constitution as follows –

1. to update Part A of the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
2. to amend Part C, Scheme of Delegations as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
3. To amend Part D, Financial and Security Regulations, to incorporate changes as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
4. to note the updated Procurement Manual as previously agreed by Council in September 2022 had been inserted at Part E, Contract Standing Orders and as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;



5. to amend Part F, Ethical Framework as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
6. to amend Part G, Scheme of Approved Duties as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report subject to a further amendment to paragraph 4 under “Qualifications” whereby rather than requiring approval of the full Council, the matter would be considered by the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Executive.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 21 August 2023, submitted)

## **9. AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the support in place to assist those families who supported British Forces while they were in Afghanistan.

### **Decision**

The Council agreed the continuing support for Afghan relocation and the provision of integration support for families through the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Refugees and Asylum Seekers dated 13 September 2023, submitted)

## **10. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER REPORT 2022/23**

The Council gave consideration to the Chief Social Work Officer report for the financial year 2022/23.

### **Decision**

The Council –

1. noted the key activities outline in the Chief Social Work Officer Report 2022/2023;
2. commended the Chief Social Work Officer on the preparation of the report;
3. acknowledged the continued commitment of social work and social care staff in the delivery of services; and
4. noted that the Report would be submitted to the Office of the Child Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government.

(Reference: Report by Chief Social Work Officer dated 21 August 2023, submitted)

The Provost ruled, and the Council, agreed to take a 15 minute comfort break at this point.

The meeting re-convened at 12.05pm.

The Provost ruled, and the Council agreed, to re-order the items of Business on the agenda and to consider item 12 of the agenda (Housing Annual Assurance Statement 2023) before item 11 of the agenda (Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022-23).

#### **11. HOUSING ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2023**

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Housing Annual Assurance Statement for 2023 which was a requirement by the Scottish Housing Regulator introduced in 2019.

##### **Decision**

The Council approved the Annual Assurance Statement contained at Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 28 September 2023, submitted)

#### **12. ARGYLL AND BUTE CHILD POVERTY ACTION PLAN REVIEW 2022-23**

The Council gave consideration to a report showing the work taking place across Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty and support families. The report sought to identify the particular challenges and advantages of the geography, demography and economic environment of Argyll and Bute and highlighted many successes and organisations and people dedicated to ensuring that children in Argyll and Bute did not grow up in poverty.

##### **Decision**

The Council noted and endorsed the report which had been approved by the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group.

(Reference: Report by Chief Social Work Officer dated 28 September 2023, submitted)

#### **13. HOMEARGYLL COMMON ALLOCATION POLICY - PROPOSED CHANGES**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing detail on proposed changes to the HOMEArgyll lettings policy which would assist with a more streamlined approach to providing permanent accommodation for homeless households.

##### **Decision**

The Council approved –

1. the following HOMEArgyll proposed policy changes:-

- Reduce the number of permanent offers of housing from two to one for households who have the maximum 200 point urgent housing need award.
- If the HOMEArgyll partners identify a particular pressure in the housing market the policy will address this by creating flexibility in the allocations process to assist to alleviate the identified pressure. This will only apply if the identified pressure in the

housing market affects households with the maximum 200-point award under the policy.

2. that a formal Council request be put to the HOMEArgyll Registered Social Landlords to increase the percentage of allocations to statutory homeless households from 50% to 60% while there are households in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated August 2023, submitted)

#### **14. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT REPORTER'S FINDINGS ON THE ARGYLL AND BUTE PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2: NEXT STEPS**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on progress with the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) process and an outline of the next steps in the statutory adoption process; and which sought approval to progress these steps with a view to Local Development Plan 2 being fully adopted by November 2023.

##### **Decision**

The Council –

1. noted and endorse the content of the submitted report;
2. agreed the recommendations contained within the Scottish Ministers Reporter's Examination Report;
3. agreed to the submission of the revised Local Development Plan 2 to the Scottish Ministers stating intent to adopt as modified in accordance with the recommendations in the Report of Examination, taking into account any consequential amendments and non-notifiable modifications. The Plan would be Adopted within 28 days of submission unless otherwise directed by the Scottish Ministers; and
4. delegated authority to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to move this matter forward on behalf of the Council, including all editorial and statutory requirements.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 23 August 2023, submitted)

#### **15. PILOT OUTCOMES FOR REGISTRAR LED FUNERAL SERVICES IN KINTYRE**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the outcomes of a pilot for civil funeral services with local undertakers in the Kintyre area that Council had approved in September 2022.

##### **Decision**

The Council approved -

1. the permanent addition of civil funeral services to the portfolio of registration services in the Kintyre registration district, in co-operation with local undertakers; noting that roll out to further districts in the future would require separate approval; and

2. that the council continues to record funeral service fees in the annual budget pack and subject to the inflationary increases approved by Council.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services dated August 2023, submitted)

#### **16. AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's annual overview of the Committee's activity during the financial year 2022/23 and a summary of key developments since the commencement of 2023/24. The report set out how the Committee had fulfilled its remit and provided assurances to the Council.

##### **Decision**

The Council endorsed the Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.

(Reference: Report by Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee dated 28 September 2023, submitted)

#### **17. SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT - CONSULTATIONS**

The Council gave consideration to a recommendation from the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 June 2023 in relation to the scrutiny review of public consultations. The Council was invited to consider and note the report by the Chair of Consultations Scrutiny Panel.

##### **Decision**

The Council agreed to note the Consultation Scrutiny Review report as per the recommendation by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 June 2023.

(Reference: Extract of Minute of Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 June 2023 and Consultation Scrutiny Report dated April 2023, submitted)

#### **18. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982 - SHORT-TERM LETS**

##### **(a) Recommendation from the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 23 August 2023**

The Council gave consideration to a recommendation from the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 23 August 2023 in relation to proposed amendments to the Council's Short Term Lets Policy Hearing Procedure.

##### **Decision**

The Council approved the proposed revisions to Argyll and Bute Council's Short-term Lets Policy Hearing Procedure as recommended by the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee at their meeting held on 23 August 2023.

(Reference: Extract of Minute of Planning, Protective Services and Licensing

Committee held on 23 August 2023 and report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 4 August 2023, submitted)

**(b) Recommendation from the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 20 September 2023**

The Council gave consideration to a recommendation from the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 20 September 2023 in relation to proposed changes to the Council's Short-term Let Licensing Policy to take account of issues which had arisen.

**Decision**

The Council approved the revised Short-term Let Licensing Policy as recommended by the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 20 September 2023.

(Reference: Extract from Minute of the meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee held on 20 September 2023; and report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 13 September 2023, submitted)

The Council resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public for the following item of business on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

**19. PROPOSED COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER**

The Council gave consideration to a report requesting approval to initiate Compulsory Purchase Order measures and to write to the owner of the property advising of the Council's intention to pursue a Compulsory Purchase Order.

**Decision**

The Council agreed to authorise the Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in suitable terms and to take all the necessary steps to enable the Council to acquire the whole rights of the property referred to in the submitted report and that at such time as the Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support and the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth shall jointly decide.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support and Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 28 September 2023, submitted)

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**MINUTES of MEETING of POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS  
on THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Fiona Howard	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Willie Hume	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Andrew Kain	

**Also Present:** Councillor Peter Wallace

**Attending:** Pippa Milne, Chief Executive  
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director  
Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services  
Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services  
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth  
Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services  
Fergus Walker, Revenue and Benefits Manager  
Stuart Green, Corporate Support Manager  
John Gordon, Programme Manager  
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gary Mulvaney and Dougie Philand.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Jim Lynch advised in relation to item 9 of the agenda (Place Based Investment Programme Fund 2021 – 2024 Allocations and Project Updates) that he had been appointed to the Oban BID Board by the Council. Having taken note of the updated Standards Commission Guidance in relation to declarations (issued on 7 December 2021) with specific reference to section 5.4(c) he did not consider that he had a relevant connection and as such would remain in the meeting.

### **3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

### **\* 4. FINANCIAL REPORTS MONITORING PACK - 31 AUGUST 2023**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing a summary of the financial monitoring reports as at the end of August 2023. There were five detailed reports setting

out the position as at 31 August 2023 which included the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report; Monitoring of Financial Risks; Capital Plan Monitoring Report; Treasury Monitoring Report and Reserves and Balances.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the revenue budget monitoring report as at 31 August 2023;
2. noted the financial risks for 2023-24;
3. noted the capital plan monitoring report as at 31 August 2023 and approved the proposed changes to the capital plan as outlined in Appendix 4 of that report;
4. noted the treasury monitoring report as at 31 August 2023;
5. noted the reserves and balances report as at 31 August 2023; and
6. agreed to recommend to Council that the revenue virements over £0.200m during July and August 2023 are approved.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 8 September 2023, submitted)

## \* **5. BUDGET OUTLOOK 2024-25 TO 2028-29**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update to the budget outlook covering the period 2024-25 to 2028-29, previously reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 August 2023.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the current estimated budget outlook position for the period 2024-25 to 2028-29; and
2. agreed to recommend to Council that the budget for winter maintenance was right sized by utilising £0.326m of the £1.4m contingency that was set aside for inflationary increases as part of the 2023-24 budget setting process.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 18 September 2023, submitted)

## **6. BUDGET SIMULATOR EXERCISE - FINDINGS**

The Committee gave consideration to a report outlining feedback from local communities on their priorities for bridging the £10M+ budget gap via the budget simulator exercise.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to take into account the budget simulator results when considering and preparing the budget for 2024/25.



(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer and Support Services dated 12 October 2023, submitted)

## **7. UPDATE ON EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF IN NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

The Committee gave consideration to a report summarising key findings from the consultation on the potential use of empty business properties in Argyll and Bute. The consultation engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders including members of the public, property owners, community organisations and Elected Members. The report focused on the location and profile of respondents, barriers and challenges to occupying empty properties, potential new roles for vacant buildings, incentives and support measures, and the community impact of addressing vacant properties.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the results of the Empty Property Relief Consultation and that a revised Policy would be brought to Council on 23 November 2023; and
2. noted that a member's seminar would be held at the start of November to discuss the position and the options for a new policy.

(Reference: Report by Head of Financial Services dated 18 September 2023, submitted)

## **8. DEVELOPMENT OF AREA PLANS TO REFLECT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The Committee gave consideration to a report setting out an approach to delivering area based plans for all communities, reflecting investment opportunities and local service prioritisation as part of the delivery of the approved Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed –

1. that the number of locality plans covering Argyll and Bute was 8 plans (option A), as set out in paragraphs 4.31 to 4.33 of the submitted report;
2. the principles on which the initiative would be designed and implemented as set out in paragraph 4.35 of the submitted report;
3. the approach to the aforementioned initiative as set out in paragraphs 4.36 to 4.40 of the submitted report;
4. the resourcing and timescales as set out in paragraphs 4.41 to 4.45 of the submitted report;
5. to reflect any relevant outcomes from the Community Planning Partnership Community Wealth Building Review in the approach to producing area plans, noting that the report would be completed before the work started on the plans; and

6. to an allocation of £200,000 from the Council's Priorities Investment Fund to fund two temporary posts and associated costs to allow commencement of this initiative.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 20 September 2023, submitted)

## **9. PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME FUND 2021 – 2024 ALLOCATIONS AND PROJECT UPDATES**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Place Based Investment Programme allocation for the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 as well as the allocations agreed to individual projects and any subsequent change that had to be made as well as an update on progress of each project.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee -

1. noted the allocation of Place Based Investment funding provided from the period 2021-2024;
2. noted the agreed allocation of the Place Based Investment funding during the period 2021-2024 to the projects in Table 1 of the submitted report;
3. approved any amendments to the funding allocation as detailed in paragraph 4.9 of the submitted report;
4. noted the update on each of the individual projects as detailed in Table 1 of the submitted report; and
5. agreed a delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to approved Place Based Investment Programme grant allocations to ensure that any risk relating to payback of any grant is minimised; noting that it may involve swapping Place Based Investment Programme allocations with Crown Estate allocation of grants against individual projects but would not affect the projects but simply the grant source.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated September 2023, submitted)

## **10. CROWN ESTATES FUNDING**

### **(a) Crown Estate 2019-2023 Allocations and Project Updates**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Crown Estate allocations for the years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 totalling £5,785,106.55 and the respective individual project allocations. The report also provided an update on any subsequent changes made to the allocations as well as providing an update on the progress of each of the projects.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the allocation of Crown Estate funding provided from the period 2019-2023;
2. noted the agreed allocation of the Crown Estate funding during the period 2019-2023 to the projects in Table 1 and paragraph 4.4 of the submitted report;
3. approved the amendments to the funding allocation as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the submitted report;
4. noted the update on each of the individual projects as detailed in Table 1 of the submitted report;
5. agreed to the continuation of delegated powers, as agreed in February 2023, to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to approved Crown Estate grant allocations to ensure that any risk relating to having to payback any grant is minimised; noting that this may involve swapping Crown Estate allocations with Place Based Investment Programme allocations of grants against individual projects but would not affect the projects but simply the grant source.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 14 September 2023, submitted)

(b) **Crown Estate 2023/24 Allocation and Possible Projects**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing detail on the proposed allocation of the Crown Estate funding for 2023/24 following consultation with all Elected Members as agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 August 2023.

**Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted that the formal allocation of Crown Estate funding for 2023/24 is still awaited;
2. noted the proposal to allocate a £1.0million prudent estimate of anticipated Crown Estate 2023/24 funding against individual projects pending receipt of the formal allocation;
3. noted that officers sought suggestions from Elected Members and are undertaking due diligence in reviewing those projects against the criteria set by the Scottish Government;
4. agreed to a delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader, Depute Leader and Leader of the largest Opposition Group to approve the final list of projects to be supported by the £1.0million prudent allocation of Crown Estate 2023/24 funding;

5. noted that officers would inform Elected Members of the decision taken by the delegation; and
6. noted that a further report would be brought back to members of the Policy and Resources Committee should the formal allocation for 2023/24 represent a higher figure than £1.0million.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 14 September 2023, submitted)

## **11. RURAL GROWTH DEAL – UPDATE PAPER**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Rural Growth Deal Programme and in particular progress towards signing of the full deal agreement, which represented the next key milestone in the Rural Growth Deal process.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. approved a further drawdown of funding from the Inward Investment Fund (up to £150k); noting that similar to previous arrangements, funds would only be drawn down subject to the Chief Executive and two Executive Directors of the Council being satisfied that the monies were for the purpose of delivering the Rural Growth Deal; and that any further funding required in excess of the approved value would require further approval from the Policy and Resources Committee.
2. noted the process and anticipated timescales for signing the Full Deal Agreement with the Scottish and UK Governments.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated September 2023, submitted)

Councillor Ross Moreland advised in relation to items 12 and 13 of the agenda, that he had been appointed to the Argyll Countryside Trust by the Council. Having taken note of the updated Standards Commission Guidance in relation to declarations (issued on 7 December 2021) with specific reference to section 5.4(c) he did not consider that he had a relevant connection and as such would remain in the meeting.

## **12. NATURE RESTORATION FUND - SPEND OPTIONS**

The Committee gave consideration to a report recommending the Council take forward a number of time sensitive and deliverable projects utilising the Nature Restoration Fund allocated by the Scottish Government.

### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the allocation of Nature Restoration Funding received;

2. agreed to the recommended projects as set out in Appendix 1 of the submitted report; and
3. agreed that officers bring forward a further list of projects for Members' consideration to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2023.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth and Roads and Infrastructure Services and Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated 12 October 2023, submitted)

### **13. CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD UPDATE AND DE-CARBONISATION TRACKER**

The Committee gave consideration to a report summarising and highlighting some of the recent activities of the Climate Change Board over the previous quarter.

#### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee noted the updates contained at Section 5 and the full Decarbonisation Tracker update attached at Appendix A to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated 12 September 2023, submitted)

### **14. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

The Policy and Resources Committee Workplan was before the Committee for noting.

#### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee noted the content of the Workplan as at October 2023.

(Reference: Policy and Resources Committee Workplan dated October 2023, submitted)

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public for the following item of business on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

### **15. ROTHESAY PAVILION UPDATE**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the construction position and the efforts of the Lobbying Group in relation to the refurbishment of Rothesay Pavilion.

#### **Decision**

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed the recommendations contained within the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services and Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 21 September 2023, submitted)

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL**

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**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

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**LEADER'S REPORT**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Leader of the Council and Policy Lead Councillors routinely provide a report outlining their strategic activities for consideration at each meeting of Argyll and Bute Council, except for the annual budget meeting in February.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the activities of the council Leader, Cllr Robin Currie, for the period 8<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023. It also includes notes on activities relating to the Leader's Policy Lead portfolio of Strategic Development.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note that any reports, briefings or copy correspondence referred to in the report can be requested as appropriate through the Leadership Support Manager, although it should be noted that some confidential reports provided by external organisations such as COSLA may be restricted.

**3. LEADER ACTIVITY 8<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023:**

- 3.1 **Storm Agnes/Babet impact, October 2023:** Tackling the impact of the severe weather wrought by Storms Agnes and Babet across Argyll and Bute at the beginning of October has been a priority for the Council in the past few weeks. The detail of the impact and the council's response has been well documented both publicly and by way of updates to elected members, so I do not propose to repeat too much of that here. However, I think it is important to put on record our thanks and appreciation to everyone who has been involved in this very significant emergency response to unprecedented circumstances – it is worth remembering that

we experienced around one month's rainfall in a single day and that, at one point over the course of the two storms, Argyll and Bute was the worst affected Scottish local authority area.

Partnership working with our communities, with local businesses and with our public sector colleagues from various agencies has never been more important than in circumstances such as these. Thankfully here in Argyll and Bute we have an excellent track record in working together and we have strong relationships to build on, as well as robust emergency response procedures in place. As I write this report, I know that work is continuing around the clock at the site of the very severe landslip on the A816. Work is progressing apace on solutions at two of the bridges affected on the same route, and on others in the Cowal area. Those who deliver front line services to people in the affected communities have found ways to adapt and overcome the very considerable obstacles in their way, often at significant personal cost

There are also many elements of the emergency response which are less visible than others but still as vitally important.

To everyone involved, and to the people in local communities who opened their village halls and their homes to help those stranded or in need, may I pass on our gratitude and our sincere thanks for all that you have done and, indeed, continue to do.

The overall response continues far beyond the immediate impact and aftermath and involves more than the practicalities. While we are taking every possible action now to keep Argyll and Bute moving, planning ahead for the future is also a top priority for us. There are many different areas where action is needed to safeguard Argyll and Bute's future resilience.

Our Finance team engaged very quickly with the Scottish Government following the activation of the Bellwin scheme, which provides support to local authorities in emergency situations. The Chief Executive and I have spoken directly with the Scottish Government's Transport Minister as well as highlighting to the UK Government when we attended the UK Government Islands Forum (covered later in this report). We will continue this engagement at both political and officer level. The reality is that, in addition to the considerable actions that this council is taking, Argyll and Bute will need significant investment from both the Scottish and UK Governments to move beyond recovery and secure our future success.

Argyll and Bute makes very significant and valuable contributions to national priorities in numerous ways, from our place high up in the Scottish tourism sector to our world-renowned food and drink exports which bring in millions of pounds each year. These high-value financial boosts to the



treasury depend on reliable routes to market if they are to continue. The many benefits that Argyll and Bute brings to the Scottish and UK economies must be safeguarded and backed up with the support we need to move beyond recovery and to continue to thrive.

**3.2 Scottish Government Travelling Cabinet, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023:**

The Scottish Government resumed its Travelling Cabinet series with the first session taking place in Inveraray on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023.

It was a privilege to officially welcome the Cabinet to their private meeting and to open the public session later in the afternoon.



While in Inveraray, ministers undertook a number of visits to local projects including a trip to Inveraray Primary School where they met with our Education management team for an overview of our action on attainment and also heard about the progress of the MyTribe initiative which helps to combat period poverty.

We were able to secure a private meeting with the First Minister and Depute First Minister, giving us an opportunity to raise some of Argyll and Bute's current key strategic issues. I have also added at each of these below short updates on our other actions in relation to these matters:

- Biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) ban and the need for a nine-month derogation or funding support;
  - We have also had initial discussions with SEPA and these will continue apace.
- Rothesay Pavilion;
  - Officers continue to engage with various funders and we are also progressing additional political discussions as required.
- Lifeline ferry services and the need to look at flexible solutions to remove or minimise disruption to island communities;
  - I have written to Calmac on a number of occasions about the desperate need for action for island communities who are taking the brunt of reduced or no sailings and where every aspect of life is impacted.
- Seeking clarity on security of funding for the long term solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful;
  - I also attended the A83 Taskforce meeting in Lochgilphead just two days after the Travelling Cabinet. We continue to maintain pressure on government – it is imperative that momentum is maintained and that the best possible timescales are put in place and, most importantly, adhered to in order to safeguard the region’s resilience.
- Highlighting the urgent need for action on depopulation as part of national strategy and activity.
  - We have asked government for a focused plan that recognises the critically urgent need to rebalance population and commits to ongoing engagement with the local authority areas most affected, including Argyll and Bute.

This was overall a positive discussion and we were encouraged by both Mr Yousaf and Ms Robison’s constructive approach to both the specific issues we raised and to the working relationship between local and national government as a whole.

Many of the issues we picked up in our private meeting were also raised during the public question time session and it is helpful for government to see that alignment with community views and needs.

### **3.3 UK Islands Forum, Western Isles, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023:**

The latest UK Islands Forum meeting took place in Stornoway. The Forum opened with a presentation from the Dept of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the UK Infrastructure Bank on opportunities for islands.

Launched in June 2021, the UK Infrastructure Bank is a government-owned policy bank providing £22bn of infrastructure finance and partnering with the private sector and local government to finance a green industrial revolution and drive growth across the country. The Bank

provides a range of financing tools across the capital structure, including loans, credit enhancement, and equity investments. UKIB also provides financing to local and mayoral authorities across the UK, for high-value and complex economic infrastructure projects.

The main Forum meeting itself focused on the theme of connectivity and included presentations on case studies from North Ayrshire and Shetland Islands councils, as well as reflections from the other island authorities present and the Scottish and UK Governments.

It was agreed to set up a new 'task and finish' group to look at island transport connections, and the forum also agreed that further work would be carried out in relation to digital connectivity, supported by both the Scottish and UK Governments.

While discussions were very useful, it was also particularly helpful to have the opportunity to press Argyll and Bute's case to both Michael Gove, as Chair of the Forum, and the Scottish Government Minister for Transport, Fiona Hyslop – especially given the attention on Argyll and Bute in the days immediately preceding the Forum and the impact of the severe weather on our remote and rural connections as well as our islands.

It is also worth mentioning that I raised, in open session with the UK Government, the prospect of them providing a significant multimillion-pound fund for distribution to islands authorities, in the same way that they provided allocations for towns and urban areas, some of which had also received awards through the Levelling Up Fund process. It was somewhat encouraging that one of the UK Government ministers made an informal but positive response to this, saying that it may be worth considering. I believe that its consideration is absolutely vital for areas like Argyll and Bute, where we make significant contributions to the UK economy but where we often face equally considerable challenges and where rural deprivation can, unfortunately, be hidden. I will continue to press this with the UK Government.

### **3.4 Housing matters:**

Prosper (formerly SCDI) Engagement Event – Unlocking Social and Economic Growth in Argyll and Bute: I was delighted to be asked to open the Housing panel discussion at this event in Inveraray on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

This session, one of a series of similar events around Scotland, saw the former Scottish Council for Development and Industry confirm its new identity as Prosper – reflecting its drive to support economic innovation in Scotland. It brought together a range of partners from the public and private sector, all with the shared ambition of seeing Argyll and Bute

thriving and successful, and looking to explore ways of collaborating and taking action together to make that reality.

As well as initial general discussions there were various focused panel sessions on key issues like transport, energy and digital connectivity, land and marine development and, of course, housing.

I was able to set out the context for our declaration of a housing emergency this summer and outline the various actions we are taking as a council to play our part in addressing this most crucial of challenges to our future growth. I highlighted also the need to attract developers into the area and overcoming any barriers to this – there is a need for a range of different types of housing and the private sector also has a significant contribution to make.

This was a really productive session and the spirit of collective action that characterised the day will, I am sure, continue beyond – I am already setting up meetings with key partners in the renewables and digital areas and will update on my progress in future reports as possible.

### Argyll and Bute Strategic Housing Forum, 19<sup>th</sup> September:

As we progress at pace on tackling the housing emergency, it is more important than ever to bring key stakeholders and partners together and look at issues holistically. The Strategic Housing Forum is a key element of our collective action to boost housing supply and provide homes for those who need them in Argyll and Bute.

Our September meeting included consideration of the Local Housing Strategy annual report, setting in context current housing demand and analysing/commenting on housing transactions and activity in the area. It also includes, of course, the key actions we agreed as vital in terms of the housing emergency, like worker accommodation, the buy-back scheme and implications for other partners, the role of the Community Housing Network and how we can attract private development as well as providing affordable housing.

The September meeting of the Community Housing Network had taken place just a few days earlier, on 14<sup>th</sup> September, and as well as an overview of our plans in relation to the housing emergency, this session included a presentation from Colonsay Community Development Company and an overview of legislative/policy changes and financial modelling in the community housing delivery context.

I visited Colonsay with officers from the Housing service on 13<sup>th</sup> September and it was great to see for myself the progress being made with the new affordable development on the island.



Scottish Rural and Islands Housing (RIHAF) Annual Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023: This year's conference theme was 'Supporting Sustainable Communities' and included sessions on issues like the role of technology in social care and housing, planning for aging and adaptations, future-proofing homes in the aging context, and the role of housing in attracting and retaining diverse populations.

The Scottish Government's Housing Minister, Paul McLennan MSP, was one of the keynote speakers. We had invited him to our own Housing Summit on 27<sup>th</sup> November, but unfortunately he is unable to attend. There was a discussion about rising costs for development in an area closer to the central belt than many of our remote/rural/island locations – I highlighted that Colonsay in particular has been an issue here, where West Highland Housing Association have been aiming to build much-needed affordable homes for several years but rising costs have created real pressure and restriction. Locations like this desperately need housing in order to retain and attract young families. The Minister did say that he intended to arrange a meeting in this regard very soon and I hope to hear more about that in due course, given the significance of this development to the Colonsay community.

We also had a very constructive discussion about fuel poverty in the rural context and in the north of Scotland where tariffs tend to be much higher – unfairly so. I had also raised this particular issue with Ofgem at an earlier UK Islands Forum meeting in Orkney. RIHAF is now seeking a meeting with Ofgem regarding this. I hope that the door is now half-open for progress on this issue which has affected communities for too long. It is understandable why tariffs were higher in the past, to cover infrastructure costs – but now, as a region which exports very high levels of energy elsewhere, it is high time we were on a level playing field.

### **3.5 COSLA Meetings:**

Since my last report to Council in September, I have attended the following COSLA meetings:

28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September – COSLA Annual Conference and Excellence Awards, COSLA Convention: The COSLA headline for September is undoubtedly the fact that our Economic Development and Commercial Services teams won a COSLA Excellence Award – taking home a well-deserved prize in the Service, Innovation and Delivery category for their school meal drone delivery project. This is a fantastic initiative which embodies innovation and excellence in local government and is typical of the energy that our officers put in to finding ways of delivering core services in often challenging circumstances. Well done to all involved!

This year's Conference theme was 'Is Scotland Living Well Locally?' with presentations from a range of partner organisations including the academic and private sectors as well as other bodies like the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, the Soil Association, the Scottish Fiscal Commission, Crown Estates Scotland and many others.

The First Minister's address and the Verity House Agreement were, of course, key areas of focus for local government attendees and indeed the

Agreement also featured on the agenda for Convention, alongside the Fiscal Framework for Local Government.

COSLA Leaders 27<sup>th</sup> October: The following items were considered at the scheduled COSLA Leaders meeting for October. These were taken in private session so I cannot share full details here but will be happy to answer questions as far as possible:

- Housing Emergency Progress
- National Trauma Training Programme
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan and Workforce Action Plan
- Pay Update
- Local Government Finance
- Council Tax Second and Empty Homes Consultation/Analysis
- Flood Risk Management Affordability
- National Care Service
- Settlement and Distribution
- Proposals to Freeze Council Tax (following local government disquiet in light of the unexpected announcement earlier in October).

Leaders agreed that the Pay Update should be considered at a special meeting of COSLA Leaders, convened for 3<sup>rd</sup> November. You can find COSLA's statement, issued following that session, at [Statement following a meeting of Council Leaders \(3rd November\) | COSLA](#)

**3.6 Convention of the Highlands and Islands, Moray – autumn/winter session:** The autumn/winter session of COHI was due to take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> October in Elgin, hosted by Moray Council. Unfortunately, due to the severe weather which was particularly affecting the north-east of Scotland at the time, the event was cancelled. We are currently waiting to hear from the Scottish Government about a reconvened virtual session and I will report on this in a future Leader's Report.

**3.7 Gaelic:**  
Mod 2024: On 21<sup>st</sup> October, Provost Maurice Corry represented Argyll and Bute Council at the official handover of the Mod flag from this year's hosts, Renfrewshire Council, to ourselves. We are now in possession of the Mod flag and look forward to it flying in Oban next year. Officers are already working with partners to prepare – this brings a significant economic boost to the area as well as its contribution to keeping the Gaelic culture and language alive and thriving.

Gaelic Gathering 2024: We are also planning for our own Gaelic Gathering which will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> April next year, again in Oban. This is the fourth Gathering that we have organised – including a virtual event during the Covid pandemic. These are positive and well-received events and we see them as a very significant element of our commitment to Gaelic in Argyll and Bute. They have also attracted interest and support from the Scottish Government, and I have written to Jenny Gilruth MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, inviting her to attend as keynote speaker.

### **3.8 Islands issues:**

Islands Strategic Group and Islands Transport Forum, 5<sup>th</sup> October: I went to Edinburgh on 5<sup>th</sup> October for an in-person meeting of the Islands Strategic Group, which session included a meeting of the Islands Transport Forum.

Agenda topics were (all in islands context):

- Islands Transport Forum – aviation, ferries, resilience and terms of reference for the Forum
- Child poverty
- Cost of living
- Migration, skills and labour shortages

Argyll Islands Sounding Board, 19<sup>th</sup> October: Our own Islands Sounding Board met on 19<sup>th</sup> October specifically to consider our response to the National Islands Plan Review, as delegated by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee. Board members provided considered and proactive input to the draft response provided by officers, noting particularly that a refresh, rather than a new plan, would be the best approach. This would allow changes resulting in a more focused plan with clear and measurable outcomes and a budget aligned to secure delivery – these being more important for our island communities rather than producing more plans.



- 3.9 Dunoon – refugee resettlement, 6<sup>th</sup> October:** I was glad to be able to meet with a number of our Ukrainian and Afghan families, along with our Refugee Resettlement Team, in Dunoon on 6<sup>th</sup> October.



It is always humbling and helpful to hear first-hand the experiences of those who have come to settle in Argyll and Bute. Many have considerable skills and I know that our resettlement team work extremely hard indeed to help them not only adjust to life in Argyll and Bute and overcome the initial challenges of arriving in a new and unfamiliar country, but to move beyond that to thrive and enjoy community life. I was interested to hear from those who are looking to start up their own businesses and to find opportunities of sharing their culture and heritage with other refugees as well as with the communities where they have made their homes. We were treated to a taste of this when we were ably entertained with traditional Ukrainian accordion music by two of our young people.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1** This report highlights the activities of the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council for the period from 8<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**Councillor Robin Currie  
Leader, Argyll and Bute Council**

**10<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**For further information or to access the Leader’s Report Pack please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email [aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

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**POLICY LEADS REPORT**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. This aims to provide updates from all Policy Leads as regularly as possible, so that all members are informed, up-to-date and able to engage with current issues.
- 1.2 The last Policy Leads report was considered by Council at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This latest report provides an update on activity during the period to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

**3. POLICY LEAD FOR FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES –  
Councillor Gary Mulvaney**

- 3.1 **Introduction:** This report provides members with an update on my activities as Depute Leader and Policy Lead for Finance and Commercial Services during the period for October and November 2023
- 3.2 **Financial Services:**  
Finance: The department continue to monitor the 2023-24 revenue and capital budget positions, where there is currently a forecast underspend of £0.080m in revenue and a forecast overspend of £0.038m within capital. Work on next year's budget continues and an updated position was presented to the recent Budget Working Group outlining a gap of £4.670m next year, rising to £23.343m in 2028-29. Options are being considered how to bridge this gap. In addition, the Council will have to consider financial provision for the new school

campus on Mull, financial implications from recent storms, along with discovery of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete within one of the schools. Furthermore, the recent announcement by the Scottish Government regarding a Council Tax freeze in 2024-25 and uncertainty around what funding will be received in relation to this will also need to be monitored closely.

The external audit of the Council's financial statements for 2022-23 continue with officers providing Mazars with all requested information. Unfortunately, due to initial staffing issues within Mazars the audited accounts will not be available for presentation to Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> November as planned and a Special Council meeting has been arranged for December.

Local Tax Collections: The Council Tax collection rate for the current year on 31st October is 65.75% which is 0.25% down on the same period in 2021/2022. This is not concerning because we will make up this deficit.

The Scottish Government are currently legislating to allow Scottish local authorities to charge double Council Tax on second homes next year. A paper will be presented to the Council suggesting that once the powers become available in law, the Council will seek to implement this change with effect from 1st April 2024. This is expected to generate circa £4.9 million of additional Council Tax billed with recoveries in-year of around £4.18 million. Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) collections on 31st October are good at 76.43% - 2.82% up on the previous year and looking very strong this year.

Empty Property Relief: Consultation with stakeholders has been completed and new Policy Options were shared with members at a seminar on 6th November. The seminar went well, we got really positive engagement from many members and the draft new policy will be presented to the Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

The proposed policy reduces the cost of Empty Property Relief by 50% in year one and a further 12.5% in year two and creates opportunities to provide empty property owners and entrepreneurs with incentives to occupy and bring properties back into use supported by a full-time Empty Business Property Officer. It is anticipated that, in time, these changes will have a positive impact on our communities and help create more vibrant town centres.

Benefits Processing: As of 31st October 2023, processing speeds for Housing Benefit have improved to 13.88 days in month. The cumulative performance since the start of the year sits at 18.05 days,

well below our 21-day target. The average time taken to process a change in circumstances is 4.82 days which is still very good and below the target of six days.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs): Total expenditure in SWF on 31st October 2023 is £369,903. Our programme funding allocation for 2023/24 is £458,284 and we are projecting an overspend of circa £200,000 on the fund this year. As at 31st October 2023 our spent and committed amount on the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund is £788,125. Initial DHP Tranche 1 funding allocation for 2023/24 in Argyll and Bute is £869,638. We are unlikely to require any further funding from the Scottish Government on DGHP in 2023/2024.

Flexible Food Fund: This project continues to perform well; however an application for funding from the Scottish Government's Cash First fund for £80,000, to expand the service and provide more outreach support, failed to get any award. Efforts continue to expand the service offering from existing resources despite this disappointment.

### 3.3 Commercial Services:

Excellence Award success: Following on from my previous report, where I advised that the service had been shortlisted for a number of national awards, I am delighted to announce that we have won the COSLA Excellence Award for the School Meals by Drones pilot project.

This project, which saw the Council team up with leading drone specialists Skyports last year, was nominated in the 'Service Innovation and Improvement' category. Building on the pilot that involved delivering freshly prepared meals from Oban Airport to Lochnell Primary School, work will be carried out later this year to undertake further trials to help establish the use of drones across more remote/rural parts of the area. Congratulations to all involved.



Helensburgh Waterfront – Commercial:

Retail – An update report was tabled at the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> September, which advised on the outcome of the public engagement exercise and provided a summary of the five proposals that have been shortlisted for progression to the next stage of the process. Letters have been issued to those on the shortlist, inviting full financial offers to be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> December. Thereafter the bids will be assessed using the scoring matrix agreed by the Area Committee at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

Skatepark – An update report was tabled at the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The reinstatement of the temporary skatepark facilities is due to be complete by autumn. In respect of the long term location for the skatepark, an assessment of each of the potential sites is under way – including Hermitage Park, East Bay Park, Kidston Park, and Iona Stables – Colgrain. A range of factors require to be assessed as part of this process including ownership/title conditions, planning issues, access/parking, flooding, environmental/noise concerns and the cost of development. A further update report will be prepared for the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee in due course.

Rothesay Pavilion: An update was provided to the Policy and Resources Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> October where it was reported that:-

- the stage 1 works remain on budget and on target for completion within the agreed timescales;
- As matters stand, a decision in relation to the funding of stages 2 and 3 will be required at the budget meeting in February 2024;
- Following the decision to integrate the project into the Rural Growth Deal, the team have been working with consultants to develop the Full Business Case, which will require to be submitted and approved by the Scottish and UK Governments.
- Following the successful Parliamentary Event on 5<sup>th</sup> September, work is ongoing by the Lobbying Group to close the remaining capital funding gap through engagement with our main funding partners, both Governments, and other potential funders for the project.

**3.4 Depute Leader:** I continue to have regular other meetings with the Leader, Policy Leads and the Chief Executive in respect of council business and priorities.

#### 4. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

- 4.1 Learning Estate Investment Programme:** I am very happy to report that the Council has been successful in its bid to the Scottish Government Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) for funding for a new school campus on Mull.

This is excellent news that we have all been hoping for. It is one of the biggest investments in community infrastructure on the island in many years and has potential to transform futures and economic potential. Mull is the highest priority in our Learning Estate Strategy and now we can move forward with our plans to provide generations of children and young people to come with a state-of-the-art facility that will enable them to reach their full potential. I would like to thank the local community for working in close partnership with us throughout this process.

It is important to stress, however, that the LEIP funding from the Scottish Government will only part-fund the project to less than half of the total value of approximately £35.5m total and the Council will have to make a major financial contribution to the overall cost, but exciting times lie ahead and I am delighted that by working together we can create a better future for the young people involved.

There is much work still to be done including a review of costs and programme, a preferred site requires to be selected and secured and further engagement with the communities and groups. The Council will be in touch with the stakeholders involved as soon as it has more information about the next steps.

- 4.2 Additional Support Needs (ASN) Provision:** Following my update in September, I am pleased to report that the Council have agreed to invest more than £1.7 million to establish four more dedicated Learning Centres in its schools so that children and young people with more complex ASN can benefit from tailored high level support.

Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs will also be developed within four mainstream secondary schools to address the growing social and emotional needs of a number of children and young people in a way that keeps them in the heart of their own communities and schools.

Agreement to these proposals ensures that access to Learning Centres is more equitable across Argyll and Bute, with bespoke facilities being offered, including:- accessible teaching spaces, breakout quiet rooms, low stimulus, and high stimulus sensory rooms, appropriate outdoor space, and changing facilities with the necessary

equipment. Learning Centres will also develop curriculum plans to include a wide range of flexibility to support all learners to achieve their potential.

- 4.3 MCR Pathways:** Argyll and Bute Council's partnership with MCR Pathways has had an excellent start. With all three Pathways Co-ordinators well-established in their schools – Hermitage Academy, Dunoon Grammar School and Oban High School – the work of supporting our targeted young people has begun in earnest.

Over 100 mentors from our communities have already registered, with 25 now ready to match with young people and the remainder going through the training and PVG process. Thirty six young people and their families have been approached regarding mentoring, with six already matched to a mentor. The matching process, and the identification of further young people who will benefit from mentoring, is continuing.

Additionally, across the three schools, over 30 young people in S2 have been identified for the MCR Group Work Programme, which prepares young people for the mentoring experience in S3 and beyond.

- 4.4 'Skills Development Scotland/Scottish Government Annual Participation Measure 2022-2023:** At the end of August 2023, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) published the 2022-23 Annual Participation Measure (APM) for Scotland, including information relating to each local authority. The APM measures the number of 16-19 year-olds in Scotland in Education, training or employment over the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Participation in Argyll and Bute has risen from 93.9% in 2021-22 to 95.6% in 2022-23, which places Argyll and Bute eighth for participation of all Scottish local authorities, and maintains our place in the top ten for the eighth year in succession.

The numbers of those not participating in Argyll and Bute has dropped from 3.8% to 3.0%, and the number of unconfirmed young people has also fallen, from 2.3% to 1.4%.

The above data points to an increasing number of young people in Argyll and Bute benefitting from education in our schools and at college and university, and achieving and sustaining positive destinations post-school.



**4.5 Education – UHI Argyll Partnership:** On 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the first annual face-to-face meeting of secondary school leaders and UHI Argyll took place at Inveraray Conference Centre. As a result of the meeting, and the ever-developing partnership between schools and UHI Argyll it represents, the scope and reach of the college's offer to young people in schools is increasing. As well as the offer of Higher National Certificates which can be studied wholly in the school setting, a 'hub' for the offer of Advanced Highers by UHI Argyll is being taken forward, as is the development of a range of skills and experience-building activities offered by the college to senior pupils both in June and throughout the year. Also planned are a range of workshops to prepare young people for the college courses they have chosen, and informative videos to form part of the options choice programme in schools.

These are just some examples of the way the proactive partnership between Education and UHI Argyll is broadening and enriching the Senior Phase Curriculum, offering increased variety and choice to ensure positive, sustained pathways for young people which allow them to achieve their full potential.

**4.6 'The Exchange School Counselling Service:** There has been an increased number of referrals to the school counselling service between July to September 2023. Referrals in secondary schools have more than doubled this quarter in comparison to the previous period, with the service now receiving referrals from 35 primary schools across the authority, and continue to reach rural schools, including on the Islands of Mull and Gigha.

Evaluation data has shown that 79% of secondary referrals felt less distressed at the end of counselling, and across primary referrals 81% of pupils were reporting an improvement, with 89% of parents reporting a similar picture.

**4.7 'Seasons for Growth:** Seasons for Growth is a peer education programme supporting children and young people who have experienced change, loss or bereavement. Seasons for Growth groups are delivered in schools by two specially trained 'companions'. The Educational Psychology Service has been leading the implementation and evaluation of Seasons for Growth since 2020.

Last year, the highest number of Seasons groups were run in Argyll and Bute with more than 60 children and young people participating. In September, we were able to train a further 11 companions who are based in education, social work and the third sector. Until recently most of the Seasons groups have been offered in the Helensburgh

and Lomond area but we were delighted to expand the offering of Seasons in Oban, Rothesay and Mid Argyll and for the first time we have trained companions in Mull.

We have committed to developing a sustainable approach by training a second Seasons for Growth trainer who is currently dedicating approximately 100 hours towards accreditation. Local evidence mirrors national data which demonstrate that children feel less isolated, are more able to understand and talk about emotions and have developed coping strategies to draw upon during adversity.

- 4.8 Addressing Non Attendance (ANA):** ANA is a significant strategic development arising as a result of a recognised need nationally, as well as locally. The aim is to implement a consistent approach to assessment, training and intervention for addressing non-attendance across Argyll and Bute establishments.

A revised guidance/framework for Monitoring and Maximising Attendance for all establishments has been written by the Maximising Attendance Strategy Group and this will be implemented this session.

The ANA training package was piloted in two of our ten secondary schools to pastoral staff and colleagues from health and social work in 2022-23. Pre and post training confidence questionnaires and evaluation data demonstrated positive impact in terms of improved staff knowledge and confidence in addressing non-attendance. Training has been delivered in a further two secondaries since August 2023 and is being evaluated. Work has started to identify the next cohort of schools with an aim to deliver training in January 2024. The team will continue to provide ongoing support with implementation and, where required, signposting/delivering further training to schools. A training webinar for primary schools will be developed this session with input from the Maximising Attendance Strategy Group.

- 4.9 Planet Youth:** The Planet Youth surveys have taken place across five of our secondary schools. The participating schools are Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Dunoon Grammar School, Oban High School, Rothesay Joint Campus and Tobermory High School. Unfortunately we have been unsuccessful in recruiting for a Lead Teacher for this work. We have been working with our colleagues in Public Health to fund an additional band 5 post to support this work. The post will be funded by the Scottish Government Grant Funding.

- 4.10 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** The UNCRC group has been successful in securing grant funding from the CORRA Foundation Innovation Fund to take forward the promotion

of UNCRC across Argyll and Bute Council. The group has met and an action plan has been populated. A special thanks goes to Mandy Sheridan, HSCP, who led on the work, to our young people from Rights Respecting Schools who were involved in feeding into this process, and to staff for organising at such short notice. Information has been provided to the Communication and Engagement and Strategy Group.

Schools have been introducing the use of the Glasgow Wellbeing and Motivation Profile Tool (GWMPT) to help measure wellbeing within their settings. To help support the inclusion of this profiling tool across all our settings, we have translated this into Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic and Dari. Dunoon Grammar School have also translated the GWMPT into Gaelic. These were issued to schools in October.

- 4.11 Cabinet Secretary Visit:** The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Jennifer Gilruth, visited Inveraray Primary School on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The visit included a tour of the school led by pupils, including an opportunity to see learning and teaching in relation to literacy, numeracy, outdoor learning and STEM. Ms Gilruth also met with the Head Teacher, Sandra Clarke, as well as Jen Crocket, Wendy Brownlie and Rosie Mackay.

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Shirley-Anne Somerville, also met with MyTribe Champions from Lochgilphead Joint Campus. The pupils told the Cabinet Secretary about the period product initiative. They were supported by Head Teacher, Jay Helbert, Amy Bruce (Project Lead for Period Products) and Christine Boyle (Business Development Manager, Commercial Services).

- 4.12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths):** Our new Primary Science Development Officer (PSDO), Paul Malcolm, has been working closely with primary schools to develop STEM.

He attended Lochgoilhead Primary for a whole day and modelled science enquiry approaches in the nursery, lower and upper school to teaching staff while working with all pupils. After this staff attended a CLPL (career Long Professional Learning) delving further into this approach and how it could be embedded in wider Inter Disciplinary Learning (IDL) context planning.

As a result of this Lochgoilhead will be piloting one of a series of STEM IDL context planners being designed, focussing on themes which connect to relevant contexts in Scotland. This will allow pupils to explore scientific enquiry and apply it through an engineering challenge which will be the culmination of the terms work. The context

also links to Learning for Sustainability themes such as outdoor learning, careers education and the Global Development Goals as well as providing rich links to the broader curriculum, especially literacy and numeracy.

The school has signed up for the Young STEM Leader Programme to develop pupil leadership within the school and opportunities for pupil led learning in STEM. The school has also decided to structure their development of a whole school approach to STEM by undertaking the STEM Nation Award.

Staff feedback was very positive:

*“Very informative and practical. I am more confident with moving forward with STEM planning and the skills involved.”*

*“The topic planning across the school will be good for seeing progression and will help with transition information from ELC to P1”.*

The PSDO and the Digital Hub also ran a whole school STEM day at Castlehill Primary. This incorporated pupil leadership of workshops and learning experiences. The PSDO attended Castlehill Primary on the day before the event and worked with Primary 7 pupils to develop science enquiry workshops based on the theme of STEM in motion.

On the STEM day the Digital Hub delivered workshops using Spheroes, exploring coding and also stop frame animation which were well received by pupils from across the school. Primary 7 delivered all of their workshops, to every other class across the school. There was a very clear impact both in the engagement of all pupils but also in how well Primary 7 pupils demonstrated confidence, knowledge and also an understanding of differentiation considering their use of language and approach to the different stages across the school.

The day was a great success with very positive feedback:

*“The two days were excellent. The children learned so much both on an educational front and on a confidence building exercise. It was lovely watching children, who at the start wouldn't speak to them explaining to others and then finally using eye contact, explaining and questioning those that were at their station. A very worthwhile two days.”*

As a result of their development work with the PSDO, the lead teacher has signed up to undertake Young STEM Leader training to embed

pupil leadership of STEM learning across the school as a sustainable practice.

#### **4.13 Early Years and Childcare (ELC):**

Tiree Primary ELC: The sun was most definitely shining over Tiree Primary ELC, during their recent visit from the Care Inspectorate, securing evaluations as follows-

- How good is our care, play and learning? 5 - Very Good
- How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good
- How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good
- How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

Meadows Under Fives: Meadows Under 5's in Campbeltown have received a Scottish Enterprise Award 2023, 'Childcare and Education Centre of the Year, 2023' - Western Scotland. They were nominated for this by colleagues within Care Inspectorate. Well done!

Learning outdoors in Oban, Lorn and Isles: We are delighted to report completion of works to strengthen the settings' immediate environment for learning outdoors, within both Lochnell Primary ELC and Park Primary ELC.



'Play on Pedals': In an unprecedented step, 'Play on Pedals' have awarded Argyll and Bute the full grant to extend our programme of implementation into the Oban area, in recognition of the strength of the work across Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islands.

This success has been realised as a consequence of wholehearted effort by Pamela Wilson, Early Years and Family Support Worker (EYFSW) who applied for additional funding. She will now influence at a distance as she supports colleague, Aileen Cameron, to build success within Oban area.

The aim of 'Play on Pedals' is to give every pre-school child the opportunity to learn to ride a bike before starting school.

Investing in Community: Aileen Cameron, Early Years and Family Support Worker, was invited along to one of the community groups in Oban that she has been supporting for an ELC information sharing session. The session was well attended and provides the opportunity to inform parents of what they are entitled to and how to prepare for upcoming events such as January registration week. The invitation has been further extended to a forthcoming date in January 2024.

## **5. POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND TRANSPORT - Councillor Andrew Kain**

**5.1 Introduction:** This month my focus will be on the recent flood events and their impact on Argyll and Bute and what needs to happen to promote and encourage a resilient and growing economy.

The strategic importance of the road network, into and across Argyll and Bute, was brought into stark focus during the floods of October. For a period, much of Argyll and Bute was separated from the rest of Scotland with no routes in.

The economic impact was considerable, affecting every business from local to strategic, including the Whisky industry. Indeed Argyll and Bute reverted to the isolation of the era pre construction of military roads and central control. The floods also shone a light on the needs of governments, both Holyrood and Westminster, regarding current and future investment needs for infrastructure to support our communities and economy.

Whatever the political complexions of the governments of Scotland they must focus on the strategic necessity of developing the resource rich potential of the Blue economy that exists in Argyll, off the coast and around the islands. The potential, here in Argyll and Bute, competes with many international locations but the luxury of time is not with us, while limitations of access compromise competitiveness in attracting investment.

Businesses require to make a return on their investment a large part of which will be the certainty of getting their goods to market. An effective road network will help deliver, in attracting business and it will likely help reduce insurance premiums. Not addressing these strategic issues will leave us stumbling on while investment will find more attractive locations. There is no time for debate or consultation the situation demands action to capitalise on the potential that exists now.

Roads are National and Council strategic assets used by the vast majority of residents in Argyll and Bute for everyday living and all manners of business; and are essential for economic success. While there will always be aspects which should and can be improved, the network in Argyll and Bute has been slowly improving over the last few years. Previous prudent investment resulted in a much improved network. However, recent events have reversed some of the good work and put repair beyond the resource capability of the council.

These events also shone a light on the vulnerabilities associated with strategic access to the region and as National strategic assets governments have a responsibility to step-up; indeed there is a commercial imperative in order to maximise the economic potential that exists.

- 5.2 Road Conditions:** More than 86% of Argyll and Bute's roads were, prior to recent floods, in a good or fair condition according to the most recent survey of the area's network. Despite normal maintenance work in some areas badly affected by the pandemic, more than 50% of the region's roads network, which covers more than 2,300 kilometres, was within the 'green' or 'good condition' band. This is a positive outcome based on the Council's investment over recent years.

However, without the damage from recent floods it would still have required in excess of £100m (in 2021 figures) to get us to 100%. As everyone, will appreciate this would not be possible within ever constrained budgets even prior to the floods.

The importance of an effective road network is obvious to all. Road networks are a significant economic enabler for all areas. Available and safe roads, both local and trunk routes, are particularly important for the economic prosperity of rural mainland and island communities of Argyll and Bute.

As ever there is much good work underway in my policy area. However, given the enormity of the impact of the October rain event I have decided to focus this report on that event.

On Saturday 7th October there was an unprecedented weather event where around a month's worth of rain fell in a 36 hour period in a number of areas across Argyll and Bute. This rain fell onto already very wet, and in places saturated ground.

This rain event resulted in localised flooding, land slips, damage to bridges and roads across much of Argyll from Helensburgh in the East to Oban and Mull in the West.

Police Scotland declared a major event and issued 'do not travel' advice for our council area on the Saturday.

The situation was so extreme that for a short period all road routes into and out of Oban and Lorn, Mid Argyll and Kintyre, Bute and Cowal were closed together with severe disruption across the Clyde. Thanks to a multi-agency response and great community effort the majority of routes were very quickly reopened and work continues at pace at a few locations across our area.

Both the Trunk and Local road networks were affected with thousands of tonnes of 'debris flow' material being washed onto many of Argyll's roads, often in places where similar events had never been recorded. Whilst the flood water receded over several hours there was significant damage left to infrastructure across our area

Whilst the cost of the above is still being calculated as some works continue the overall cost is expected to run into several millions. In the current climate of constrained budgets these are amounts this council will find, with reducing budgets and increasing demands, impossible to find. There needs to be recognition and proportionate funding made available from Governments to ensure that key infrastructure repairs are fully funded.

Indeed I would argue the importance of the access network to Argyll and Bute is of strategic economic importance to the economies of both Holyrood and Westminster now and most importantly for realising future economic development potential.

The Positive: There has been a fantastic multiagency response, along with huge support from many communities both during the event and in the subsequent recovery phase. The great communications and twice daily service disruption briefings together with the amount of progress made is truly fantastic given the scale and magnitude of the problem.

The service along with the support from communities must be commended and I personally thank all for their contributions and commitment.

This rain event should be a wakeup call in terms of the likely future impact resulting in a growing trend for extreme weather events linked to climate change.

A safe and reliable transport network provides the most significant economic enabler there is. Without reliable and resilient transport



networks the economy will be severally compromised. Numerous historic weather events and particularly this most recent flooding shows just how fragile and vulnerable our transport network can be across all of the UK. Whilst we see improvements to the Road Condition Index through forward thinking and investments made by Council the recent weather event shows that it is not just the road surface which needs investment but also our bridges, structures, flood prevention, costal protection, drainage systems all need significant investment in order to make these key infrastructure networks climate resilient.

Going forward there needs to be major investment to our infrastructure. Without this Argyll and Bute will not be able to meet the increasing attrition brought about by more severe weather and vehicles many, many, times larger than most of our infrastructure was ever built (or even evolved) to carry.

**5.3 Greater involvement - Roads Reconstruction:** The Environment, Development and Infrastructure committee on 1<sup>st</sup> June endorsed proposals for additional member and Area Committee engagement for the development of the annual roads capital programme. This will create better focus on priorities and potentially have a positive impact on time and resources. The intention is to engender a more effective collaboration between members and the Service with the objective of enabling us to be focussed on priorities and do more for less and in timely manner. I remind again on the considerable shortfall that does exist across Argyll and Bute to get all roads to A1 condition; and stress this greater engagement must not be seen, or driven, to be an area competition. The final say will always be based on facts such as; safety, economic benefit and in the end engineering / resource realities; and for the benefit of all Argyll and Bute as a whole. While the recent flooding has put this back we will still move forward; although as a result of events the commercial challenges are now even greater.

Indeed recent events have stressed the budgetary challenges and the absolute need for an Argyll and Bute strategic focus.

**5.4 New vehicles procured from additional funds following Budget Meeting:** I am pleased to note that a low mileage, ex-demonstrator jetpatcher has been secured and will be delivered in the coming weeks. Additional operator training has been taking place to increase the number of users that our Operations Team will have. Having seen the jetpatcher in use I can attest to its effectiveness. This technique helps to provide proportionate repairs not only filling any defects but also sealing hairline cracks and other voids which, if not treated, would lead to further deterioration of our road network.

Our teams are also in the process of procuring a road marking machine. Unfortunately they have not been able to find a suitable vehicle already built so this will take longer for the vehicle to be delivered due to its specialist nature and build time. However, when achieved this vehicle will add value to operations and possibly provided a revenue earner.

**5.5 Route Optimisation:** As reported to the June Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, the Council now has a supplier in place to provide route optimisation software. Whilst the first project to be rolled out is to be around waste collection which sits within the portfolio of the Policy Lead for Climate Change and Environment, there will be a number of opportunities which will be explored across the Roads and Transport portfolio where there are many cyclic activities that have the potential to benefit from this type of system. Having had a short demo of the system I can attest to its potential and look forward to further demonstrations and operational deployment.

**5.6 Oban Municipal Harbour Authority:** The Council's plans for establishing a Municipal Harbour Authority in Oban are continuing to move forward albeit, (outside our control) slower than we would like. The council is already the Harbour Authority for Oban North Pier, and while CMAL/CalMac and Northern Lighthouse all have responsibility for separate areas within the bay, the approaches into and out of the bay are currently unregulated.

The Council and stakeholder communities want to establish a Harbour Authority to enforce positive safety measures and, on 22nd December last year, the Council submitted a draft Harbour Revision Order (HRO) to Transport Scotland. Since then, positive discussions have taken place between the council and Transport Scotland, and the Scottish Government's legal team will now review the draft HRO. We are now awaiting approval of the draft HRO from the Scottish Government.

Once this has been done, the HRO will need to be approved by the Argyll and Bute Harbour Board before we then begin the statutory 42 day public consultation. Oban Bay is very busy with marine traffic, particularly during the summer months, so it is vital that we establish a Municipal Harbour Authority for this area so that people have safe and regulated access within the bay. It is likely that a special Harbour board will be convened in December.

While there are differences of opinion as to some of the operational detail there is expressed, and I believe, unanimous support among Stakeholder Groups for addressing greater safety and future

development of Oban Harbour through the establishment of a Municipal Harbour Authority.

**5.7 Marine Issues:**

Port Marine Safety Code: the Council remains on course to achieve this national good practice standard for its ports and harbours – something that very few others in the UK have secured. The Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) sets out a national safety standard covering different aspects of running ports and harbours, and represents ‘good practice’ as recognised by a wide range of industry stakeholders.

Kilcreggan Upgrade: we visited Kilcreggan Community Council in June, to brief and engage more fully with residents and local members on the ferry replacement / infrastructure proposal as there had clearly been some confusion as to intentions and indeed the Council’s role. As has been the case throughout the objective is, and will remain, to improve the reliability and resilience of the ferry service between the village, the wider community and Gourock. This is within the constraints under which we must operate.

After a frank and constructive discussion I believe we have an opportunity to more fully engage with the community and that when confirmation of ferries is achieved. The community have done considerable work in outlining an holistic vision on how to improve the attraction, facilities and economic future of Kilcreggan. Part of this vision is reliable ferry services that will better enable developments in tourism and improved access for locals.

Transport Scotland is (hopefully) close to confirming the designs for new passenger ferries coming into operation on the Gourock, Dunoon and Kilcreggan routes.

I am confident, once it is clear on vessel design that, working with the community the service can deliver a solution that is sympathetic to Community vision with our objectives aligned. A solution that will enable berthing in more difficult conditions provide greater resilience, contribute to economic benefit and enhance local communications.

**5.8 The Island of Luing:** For some considerable time there have been issues raised by the community in relation to school transportation. These were raised and led by Councillor Mackenzie along with other ward Councillors. Behind the Scenes Both Roads and Education Service officers have been working towards addressing community concerns. This was with the backdrop of an already legal and

compliant service; and limited resources. It was also a desire to look to a solution that would help address more strategic Island and community issues. In June Officers and members met with the community on Luing and the basis of what could be an elegant solution for school transport and greater community flexibility was agreed in principle. The community sent their proposals, as suggested, to the Head of Roads and Transport who coordinated with Education Service as to how to achieve delivery. Despite some initial confusion I believe we are working towards effectively addressing issues within the constraints of budgets. We will continue discussions on supporting sustainable economic development on Luing.

- 5.9 Rest and Be Thankful:** While the announcement by Scottish Government earlier this year for permanent works to be progressed at the Rest and Be Thankful A83 are very welcome, it is now evident that more will need to be done. As part of the October rain event several apparently 'new' land slips occurred. In addition to material flowing into the catch pits and bunds already constructed at the R&BT and along the A83 it is understood that several thousand tonnes of material blocked parts of the A83 between the R&BT and Cairndow with these sections of road remaining closed along with the northern section of the A815 (council road) whilst a co-ordinated clean up took place. It is clear that significant additional mitigation works over and above those proposed at the R&BT are very much necessary to enable reliable and safe life line routed into and out of Argyll and Bute can be maintained.

I would ask that all councillors who have previously lobbied on the Rest and be Thankful continue to support this.

- 5.10 Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2):** STPR2 is highly significant for the future of transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years and the recommendations for our communities are particularly disappointing in light of the initial assurances we were given and how engaged the Council was throughout the entire process.

My view is that some of the outcomes if progressed, as suggested, will have unintended, negative and potentially damaging consequences. We will be seeking further discussions with both Transport Scotland and the Transport Minister of Scottish Government, as soon as possible, to both express our major concerns about the review and to seek further clarification on issues of a strategic nature impacting Argyll and Bute.

Indeed recent events demand a more realistic approach towards the strategic links to access Argyll and Bute and its island communities.

- 5.11 Flood Prevention:** It is great to see the Campbeltown Flood Prevention Scheme nearing completion. This £15M investment, funded 80% by Scottish Government, as part of the first cycle of the national flood prevention programme will help to significantly build resilience against flooding in Campbeltown. This is an impressive project with a professional construction company. We have other areas of potential flooding needing attention and resource commitment.
- 5.12 Future:** The challenges facing Argyll and Bute for the future have grown significantly since the 7<sup>th</sup> October. Indeed events have highlighted the isolation of Argyll and Bute and the historic economic ineptitude of governments. Communications routes first constructed to give central government 'military' access to the peoples of the highlands and islands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for the purpose of control have seen little development since. Whether by policy design, neglect or just old fashioned incompetence, the resulting failure to develop communications links continues applying unwarranted pressure on inhabitants while hugely limiting the economic contribution of Argyll and Bute to the economies of Scotland and the UK.

We haven't got ten years to repair strategic infrastructure; the world will not wait 'sympathetically' until we get our acts together. We need to address our failings head on and look abroad as to how others build and develop; the engineering skills developed in Scotland and adopted by many overseas are no longer easily available here. There must be an acknowledgement that many well-intentioned projects have more to do with vanity and idealism than with economic development. If we do not collectively wake up and smell the coffee we can forget contributing to net zero as we will condemn ourselves to achieving only 'economic zero'.

Addressing these issues is beyond politics, it's about economic development and future prosperity; we can't wish away decline because it is somehow unfair nor can we isolate ourselves from the realities of the global economic system.

**6. POLICY LEAD FOR CARE SERVICES – Councillor Amanda Hampsey**

- 6.1 Severe weather incident:** An Amber weather warning was received across parts of Scotland on Friday 6th October which had a significant impact across our communities and with potential to impact on access to health and social care.

Working with public sector and volunteer partners as part of the Local Resilience Partnership, led by Police Scotland and with communities the Integration Joint Board through the HSCP delivered the Caring for People response. Thanks are offered to the multi-agency staff, volunteers and community members who participated to keep communities safe over the weekend while dealing with significant impacts to service delivery.

The HSCP is now participating in the council-led recovery process and looking forward to developing the response in future through the lessons learned.

- 6.2 The National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children:** The National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children is a legally mandated scheme designed by the UK Home Office. Argyll and Bute as a Local Authority are required to take 0.1% of our children's population. Locally this equates to 14 young people under the age of 18 years old. When a young person within this scheme reaches 18 years old they no longer count as part of our quota of 14 young people, although we continue to have responsibilities towards them through Scottish child care law. Home Office financial support drops significantly once a young person reaches 18 years old.

The combined work of Council staff, HSCP services and our housing providers has allowed us to meet this need for the moment - however reflecting the experience of other local authority areas such as Glasgow, current resources are not adequate to sustain the level of demand being experienced at the moment.

Officers are aware of these risks and are working to ensure we have in place organisational structures to co-ordinate our response. A further briefing will be provided for subsequent meetings.

**6.3 National Recruitment of Social Workers:** Research has been published which indicates a national shortage of social workers throughout Scotland. The SSSC published their findings on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

[New report shows most Scottish local authorities find it difficult to recruit social workers \(sssc.uk.com\)](https://www.sssc.uk.com)

(note the Argyll and Bute figures have not been included in this report, however this is due to issues within the Scottish Social Services Council. This will be rectified and the report republished.)

The report considers pay, conditions and remote working which combine with a complexity of other factors leading to this situation. At a local authority level certain areas and particular specialisms are under particular pressure. It is harder to recruit into our remote and island areas. Equally disparity in salary creates a competitive market causing frequent movement and can cause a strain in retention in our further east areas.

Work is being undertaken by Scottish Government and with other parties such as COSLA and Social Work Scotland on the potential formation of a National Social Work Agency. Indications are that the NSW Agency will be included within the National Care Service Bill. Once this work begins to crystallise into a firm proposal elected members will be given a fuller briefing.

#### 6.4 Vaccinations and community treatment services:



The Autumn/Winter campaign is under way after a successful 're-phasing' ask from Scottish Government (SG), with 41% delivery rate which is ahead of trajectory at this point in the campaign. All care homes have been completed.

Successful transfer of all adult immunisations across mainland practices has been achieved.

We have been working with the NHSH web team to 'map' all active clinic locations, so it is much clearer that we have appointments close to everyone.

Community and Treatment care services are now delivering approximately 75% of required capacity. We are working with the Scottish Government to bid for funding to extend this. Premises remains a risk across Argyll and Bute due to increased demand on GP surgery and hospital clinical space.

#### 6.5 Dental: Recruitment and redesign have secured further provision of the Campbeltown outreach (i.e. student teaching) centre. This is a big success.

There are continued pressures on dental access owing to changes in the general dental sector. A new contractual framework has been announced, with a national publicity campaign to follow.

We are continuing to monitor pressures on the Public Dental Service in Dunoon given the increase in unregistered emergencies.

A new contractual structure has been agreed with dentists, which also impacts upon the charges which patients may be asked to pay as part of their treatment.



The clearest information on this is on the NHS inform website, link below- <https://nhsinform.scot/dentist>. There is information here on registering with a dentist, understanding your dental treatment, dental treatment costs and complaints process.

- 6.6 General Medical Practice:** All practices are at Level 1 of the escalation framework, operating normally. Two practices have closed lists. Four practices are operating under 2C arrangements (directly managed). Improvement works are ongoing in all four. There are some regular contingencies in all four practices owing to the supply of GP locums.
- 6.7 Sexual Health:** A risk around sexual health service provision has now been realised, in that there is no specialist sexual health service in Helensburgh. A paper has been escalated through the Senior Leadership Team and clinical governance, with a board-board conversation requested between NHS Highland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to recover this situation. Local discussions are underway around risk mitigation.
- 6.8 Locality Planning:** The IJB Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) have proposed local 12-month plans to the Strategic Planning Group. This is based on locally volunteered priorities and actions which are in line with the main strategic plan. These were supported pending completion to allow for the key actions to progress.

Preparation for the next Strategic Plan will commence in January 2024 with the intention that the LPGs will participate in the three-year planning cycle which will aim to support longer term goals which will continue to develop the coproduction approach.

Meetings of the Integration Joint Board can be found at the following link.

[Argyll and Bute HSCP Integration Joint Board \(IJB\) - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

- 6.9 Winter Planning:** Winter Planning is traditionally undertaken to reflect changes in demand between the months of October and March. A systems impact approach is undertaken in Argyll and Bute and we work with partners to ensure that we have a broad spectrum of service and response resilience.

The Scottish Government this year provided a winter checklist and sought a response from each area on levels of preparedness.

Structures are in place via planning and performance to ensure that HSCP collaborates with all partner organisations, including in Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Care at Home and Care Home Assurance functions are in place on a multi-disciplinary team basis with clear escalations and management of risk.

Daily Huddle meetings will take place at system level and can be adjusted in line with demand. Any escalations relating to workforce/capacity are logged, directed, and managed via that process. Once a week, System Pressures Oversight Group (and by way of this, direct access to SLT) is in place. Heads of Service and Professional Leaders from across the HSCP are attendees. These will link very closely with acute/hospital based ward rounds/virtual wards to ensure flow is maximised and maintained, with appropriate escalation management where required.

In terms of communication, Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Winter Planning communications include working closely with partners, stakeholders, third-sector organisations, and staff members to ensure all our networks will be well-informed and engaged. A range of proactive communications activities is utilised to ensure our networks and communities across Argyll and Bute are well informed. These include social media platforms, media outlets, stakeholder briefings to elected members and key partners; and regular public health messages and public information communicated through appropriate external and internal communication channels and systems.

Business Continuity Plans are in place across areas and services. A piece of work is underway to ensure that these are updated, visible and practicable. This work is due to be finalised by the HSCP in the coming weeks. Links with the Local Resilience Partnership is clear.

**6.10 Mental Health and Psychological Therapies development:**

Reflective of the national shortage of Registered Mental Health Nurses, recruitment remains a challenge - however some headway has been made by the recruitment of three new nursing staff for the inpatient service. A new induction handbook has been developed by the Associate Lead Nurse for Mental Health to support our new employees. The ward continues to facilitate student nurse placements and recruitment is ongoing. We are currently working with North Highland on international recruitment and four international recruits have been identified to come to work in Succoth Ward on their arrival in the UK.

Core mental health standards for secondary care were launched in September 2023 and these will underpin both our inpatient and community services moving forward.

We have now appointed a new Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Lead for Psychological Therapies. This person will take up post early in 2024 and will lead on scoping and developing a sustainable model to deliver the standards set out within the revised national matrix across Argyll and Bute.

- 6.11 Adult Support and Protection (ASP):** The Scottish Government published an [updated code of practice](#) in July 2022. In response to this, the West of Scotland ASP procedures have been updated and Argyll and Bute's Professional Lead for ASP is currently in the process of updating our local procedures to reflect both these documents.

The Care Inspectorate has indicated that they intend to facilitate some "light touch" ASP inspections early in 2024 and we are in the process of reviewing our ASP action plan in preparation for this.

- 6.12 Learning Disability and Neurodiversity:** The first iteration of Argyll and Bute's Dynamic Support Register was submitted to Scottish Government on 11th October 2023. This is in line with the recommendations from the [Coming Home Implementation Report](#).

In February 2021, the Scottish Government allocated a £20 million Community Living Change Fund to Integration Authorities via NHS Boards to:

- Reduce the delayed discharges of people with complex needs.
- Repatriate those people inappropriately placed outside of Scotland.
- Redesign the way services are provided for people with complex needs.

To effectively deliver this we will be working with third sector colleagues to commission services and delivering staff training to increase capacity.

There is an emerging trend nationally within Boards and Authorities to develop a Neurodevelopmental Pathway which is a specialist service responsible for the assessment of neurodevelopmental conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adults.

A Programme Manager has been in post now since August 2023. He has made significant headway in terms of scoping, meeting with key stakeholders and the development of a project plan.

## **7. POLICY LEAD FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES – Councillor Kieron Green**

**7.1 Introduction:** Since my September report I have chaired PPSL meetings and civic government hearings on the 20<sup>th</sup> September and 18<sup>th</sup> October, and a Local Review Body on 30<sup>th</sup> October. Additionally I have attended COSLA Culture Convenors Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September, COSLA Justice Convenors Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> October, and an information session on Firework Control Zones organised by COSLA on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. I was present for the COSLA Community Wellbeing Board on 20<sup>th</sup> October where agenda items included; Near Me video conferencing to support social justice work in prisons, Illegal Money Lending, and an integration strategy for refugees arriving in Scotland.

**7.2 Development Management:** With the Validation Team now meeting the target of five days, work has commenced on scoping the ability to utilise capacity within this team to provide support for officers determining applications. Difficulties are continuing in recruitment, and there remain vacant positions, with major applications particularly affected. Agency cover is being utilised where possible, although this is often not continuous.

Through ongoing efforts to improve processing FQ2 saw determinations match the volume of submitted applications, however there remains a substantial backlog which will require additional resources to reduce significantly.

A consultation is underway around pre-application advice seeking feedback from customers around content, format and cost.

An audit on efficiency of processes and improving customer communication is being conducted which will be reported to Audit and Scrutiny in December 2023.

**7.3 Development Policy:** Following approval by council of the revised Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) and submission to Scottish Ministers, this is due to be adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Technical guidance is being produced to support the plan, with the first of these on sustainability, sustainable buildings, and simplified landscape and visual impact assessments having already been approved by committee.

- 7.4 Building Standards:** Building warrant income remains on target for 23/24 although commercial work for other authorities has been decreasing. Performance targets for July to September were all met, with 99.23% of requests for building warrants responded to within 20 days and 97.32% issued within six days, and completion certificates being issued on average in two days. Therefore 100% of users are either satisfied or very satisfied.

The White Hart Hotel in Campbeltown has also been subject to a Dangerous Buildings Notice with good progress being made by the owners to carry out repairs to the property.

- 7.5 Regulatory Services:** The Food Control Law Enforcement Plan was approved by committee on 18th October 2023. Whilst there is insufficient resources to deliver the Food Law Code of Practice, the plan effectively deploys our available resource targeted at high-risk priorities including the approved (export) sector.

With a UK outbreak of Listeriosis, work is underway to assess issues and risks in fish smokeries within Argyll and Bute.

The migratory bird season leads to increased risk of avian influenza, and there have been outbreaks in the north of Scotland. Updates have been given to poultry keepers to ensure enhanced biosecurity measures to protect their flocks, and there remain no reported cases or outbreaks in commercial or domestic poultry flocks in Argyll and Bute.

Environmental Health issued communications following a diesel spill from a private vessel at Rosneath Bay, which was contained using booms by the Royal Navy and subsequently dispersed naturally.

The annual Local Air Quality report has again confirmed that this is good in Argyll and Bute.

- 7.6 Short-Term Lets:** A total of 3,201 applications for Short Term lets licences were received by the deadline of 1st October compared to a forecast of 3,500. Over 200 have been issued so far, with processing of these continuing. Applications for new premises, where a license is required prior to trading, are being prioritised, and staffing levels are under review with the aim of increasing throughput.

As previously reported, the decision on whether to introduce control areas for short term lets within the Argyll and Bute Planning Authority Area will be evidence-based. With this data beginning to be available, and recognising the declaration of a housing emergency for Argyll and

Bute made earlier this year, work is now progressing on this matter. Further information will be brought before members in due course on this prior to any decision being taken.

**8. POLICY LEAD FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES - Councillor Ross Moreland**

**8.1 Tackling Climate Change:** Argyll and Bute Council has installed solar panels at a number of its sites and offices as part of its ongoing commitment to tackle climate change and become a net zero organisation, saving £150,000 in electricity costs each year.



Funded by the Scottish Government's 'Non-Domestic Energy Efficiency Framework (NDEEF)', the council has installed roof-mounted solar panels at Graham Williamson IT Centre in Helensburgh; the Blackhill Roads Depot in Helensburgh; Rothesay Swimming Pool; Kintyre House in Campbeltown; and Lochgilphead Learning Resource Centre.

Plans are also underway for roof-mounted solar panels at Cardross Primary School. However, the largest of the projects to date has been the installation of 100 freestanding solar panels at the council headquarters in Lochgilphead. These panels produce 45,000kWh of electricity per year, saving the council £9,800 alone in electricity costs per year at the current electricity rate.

In addition to those funded through NDEEF, the Council has also installed solar roof panels at Rothesay Joint Campus; Hermitage Academy; Tobermory High School; Islay High School; Hermitage

Primary; Parklands School; Tarbert Academy; Dunoon Grammar School; Inveraray Primary School; Lochgilphead Joint Campus; Taynuilt Primary; Park Primary; and Oban Joint Campus.

The Council is committed to doing everything it can to reduce carbon emissions in Argyll and Bute. Installing solar panels at our premises is not only helping to reduce our carbon footprint, but it is also helping us to achieve energy savings and cut electricity costs.

As a Council, we are taking action to create a climate-friendly Argyll and Bute, to develop sustainable ways of working and living, and to become a net zero carbon emissions organisation by 2045.

**8.2 Reducing emissions and driving forward change:** The Council's Climate Change Board provided an update to the Policy and Resources Committee on some of the recent activity aimed at ensuring Argyll and Bute meets its Net Zero targets.

A variety of projects and initiatives are under way, all of which are aiding the drive to reduce emissions. These include:-

- 281 homes have been insulated across Argyll and Bute as part of the Scottish Government's Energy Efficient Scotland Scheme, contributing to a reduction in harmful carbon emissions and reducing fuel costs for householders.
- A joint project between the council and Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) has delivered a programme of insulation works on properties in Tarbert, Bute, and Cowal, using Scottish Government funded grants of £722,000.
- A new 50kW Solar PV ground array system at the council's headquarters at Kilmory Castle is now online and generating energy.
- Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT) is hosting a Climate Change Manager on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership. Andy Macpherson started in post on 30<sup>th</sup> October, and will be responsible for leading the delivery of a new regional Argyll and Bute Climate Action Plan.
- ACT is also working with partners to submit a proposal to the Scottish Government to host a new Argyll Climate Action Hub.
- The Council's 'Green Summer' campaign promoted a range of initiatives including a school uniform recycling scheme, plastic-free picnics, International Plastic Free Bag Day, shop local, reduce fast fashion, active travel maps, National Marine Week and World Conservation Day.



As part of the Council's overall climate change strategy, its Decarbonisation Plan sets a three-year framework for the area's climate journey and route map to Net Zero. The plan highlights the council's clear commitment to be a Net Zero organisation by 2045 – full details are available on the [council website](#).

You can read the full report presented, here:

[CLIMATE CHANGE DECARBONISATION.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

**8.3 Waste Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** In my last Policy Lead Report, I made mention of Persistent Organic Pollutants, also known as POPs. We are all sure to have POPs in our households – POPs are generally found in items such as sofas and mattresses, etc.

SEPA have been working closely with local authorities and waste operators over the course of the last year to highlight the emerging concerns and to seek feedback on their developing guidance on how these Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) should be managed. Regulations are very clear that this waste must be managed in such a way as to destroy or irreversibly transform the POPs content, and this means that the landfilling of WUDS must stop and this type of waste must instead be sent for incineration. My understanding is that the draft guidance will make clear, at the point at which an item of upholstered domestic seating becomes waste (WUDS), it is an offence for it (or any waste arising from its treatment) to be disposed of by landfilling, or in any other way that is not one of the appropriated disposal routes.

The Council have been advised, following confirmation from SEPA in October 2023 that SEPA's intention is to publish their guidance on POPs on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 – officers are preparing a report to the November 2023 Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on waste, which will include an update on POPs, with a copy of this guidance once it has been published.

SEPA have confirmed that they will also publish information which clearly signposts the regulatory support available to enable operators who currently have a waste management authorisation to continue to store and treat WUDS containing POPs whilst working towards full compliance with the requirements outlined in the guidance document.

**8.4 Play Park Funding:** Communities across Argyll and Bute have provided the Council with feedback on their local play parks following a recent survey. More than 1,000 adults and 400 young people took part in the Council consultation, which invited play park users,



Community Councils, Disability Forums and pupils to consider priorities for their local park.

The consultation followed the award of Scottish Government funding of £938,000 for play park renewal, which the Council will allocate to 28 play parks in the area: 11 in Helensburgh and Lomond; 11 in Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the islands; five in Bute and Cowal; and one in Oban, Lorn and the Isles.

Once the Council has fully reviewed the results of the consultation, a report will go to each Area Committee to agree the priorities for each play park in their area. On top of presenting information to each Area Committee for decision, officers have commenced Area Business Days to provide Elected Members with details, which will inform the information presented to the Area Committee Meetings in December.

The Council are committed to providing a safe, fun and high-quality environment and experience for children and young people across the area's play parks.

The excellent response from our communities to the consultation demonstrates the high value which local people place on these and we would like to thank everyone who took the time to let us know their thoughts. We look forward to reviewing all the responses and further enhancing the facilities on offer.

**8.5 Recycling Infrastructure Fund:** I was delighted to hear that the Council submitted an application to the Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) which is managed by Zero Waste Scotland and in October were advised that they had successfully secured funding, totalling £891,945.12.

In summary, the application was for funding from the Recycling Improvement Fund to support improvements to recycling infrastructure at six Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) on the islands and the Helensburgh and Lomond area of the Argyll and Bute Council area. The improvements will increase the quality and quantity of recycle material captured by the Council and provide further re-use opportunities for items deposited at these sites – well done to everyone involved in securing this substantial amount of monies.

**8.6 Other works:** There are a number of works ongoing within the Service, which I also wanted to highlight, such as:-

- Grass cutting – grass cutting for the season ceased at the end of October, and I wanted to pay my thanks to staff for their efforts in keeping our area looking great this year;
- Burials/Crematorium – the number of burials and cremations remain manageable, with numbers in line with seasonal averages. Crematorium Superintendent and Operators posts were vacant and I was delighted to hear that these have now been filled;
- Bin collections – following the weather incidents in early October, operatives have tried their best to deliver to schedule, while managing other conflicting demands which arose from the recovery from the weather incident. You can check on any service disruption to your bin collections on the Council's website here [Rubbish and recycling | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://Rubbish and recycling | Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk))

I would also want to put on record my thanks to all staff for their efforts following the weather incident and the recovery process which is underway – there is a lot of hard work going on, a lot that is often unseen – well done to everyone involved.

## **9. POLICY LEAD FOR ISLANDS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - Councillor Liz McCabe**

**9.1 Support for businesses during the recovery from weather incident:** Officers have been in touch with local businesses to share information following the impacts of extreme weather events which are affecting communities across Argyll and Bute, and Scotland as a whole.

Businesses were offered advice and information through our Business Gateway service. Business Gateway can provide one-to-one support from a business adviser and can link business owners to an expert help adviser for support with particular aspects such as marketing, to help business recovery. Their support is free of charge and is open to every business owner to contact them on 01546 604555 or email [business.gateway@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:business.gateway@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Updates on progress concerning the reinstatement of our transport infrastructure can be found on our website at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/weather-recovery](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/weather-recovery)

I would want to express my sincerest thanks to all of the officers involved in the recovery works, there have been a lot of well-deserved positive comments on social media regarding staff and their efforts – well done.

Helping local businesses to thrive with free events: Entrepreneurs and people in business across Argyll and Bute are being offered the chance to attend a free event designed to help them expand their business activity.

Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) are jointly hosting a series of 'Thrive and Transform' events, designed to help local businesses expand their activity.

The series kicked off in Dunoon on 20th September, with 30 attendees. Sessions were also held in Tobermory on 4th October and Oban on 26th October with further sessions (at the time of writing) scheduled for Helensburgh on 2nd November, Campbeltown 29th November and Lochgilphead 7th February. There will also be a virtual event on 24th January 2024 for anyone unable to get to an event in person.

Local businesses are integral to Argyll and Bute's long-term economic success. We know that the last couple of years have been incredibly challenging for many business owners. The Thrive and Transform series is a great opportunity to network and hear from industry experts on the range of support available

Plenty of support can be provided virtually but these events are a great excuse to get together and meet face to share ideas and best practice.

The events start with networking, followed by short presentations from Business Gateway and HIE on the different types of support each organisation can offer.

Each event will also include a selection of expert partners able to offer advice on reducing costs, minimising waste and optimising operational efficiencies in a business.

Full details and registration are available online at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/unlockyourbusinesspotential](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/unlockyourbusinesspotential)

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – business support: Promotional activity via email, social media and press releases is now generating increased activity - 27 applications have been received to date.

For the small business development grant, nine applications have been approved, four are in progress and one rejected as ineligible. For the start-up grant, one application has been approved, three are in progress and three rejected as ineligible. One Trade Fair, Training or Accreditation grant has been approved and one other is in progress. One expert help session has been approved.

## **9.2 Islands Issues:**

Argyll Islands Sounding Board: At the August EDI committee it was agreed that the Council's formal response to the National Islands Plan (NIP) consultation be prepared and shared with members of the Argyll Islands Sounding Board for their views and input, prior to the final response being submitted. The original closing date was 9th October; however, the Scottish Government advised local authorities on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 of an extension to the response deadline to 7th November.

The Argyll Islands Sounding Board met on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023, to discuss the consultation response to the Scottish Government's National Islands Plan Review and a response for submission is in hand.

Islands Programme (IP) 2023/2024: The Council submitted two applications to the IP 2023/24 and successfully secured funding for both projects. £700,000 has been awarded to Tobermory Worker Accommodation project, as part of the Rural Growth Deal, and £450,000 awarded to the HSCP for the Tiree Community Care Hub project.

The formal contracts from the Scottish Government have been received, signed and returned and procurement work is now underway.

## **9.3 Regeneration activity:**

Tarbert Heritage Regeneration Scheme: An Area Partnership Group has been formed and all contracts have been signed. The Project Officer is currently working with National Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to get the briefs for the Architects and Community Engagement out on Public Contracts Scotland (the portal for tenders in the public sector). An office in Tarbert has been sourced for the Project Officer in Tarbert Library for three days a week. This started from Monday 2nd October and will allow the project to move forward substantially having a base in the town.

Rothesay Townscape Heritage (TH): Rothesay TH is now expected to complete by the end of 2023 due to delays with contracts for completion of the last remaining projects. 69-72 Victoria Street is the last remaining priority building with the shopfront on ground floor being the last shopfront restoration project. There has been a great social media response to the completion of 1 Tower Street, with many members of the public commenting on the improvement it makes to the seafront.

Lochgilphead Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme: Lochgilphead CARS is a £2m programme in its fourth year – due to end March 2026. Two priority buildings have works under way on site. The remaining two priority buildings are scheduled to start in spring 2024. A repair project is underway on Lochnell Street with a number of other projects in the development phase. A Tenement Maintenance and Retrofit event took place in September which seventeen people attended.

Film and TV production in Argyll: The number of film enquiries and productions filming in the area has been a steady stream. There has been one large scale Netflix production in the area and another medium sized production based outside Oban for six weeks.

For more information on filming in Argyll and Bute, please have a look at the dedicated Film in Argyll website - [Whats New | Film in Argyll | Filming in Scotland](#)

#### **9.4 Employability:**

Fair Start Scotland - 16 to 67 year olds: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

Ten additional starts have signed up to Fair Start Scotland, bringing the total to 397 participants since the service commenced (73 Helensburgh, 95 Campbeltown, 48 Rothesay, 77 Dunoon and 104 Oban). Key Workers have supported 148 people into work.

PeoplePlus continues to set targets. Referral numbers from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have picked up slightly following attendance by our keyworkers at recent 50 years plus events.

The Scottish Government has granted a one year extension to allow referrals to be received up to 31st March 2024.

Officers continue to complete the Marketing Action Plan detailing the activity carried out to promote the service.

No One Left Behind (NOLB) - Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) 25+ Years : Applications have now ceased utilising 22/23 funding. This funding allowed unemployed people aged 25+ years the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

Seven employers recruited nine employees - of these, five employees have reached the end of their subsidised period/left early; one has been retained in employment with the employer accessing the subsidy; two have moved into self-employment; one has secured alternative employment with an employer and one has moved to London to be closer to family.

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) - Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) 16 to 67 Years: [https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated\\_files/participant\\_leaflet\\_pesf\\_eri\\_22.23.pdf](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated_files/participant_leaflet_pesf_eri_22.23.pdf)

Applications continue to be accepted in respect of the ERIs of up to £6,000 per person. This allows unemployed parents aged 16 to 67 years the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

Parental Welfare Fund: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

This fund is aimed at parents receiving support through the PESF (see above) who successfully secure employment. It helps with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries.

Up to £1,000 is claimable and paid in three instalments over the first 13 weeks of employment. This fund will help with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries around costs of work wear, travel to work, etc, helping to balance between receiving salary and Universal Credit payments.

The Young Person's Guarantee - 16-24 year olds: The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) has now ceased as the 23/24 All Age Employability Service will now support people ages 16 to 67 years.

Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) are still available to employers under the YPG general revenue grant. Employers can apply for grants of up to £6,000 per participant. This will allow a total of 90 unemployed young people the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

To date 86 young people have commenced an ERI. Of these 62 have now completed or left early; 38 remain employed with the same employer; six are employed with a different employer; four are in further education; five are not in education or employment and nine are whereabouts unknown

NOLB All Age Service and Child Poverty 2023/24: Local authorities received their grant offer letters on 30<sup>th</sup> May this year from the Scottish Government in respect of funding from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

A grant allocation of £443,000 is available to fund delivery and staff costs for pre-employment All Age Employability Support. A further allocation of £543,000 is available to help fund the tackling of child poverty. All monies are subject to a hard stop spend at 31st March 2024.

At the Scottish Government's request an Annual Investment Plan has been created. The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership (ABEP) endorsed this plan on 5th July 2023. The plan details all delivery by the Employability Team and Third Sector Partners.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are in place with two Third Sector partners InspirAlba and WorkingRite. InspirAlba, the consortium lead, along with their partners will deliver pre-employment support across the whole of Argyll and Bute. A total of 110 participants will be supported including 20 work taster placements and four work placements. WorkingRite will also deliver 25 pre-employment places in Mid Argyll, Lorn and the Isles.

In respect of child poverty, InspirAlba will deliver support to 140 parents; 110 of which will access specialist support with Bute Advice and Alienergy. There will also be four opportunities for interested parents to be fully supported to set up their own childminding business. This intervention will help tackle the shortage of available childcare in the area. A further 24 parents will be involved in budget cooking where they not only gain budgeting skills but also coaching and accredited training in the food and drink industry. Completion of the course will allow parents to be best placed to secure employment in the hospitality sector.

An additional letter in respect of £213,000 general revenue grant (GRG) monies to fund Child Poverty staff costs was received on 12th July 2023. These monies will be paid in March 2024 and are permitted to be accrued to 2024/25.

As well as the overall management of partner delivery, the Employability Team continues to deliver support to low income employed parents and unemployed parents. We will also shortly be advertising work.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund: We are offering work placement and training interventions. There are 29 opportunities available in 2023/24. Eighteen unemployed people have commenced a work placement paying the Real Living Wage. A further five employers have shown interest and may have potential starts.

Interest in the training intervention has picked up. Eight participants have had their funding application approved and seven are pending.

Fifteen of the interventions have now started delivery. The remaining four expect to start delivery before the end of the year.

The Multiply programme has been tendered, and the contact will be awarded in October.

Approval has been granted for underspends from 2022/23 to be carried forward into 2023/24. Payment of the 2023/24 allocation is expected to be received in October.

## **9.5 Digital/R100:**

In terms of an update on Digital/R100 I have been kept informed by officers, and note the latest statistics:-

- 94.7% of Argyll and Bute premises are connected to the fibre network
- 87% can access speeds >30Mbps
- 0.8% are between 24 and 30 Mbps
- 2.3% are between 15 and 24 Mbps
- 1.7% are between 10 and 15Mbps
- 5.2% are between 2 and 10Mbps
- 3.1% are below 2Mbps

Full Fibre/Ultra-Fast Broadband (>100 Mbps) availability is currently at 8.21% -

- Openreach 8.1%
- Virgin/KCOM 0.18%

A meeting is scheduled with Scottish Government representatives and Executive and Senior management to take place before the end of this year to discuss the progress of the R100 programme across Argyll and Bute.



**10. POLICY LEAD FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, COMMUNITIES AND CORPORATE SERVICES - Councillor Alastair Redman**

**10.1 Economic Growth and Communities:**

Tarbert Heritage Scheme: Ambitious plans to regenerate Tarbert are taking shape, following the announcement of new funding for the project. Argyll and Bute Council has launched the first phase of the Tarbert Heritage Regeneration Scheme, with the restoration of historic buildings being one of the key aims of the initiative.

The Council has awarded £60,000 to the project, while the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland have each committed £40,000.

Priorities in the coming months are the development of an application for the next phase of delivery as well as plans to engage with the local community on their aspirations for the area. The Council also plans to carry out cost analyses of potential priority buildings, conduct a skills audit in the local area, and develop an energy efficiency scheme.

The aim with the Tarbert Heritage scheme is to replicate the success of other regeneration projects already launched in areas such as Rothesay, Dunoon, Campbeltown and Lochgilphead.

The restoration and refurbishment of historic buildings and enhancement of the local culture and heritage of our communities is a key priority, boosting the wider economic health of Argyll and Bute, generating employment, enhancing skills and attracting more people to live and work in the area.

Love Local Cards – Photography Competition: A new photography competition has taken place with the dual aim of helping to support local businesses while highlighting the area's stunning scenery.

Argyll and Bute Council is looking for iconic landscape images of the area, with the winning entry featuring on the new Argyll and Bute Gift Card design. As well as seeing their work on the new cards, the winner will themselves receive a £50 Argyll and Bute Gift Card.

Local businesses are the beating heart of our communities and communities are encouraging more people to show support and shop local. From amazing experience days to the best local produce and bespoke gifts, purchasing the Argyll and Bute gift card not only makes a great present but you're also supporting local jobs.

Launched in 2021, the gift card encourages people to support local businesses by shopping local. The card works just like a gift voucher with over 300 independent shops, experiences and services to choose.

The competition looked for a stunning landscape image to feature on the gift card, one that really captures what makes Argyll and Bute so special.

The competition launched on 2nd October and closed on 20th October - the Council will make an announcement on the winner soon and I look forward to seeing all of the entries and the winning picture.

Below are a couple of pictures which I took while out Portnahaven which showcases the wonderful landscapes we really do have in Argyll and Bute. I would encourage everyone who uses social media to use our hashtag when uploading their images of our beautiful area **#abplace2b**



## 10.2 Customer and Support Services:

Registrar Funeral Services: Residents and undertakers in Kintyre can now ask Argyll and Bute Council Registrars to conduct non-denominational funeral services following a successful pilot programme.

The decision by the Council means that people in the Kintyre area will have a greater choice of funeral service provider from within their own community. It also removes any potential need to travel outside their local area or the need to bring in officiators.

Local undertakers approached Argyll and Bute Council for help, due to the long-term decline in the number of available Church of Scotland Ministers to conduct funerals. The Council launched a six-month pilot in 2022 to enable registrars based in Campbeltown, who already officiate at marriage ceremonies and register deaths, to deal with funeral arrangements including conducting services.

It is great to be able to offer the support of our experienced registrars to deliver this important service to families at very challenging times. During the pilot, a number of positive responses from families, mourners and undertakers were received. It was clear that the Kintyre community would welcome making this move permanent. It now gives people a wider choice locally and helps to support our local undertakers.

At present, there would not appear to be a demand to widen out the service into other areas of the Argyll and Bute region but officers will continue to monitor the views of registrars in other districts to assess if there is a need elsewhere.

Council Website: Argyll and Bute Council's new-look website now makes it even easier for residents, businesses and visitors to access information and keep up to date with all the latest news. The new website offers the same huge range of online services as before, as well as some new ones, to make connecting with the council quick and convenient.

The website also has a number of "[Request It](#)" and "[Report It](#)" functions that allow people to report lighting and road faults; tell us if they have moved house; make and comment on planning applications; order a new bin; change the name of their house; or request a copy birth certificate. The [My Council](#) section is the gateway to a host of council information from current fees and charges to all the papers from council and committee meetings and councillor related information.

The website allows you to sign up to our “[Keep In The Loop](#)” service, which keeps you up to date via text or email about [disruptions](#), service changes, events and news. It also enables you to engage with the council by taking part in [consultations and surveys](#). You can hear from the council's Chief Executive Pippa Milne on a wide range of topical subjects in [Pippa's Podcasts](#).

The site also has a Digital Assistant called Abbot, web chat and improved search function, to help you get the information you need around the clock, and if you are planning a journey, you can even check the roads before you go by taking a look at our [roads cameras](#).

The new streamlined website not only looks great, it offers a huge variety of resources that could save you time and money.

The team are committed to delivering new and useful digital services, and the website makes it even easier to navigate these. I would urge everyone to have a look at the new site to see how it can benefit them. Visit [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

The Council's Web Team are always keen to improve the content and usability of the website, so constructive [feedback is very welcome](#).

Customer Engagement Team: The team continue to deliver on a number of different platforms, and the following gives a flavour of what the team have been working hard on:-

- Webchat re-applied to the website in September along with the Drupal 9 compliant version of our Web Bot Abbot and the team are developing an equivalent for the MyCouncil Works pages too.
- The increase in the call abandon rate from 3% last August to 5.1% this August and reduction in resolution at first point of contact from 89% to 88% is indicative of the influx of new Agents and loss of experienced ones over past months. Mediated contacts also rose adding to the strain on team resources.
- Marriage activity is still buoyant, although down on the post pandemic peaks of last year and it is notable that for the year to date there have been 368 civil and 338 religious ceremonies.
- The number of page views on the new website in August was 42,000 up on the old website last August and it looks like the visitors to the site are having a good look around it. The web team have been working to ensure that recording measures and external website scoring reflect visitor/view levels, including challenging some metrics successfully which mean that our monthly scores should improve from the current, very respectable 96/100.

- The external facing staff website called [My Council Works](#) has had a significant facelift by the Web Team under the direction of the Comms Team and has new HR and Wellbeing pages.
- New content has also been developed for the Health and Social Care Partnership on the [abplace2b site](#) which is now being linked to from all their recruitment adverts. Stats are being monitored and provided to the HSCP to monitor effectiveness.

Business Support web pages: Following the recent weather events and the large scale recovery which is underway, I would encourage all business owners to take a look at the Council's website, which provides a range of support which is available to them - [Business support | Argyll and Bute Council](#)

### **10.3 Corporate Services:**

By-election – Ward 1 South Kintyre: The team administered the by-election in Ward 1, South Kintyre on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, with five candidates standing for election. There will be a separate report to the November meeting of the Council in relation to the result. An electronic count was carried out in Campbeltown immediately following the close of poll at 10pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1** This report provides members with an update on each of the Policy Lead portfolios. Policy Lead Councillors will be happy to discuss any particular issues with colleagues as required.

**Argyll and Bute Council – Policy Lead Councillors Report – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**For further information please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email [aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL  
ELECTION OF COUNCILLOR  
WARD 1 – SOUTH KINTYRE  
2 NOVEMBER 2023**

The name and address of the person who has been elected as a Councillor in Ward 1 – South Kintyre at the by-election held on 2 November 2023 is as follows:-

<b>ELECTORAL WARD</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Ward 1 – South Kintyre	Jennifer Mary Kelly	Strathmore, Drumlemble, Campbeltown	Independent

Pippa Milne  
**Returning Officer**  
3 November 2023

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

**LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT**

**COUNCIL**

**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

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**POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** This report invites the Council to give consideration to a number of vacancies on committees and other organisations. It also includes, for noting, the updated political composition of the Council following the by-election in Ward 1, South Kintyre, which took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** The Council is asked:
- a) To give consideration to the current vacancies on committees and other organisations;
  - b) To note that Councillor Kelly will become a Trustee for the Campbeltown Common Good Fund and the Kintyre Education Trust along with the other Ward 1 Members; and
  - c) To note the updated Political Composition of the Council as set out at Appendix 1.

### **3. DETAIL**

- 3.1** When the Council met on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023, it considered a report outlining vacancies on council committees, external organisations and area-based organisations following the resignation of Donald Kelly as a Councillor for Ward 1, South Kintyre. The Council agreed to defer consideration of these vacancies until after the Ward 1 By-Election which took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.
- 3.2** Councillor Jennifer Kelly was elected to represent Ward 1 – South Kintyre at the By-Election held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.
- 3.3** The vacancies for Council’s consideration are listed below:
- a) Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee – one space
  - b) A83 Taskforce – one space
- 3.4** Councillor Kelly as the newly Elected Councillor for Ward 1, South Kintyre will become a Trustee for the Campbeltown Common Good Fund and will also become a Trustee of the Kintyre Education Trust, along with the other Ward 1 members. As this is an Area appointment it will also be confirmed to the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Area Committee at the next meeting to be held in December 2023.
- 3.5** The political composition of the Council has been updated following the Ward 1, South Kintyre By-Election on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, and this has been attached at Appendix 1.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1** This report asks Council to give consideration to a number of vacancies and to note its updated political composition following the By-Election on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** **Policy** – none
- 5.2** **Financial** – None

**5.3 Legal – None**

**5.4 HR – None**

**5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - None**

**5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None**

**5.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty - None**

**5.5.3 Islands - None**

**5.6 Climate Change - None**

**5.7 Risk – None**

**5.8 Customer Service – None**

**Douglas Hendry**

**Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support**

**6<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**For further information please contact Shona Barton on 01436 657605 or by email on [shona.barton@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:shona.barton@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**

Appendix 1

Political Composition of Argyll and Bute Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

**Argyll and Bute Council - Political Composition**

**ARGYLL FIRST (1)**

**Douglas Philand (Ind) (Leader of Argyll First) \***

**INDEPENDENT (2)**

Mark Irvine \*  
Jennifer Kelly

**INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST (1)**

Tommy Macpherson

**SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY (1)**

Luna Martin

**SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY (1)**

Fiona Howard \*

**SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY (12)**

John Armour \*  
Gordon Blair \*  
Jan Brown \*  
Math Campbell-Sturgess \*  
Audrey E Forrest (Depute Leader, SNP Group) \*  
Willie Hume \*  
Reeni Kennedy Boyle \*  
**Jim Lynch (Leader of the Opposition) \***  
Ian James MacQuire \*  
Dougie McFadzean \*  
Julie McKenzie  
Iain Shonny Paterson \*

**\* Member of the Strategic Opposition Partnership (SOP) – an informal partnership arrangement and not a formal political group**

**THE ARGYLL, LOMOND AND THE ISLES GROUP (18)**

Garret Corner (Con)  
Maurice Corry (Con)  
Robin Currie (LibDem)  
Kieron Green (Ind)  
Amanda Hampsey (Con)  
Daniel Hampsey (Con)  
Graham Hardie (LibDem)  
Andrew Kain (Ind)  
Paul Donald Kennedy (LibDem)  
Liz McCabe (Ind)  
**Yvonne McNeilly (Con) (Leader, TALIG)**  
Ross Moreland (LibDem)  
Gary Mulvaney (Con)  
Gemma Penfold (Con)  
Alastair Redman (Ind)  
William Sinclair (LibDem)  
Andrew Vennard (Con)  
Peter Wallace (Con)

*Note:*

*Con - Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party*

*Ind - Independent*

*LibDem - Scottish Liberal Democrat Party*

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT****23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**DRAFT PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2024-25**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council's Standing Orders for Meetings require the Council to approve a Programme of Meetings for the Council and its Committees every year. Attached is a draft programme of meetings for the year 2024-25, based on the current committee cycle, which it is recommended that the Council approve.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council consider and approve the draft Programme of Meetings for the year 2024-25.

**3.0 DETAIL**

- 3.1 Standing Order 20.1 requires that the Council approve a Programme of Meetings each year.
- 3.2 The current approved Programme of Meetings for the Council and its Committees runs until June 2024.
- 3.3 The Council is required to approve a Programme of Meetings for the period July 2024 to June 2025 and a draft is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.4 Members are requested to note that, with the agreement of the Chair, there have been some adjustments made to the dates for the meetings of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee which were scheduled to take place on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024. These will now take place on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 respectively and this is reflected in the attached programme.
- 3.5 It should be noted that Standing Order 20.2 makes provision for the Chair of a Committee (or in whose absence the Vice- Chair) for good cause to cancel or alter the date, time or place for a meeting but not after the summons for the meeting has been issued.

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Council's Standing Orders for Meetings require the Council to approve a Programme of Meetings for the Council and its Committees. The approved Programme runs until June 2024 and the Council is invited to approve a

Programme of Meetings for the period July 2024 to June 2025.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Policy - None

5.2 Financial – Members travel and subsistence costs

5.3 Legal – Requirement of Standing Order 20.1

5.4 HR - None

5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

5.5.1 Equalities – None

5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None

5.5.3 Islands - None

5.6 Climate Change - None

5.7 Risk - None

5.8 Customer Service – None

**Douglas Hendry**

**Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support**

**15 November 2023**

**For further information contact:** Shona Barton, Governance Manager (01436) 657605

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Draft Programme of Meetings 2024-25



Programme of Committee Meetings – up to June 2025

	2023	2024						July						2025					
Committee	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Council			Thu 22		Thu 25		Thu 27			Thu 19		Thu 21			Thu 20		Thu 24		Thu 26
Policy & Resources	Thurs 7		Thu 15			Thu 9			Thu 15		Thu 10		Thu 5		Thu 13			Thu 8	
Community Services	Thurs 14			Thu 7			Thu 6		Thu 22				Thu 12			Thu 6			Thu 5
Env, Dev, Inf *Harbour Brd				*Thu 21			Thu 20			*Thu 12			Thu 19			*Thu 20			Thu 19
PPSL	Wed 20	Wed 24	Wed 21	Wed 20	Wed 17	Wed 22	Wed 19		Wed 21	Wed 18	Wed 23	Wed 20	Wed 18	Wed 22	Wed 19	Wed 19	Wed 23	Wed 21	Wed 18
Audit & Scrutiny	Tues 19			Thu 14			Thu 13			Thu 5			Tue 17			Thu 13			Thu 12
B&C Area	Tues 5			Tue 5			Tue 4			Tue 3			Tue 3			Tue 4			Tue 3
B&C CPG			Tue 6		Tue 30				Tue 13			Tue 5			Tue 4			Tue 6	
MAKI Area	Wed 6		Wed 28				Wed 5			Wed 4			Wed 4			Wed 5			Wed 4
MAKI CPG		Wed 31				Wed 1			Wed 28			Wed 6			Wed 5			Wed 7	
H&L Area	Tues 12			Tue 12			Tue 11			Tue 10			Tue 10			Tue 11			Tue 10
H&L CPG			Tue 13			Tue 7			Tue 20			Tue 12			Tue 11			Tue 13	
OLI Area	Wed 13			Wed 6			Wed 12			Wed 11			Wed 11			Wed 12			Wed 11
OLI CPG			Wed 7			Wed 8			Wed 14			Wed 13			Wed 12			Wed 14	
IJB		Wed 31		Wed 27															
CPP/Mgt Comm	Wed 20																		
Licensing Board			Tue 27		Tue 23		Tue 25			Tue 17		Tue 19							
Seminars																			

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT 23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023-24**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a review, between the dates of 2 October 2023 and 28 January 2025, of polling districts and polling places within the Argyll and Bute area for the purposes of UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections.

The Council is being asked to agree the following recommendations:-

- a) Note that polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances;
- b) Note that under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review of polling districts and polling places will require to be carried out by the end of January 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter;
- c) Approve the scheme of polling districts and polling places detailed in Appendix 1;
- d) Note the representations received during the consultation period detailed in Appendix 2 together with the Returning Officer comments thereon.

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT 23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023-24**

---

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a review, between the dates of 2 October 2023 and 28 January 2025, of polling districts and polling places within the Argyll and Bute area for the purposes of UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council is being asked to:-

- 3.1 Note that polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances;
- 3.2 Note that under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review of polling districts and polling places will require to be carried out by the end of January 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter;
- 3.3 Approve the scheme of polling districts and polling places detailed in Appendix 1;
- 3.4 Note the representations received during the consultation period detailed in Appendix 2 together with the Returning Officer comments thereon.

**4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 There has always been a requirement on the relevant local authority to keep under review the polling districts and polling places used at parliamentary and local government elections. Section 17 of the Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires every local authority to undertake a review by the end of January 2025, and every fifth year thereafter. In practice in Argyll and Bute the fixing of polling district boundaries and polling places is delegated to the Chief Executive, who also acts as the Returning Officer for parliamentary and local

government elections.

- 4.2 The polling districts and polling places were last reviewed in Argyll and Bute in 2018. The polling district boundaries and polling places are the same for all elections whether UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary or local government elections.
- 4.3 The aims of the review were to seek to ensure that:
  - (a) all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
  - (b) so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who may have a disability.
- 4.4 In an ideal world electoral administrators would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there may be little choice available. Where it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment is made to provide access for all electors. The choice of polling place will often be a balance between the quality (access, facilities, etc.) of a building and the distances between the residents and that building compared to other options for polling places. There is no fixed rule on how to decide how this should be done. The legislation provides that all electors in a constituency should have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.5 The review was held from 2 October 2023 and details of the proposals were sent to all Elected Members, Community Councils, relevant Constituency MPs and MSPs, local Access Panels and the Electoral Registration Officer. These proposals are set out in Appendix I. Notices were posted, and copies of the documentation made available for public view, in Kilmory Headquarters and the Civic Centre, Helensburgh and on the Councils website. Representations on the proposed scheme were invited by 30 October 2023.
- 4.6 A number of representations have been received and these are detailed in Appendix 2, together with the Returning Officers comments.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Having taken into account the responses to the consultation, and in the knowledge that (a) polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer, to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances; and (b) under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review will require to be carried out by 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter, it is

concluded that Appendix 1 be approved as the final scheme for polling districts and polling stations for Argyll and Bute.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial – Reduction in the number of polling places will provide a cost saving for elections.
- 6.3 Legal – The review is in line with the requirement set down in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- 6.4 HR – There will be a reduction in the number of staff required if the revised scheme is agreed.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
  - 6.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics - None
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
  - 6.5.3 Islands – Will ensure our island communities are able to participate fully in electoral processes.
- 6.6 Climate Change – Reduction in the number of polling places will reduce travel.
- 6.7 Risk – Reduces the risk of polling place issues as the venues identified all meet the required standards.
- 6.8 Customer Service – Ensures that the people of Argyll and Bute are able to fully participate in electoral processes.

**Douglas Hendry – Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support**

**Policy Lead - Councillor Alastair Redman**

November 2023

**For further information contact:** David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support

Phone 01546 604322

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – final proposals

Appendix 2 – responses to consultation

## ARGYLL AND BUTE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES – 2023/24

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA01	Campbeltown South	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown	AA01	Campbeltown South	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown, PA28 6EG	No change
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA02	Drumlemble	Machrihanish Golf Club	AA02	Drumlemble	Stewarton and District Village Hall, Campbeltown PA28 6PG	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA03	Southend	Dunaverty Hall	AA03	Southend	Dunaverty Hall, Southend, Campbeltown, PA28 6RW	No change
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA04	Campbeltown Central	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown	AA04	Campbeltown Central	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown, PA28 6EG	No change
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA05	Peninver	Peninver Village Hall	AA05	Peninver	Peninver Village Hall, Peninver, PA28 6QP	No change
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA06	Campbeltown North	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown	AA06	Campbeltown North	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown, PA28 6EG	No change
Ward 1 - South Kintyre	AA07	Bellochantuy / Kilkenzie	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown	AA07	Bellochantuy / Kilkenzie	Victoria Hall, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown PA28 6EG	No change

### Drumlemble\*

Proposed permanent change of polling place from the Machrihanish Golf Club to the Stewarton & District Village Hall as the golf club is no longer available as a venue for polling. There are no other suitable venues in and around this area. The Hall has been used for the last two elections and has worked well. The hall has excellent disabled access via a ramp at the front entrance of the building.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA08	Carradale	Carradale Village Hall	AA08	Carradale	Carradale Village Hall, Carradale, PA28 6QG	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA09	Skipness	Skipness Hall	AA09	Skipness	Skipness Hall, Skipness, PA29 6XT	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA10	Tarbert	Templar Arts & Leisure Centre, Tarbert	AA10	Tarbert	Templar Arts & Leisure Centre, Harbour Street, Tarbert, PA29 6UD	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA11	Gigha	Gigha Primary School	AA11	Gigha	Gigha Village Hall, Ardminish, Isle of Gigha, PA41 7AD	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA12	Chleit	Tayinloan Village Hall	AA12	Chleit	Tayinloan Village Hall, Tayinloan, Tarbert, PA29 6XG	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA13	Clachan	Clachan Primary School	AA13	Clachan	Whitehouse Village Hall, Whitehouse, Tarbert PA29 6XR	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA14	Dunmore	Kilberry Inn, Kilberry	AA14	Dunmore	Ormsary Estate Hall, Ormsary Farm, Ormsary PA30 8PE	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA15	Port Charlotte	Port Mor, Port Charlotte	AA15	Port Charlotte	Port Mor, Port Charlotte, Islay, PA48 7UE	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA16	Portnahaven	Rhinns Hall, Portnahaven	AA16	Portnahaven	Rhinns Hall, Portnahaven, Islay, PA47 7SG	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA17	Kilmeny	Ballygrant Hall	AA17	Kilmeny	Ballygrant Hall, Ballygrant, Islay, PA45 7QR	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA18	Port Ellen	Ramsay Memorial Hall, Port Ellen	AA18	Port Ellen	Ramsay Memorial Hall, Port Ellen, Islay, PA47 7BD	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA19	Bowmore	Bowmore Village Hall	AA19	Bowmore	Islay Customer Service Point, Jamieson Street, Bowmore, Isle of Islay PA43 7HP	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA20	Jura	Craighouse Village Hall	AA20	Jura	Craighouse Village Hall, Craighouse, Jura PA60 7XG	No change
Ward 2 - Kintyre & the Islands	AA21	Colonsay	Colonsay Village Hall	AA21	Colonsay	Colonsay Village Hall, Colonsay, PA61 7YW	No change

### Gigha

Proposed permanent change of venue from Gigha Primary School to the Gigha Village Hall which comes as a result of finding a school alternative. The Gigha Hall is geographically a very short move but it is a viable alternative to a primary school. The hall has excellent disabled access via a ramp at the front entrance of the building.



**Dunmore** \*

Proposed permanent change of venue from the Kilberry Inn to the Ormsary Estate Hall comes as a result of the Kilberry Inn being sold and being no longer available. The consultation also included the Templar Arts & Leisure Centre in Tarbert but the Ormsary Hall is more convenient for voters. There are no other suitable venues in this polling district area other than the Ormsary Estate Hall which geographically is a shorter move than to Tarbert.

**Bowmore**

Proposed permanent change of venue from Bowmore Village Hall to the Islay Service Point which is more convenient for voters. The Service Point has been used for the last two elections and has worked well. The Service Point is more centrally located and is easily accessed.

**Clachan**

Proposed permanent change of venue from Clachan Primary School to the Whitehouse Village Hall which comes as a result of finding a school alternative. The Whitehouse Village Hall is 4.8miles from Clachan but it is a viable alternative to a primary school. The Whitehouse Hall is a more suitable venue within the polling district with good accessibility.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA23	Ardrishaig	Ardrishaig Public Hall	AA23	Ardrishaig	Ardrishaig Public Hall, Chalmers Street, Ardrishaig, PA30 8EY	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA24	Achahoish	Achahoish New Primary School	AA24	Achahoish	Ormsary Estate Hall, Ormsary Farm, Ormsary PA30 8PE	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA25	Crinan	Achnamara Hall	AA25	Crinan	Achnamara Hall, Achnamara, Lochgilphead, PA31 8PU	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA26	Tayvallich	Tayvallich Village Hall	AA26	Tayvallich	Tayvallich Village Hall, Tayvallich, PA31 8PN	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA27	Lochgilphead	Lochgilphead Community Education Centre	AA27	Lochgilphead	Lochgilphead Community Education Centre, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8SY	Slight boundary change. Moving one house from Lochgilphead AA27 to Kilmichael Glassary AA33.
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA28	Inveraray	Nicoll Hall, Inveraray	AA28	Inveraray	Nicoll Hall, Church Square, Inveraray, PA32 8TZ	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA29	Furnace	Furnace Hall	AA29	Furnace	Furnace Village Hall, Furnace, By Inveraray, PA32 8XN	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA30	Kilmartin	Kilmartin Church Hall	AA30	Kilmartin	Glassary, Kilmartin & Ford Parish Church Hall, Barr Mhor, Kilmartin PA31 8RN	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA31	Ford	Ford Village Hall	AA31	Ford	Ford Village Hall, Ford, PA31 8RH	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA32	Craignish	Craignish Village Hall	AA32	Craignish	Craignish Village Hall, Ardfarn, PA31 8QN	No change
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA33	Kilmichael Glassary	Glassary Primary School	AA33	Kilmichael Glassary	Glassary Primary School, Kilmichael Glassary, PA31 8QA	Slight boundary change. Moving one house from Lochgilphead AA27 to Kilmichael Glassary AA33.
Ward 3 - Mid Argyll	AA34	Minard	Minard Village Hall	AA34	Minard	Minard Village Hall, Minard, by Inveraray, PA32 8PN	No change

**Achahoish** \*

Proposed permanent change of venue from Achahoish Primary School to Ormsary Estate Hall which comes as a result of finding a school alternative. There are no other suitable venues within this polling district area, currently utilising the School. Ormsary Hall has excellent disable access at the front entrance of the hall.

**Lochgilphead – Kilmichael Glassary** \*

Proposed slight boundary change of one house from AA27 Lochgilphead to AA33 Kilmichael Glassary given the potential for development and location of the entrance.

There are no other suitable venues in this area, currently utilising the School.

**Kilmartin**

Proposed permanent change of name of venue from Kilmartin Church Hall to the Glassary, Kilmartin & Ford Parish Church Hall which is currently being used as a polling station.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA36	Oban Central	Salvation Army Hall, Stevenson Street, Oban	AA36	Oban West and Central	The Rockfield Centre, Stevenson Street, Oban PA34 5DQ	Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA36 & AA37 into one. Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA37	Oban West	Baptist Church Hall, Albany Street			The Rockfield Centre, Stevenson Street, Oban PA34 5DQ	Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA36 & AA37 into one. Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA38	Oban Glencruitten	Kilmore & Oban Parish Church Hall, Glencruitten Road, Oban	AA38	Oban Glencruitten	Kilmore & Oban Parish Church Hall, Glencruitten Road, Oban, PA34 4DN	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA39	Oban Soroba	Soroba Community Facility, 6B Scalpay Terrace, Oban	AA39	Oban Soroba	Soroba Community Facility, 6B Scalpay Terrace, Oban, PA34 4YH	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA42	Tobermory	Aros Hall, Tobermory	AA42	Tobermory	Aros Hall, Main Street, Tobermory, Mull, PA75 6NT	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA43	Dervaig	Dervaig Hall	AA43	Dervaig	Dervaig Hall, Dervaig, Mull, PA75 6QN	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA44	Ulva Ferry	Ulva Ferry Primary School	AA44	Ulva Ferry	Ulva Ferry Primary School, Ulva Ferry, Mull, PA73 6LT	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA45	Salen	Salen Parish Church Hall	AA45	Salen	Salen Parish Church Hall, Salen, Aros, Mull, PA72 6JG	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA46	Lochdonhead	Craignure Hall	AA46	Lochdon and Lochbuie	Craignure Hall, Craignure, Mull, PA65 6AY	Amalgamate polling districts AA46 and AA47 with voters from Lochbuie going to Craignure Hall.
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA47	Lochbuie	Fiadh Cottage Caravan, Lochbuie			Craignure Hall, Craignure, Mull, PA65 6AY	Amalgamate polling districts AA46 and AA47 with the removal of Fiadh Cottage Caravan venue. Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA48	Pennyghael/Tiroran	Pennyghael Hall	AA48	Pennyghael/Tiroran	Pennyghael Hall, Pennyghael, Mull, PA70 6HB	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA49	Bunessan	Bunessan Community Centre	AA49	Bunessan	Bunessan Community Centre, Bunessan, Mull, PA67 6DG	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA50	Fionnphort	Creich Community Centre, Fionnphort	AA50	Fionnphort	Creich Community Centre, Fionnphort, Mull, PA66 6BP	No change

Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA51	Iona	Iona Village Hall	AA51	Iona	Iona Village Hall, Iona, PA76 6SJ	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA52	Coll	An Cridhe	AA52	Coll	An Cridhe, Arinagour, Isle of Coll, PA78 6SY	No change
Ward 4 - Oban South & the Isles	AA53	Tiree	An Talla Hall	AA53	Tiree	An Talla Hall, Crossapol, Isle of Tiree, PA77 6UP	No change

### **Oban Central – Oban West**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA36 and AA37 into one **Oban West and Central** polling district so that polling takes place in the one central location and helps even out the electorate within the polling district.

Proposed permanent change of venues from the Salvation Army Hall AA36 and the Baptist Church Hall AA37 to the Rockfield Centre which has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well. The Rockfield Centre has also recently been refurbished. The Rockfield Centre is now proposed as the new designated polling place for the new polling district.

### **Lochdonhead – Lochbuie \***

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA46 and AA47 into one **Lochdon and Lochbuie** polling district so that polling takes place in the one central location. Currently AA47 Lochbuie voters are voting at the Craignure Hall due to unavailability of any suitable venues in the Lochbuie area.

Proposed permanent change of venue from the Fiadh Cottage Caravan to the Craignure Hall which has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well. The Craignure Hall is now proposed as the new designated polling place for the new district.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA55	Lochawe	Lochawe Village Hall	AA55	Lochawe and Dalmally	Dalmally Community Centre, Dalmally, PA33 1AX	Lochawe Hall is closing, move voters to Dalmally and amalgamate AA55 and AA56.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA56	Dalmally	Dalmally Community Centre			Dalmally Community Centre, Dalmally, PA33 1AX	Move Lochawe voters to Dalmally Hall and amalgamate polling districts AA55 and AA56.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA57	Bridge Of Orchy	Bridge of Orchy Church	AA57	Bridge Of Orchy	Bridge of Orchy Village Hall, Bridge of Orchy PA36 4AD	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA58	Taynuilt	Taynuilt Village Hall	AA58	Taynuilt	Taynuilt Village Hall, Taynuilt, PA35 1JE	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA59	Kilchrenan	Kilchrenan Village Hall	AA59	Kilchrenan	Kilchrenan Village Hall, Kilchrenan, PA35 1HG	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA60	Dalavich	Dalavich Community Centre Hall	AA60	Dalavich	Dalavich Community Centre Hall, Dalavich, PA35 1HL	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA61	Portsonachan	Portsonachan Village Hall	AA61	Portsonachan	Portsonachan Village Hall, Portsonachan, PA33 1BQ	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA62	Luing	Cullipool Village Hall	AA62	Luing	Cullipool Village Hall, Luing, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA63	Kilmelford	Kilmelford Village Hall	AA63	Kilmelford	Kilmelford Village Hall, Kilmelford, PA34 4XD	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA64	Oban North	St John's Cathedral Hall, Oban	AA64	Oban North	The Corran Halls, 54 The Esplanade, Oban PA34 5AB	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA65	Easdale	Seil Island Hall, Easdale	AA65	Easdale	Seil Island Hall, Easdale, PA34 4RF	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA66	Kilmore	Kilmore Hall	AA66	Kilmore	Kilmore and Kilbride Hall, Kilmore, By Oban, PA34 4XT	No change to venue, change of name.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA67	Dunbeg	Dunbeg Church	AA67	Dunbeg	Dunbeg Church, Etive Road, Dunbeg, By Oban, PA37 1QF	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA68	Kilninver	Kilninver Primary School	AA68	Kilninver	Kilninver Primary School, Kilninver, By Oban, PA34 4UT	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA69	Lismore	Lismore Public Hall	AA69	Lismore	Lismore Public Hall, Isle of Lismore, PA34 5UG	No change

Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA70	Appin	Appin Hall	AA70	Appin	Appin Hall, Appin, By Oban, PA38 4BN	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA71	Connel	Connel Village Hall	AA71	Connel	Connel Village Hall, Main Street, Connel, PA37 1PA	No change
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA72	Barcaldine	Victory Hall, Benderloch	AA72	Barcaldine and Lochnell	Victory Hall, Benderloch, By Oban, PA37 1RZ	Amalgamate polling districts AA72 & AA73 into one.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA73	Lochnell	Victory Hall, Benderloch			Victory Hall, Benderloch, By Oban, PA37 1RZ	Amalgamate polling districts into one.
Ward 5 - Oban North & Lorn	AA74	Ardchattan	Ardchattan Primary School	AA74	Ardchattan	The Ardchattan Centre, Ardchattan, by Oban PA37 1RH	No change

### **Lochawe – Dalmally**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA55 and AA56 into one **Lochawe – Dalmally** polling district due to the closure of the Lochawe Village Hall. The Dalmally Village Hall is now proposed as the designated polling place which helps even out the electorate within the new polling district.

### **Bridge of Orchy**

Proposed permanent change of venue from Bridge of Orchy Church to Bridge of Orchy Village Hall due to refurbishment of Hall. The hall has been used for recent elections and has worked well.

### **Oban North**

Proposed permanent change of venue from St John's Cathedral Hall to the Corran Halls due to complaints from voters regarding the disabled access to the building. The Corran Halls is now proposed as the designated polling place for the district which has been used for a number of elections and has worked well.

### **Barcaldine – Lochnell**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA72 and AA73 into one **Barcaldine – Lochnell** polling district due to the low numbers of voters at the Barcaldine district. Both districts currently use the Victory Hall which will now be one station and also be the designated polling place for the new district.

### **Dunbeg**

No change to the polling venue although there has been significant new build in the area. The electorate number of 829 (681 taking off postal voters) is well under the recommended Electoral Commission guidance figures for a single polling station.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA75	Glendaruel	Glendaruel Hall	AA75	Glendaruel	Glendaruel Hall, Glendaruel, PA22 3AE	Boundary change proposed, 17 voters from Uig Hall AA84 to Glendaruel.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA76	Colintraive	Colintraive Hall	AA76	Colintraive	Colintraive Hall, Colintraive, PA22 3AS	No change
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA77	Cairndow	Cairndow Village Hall	AA77	Cairndow	Cairndow Village Hall, Cairndow, PA26 8BN	No change
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA78	Lochgoilhead	Lochgoil Village Hall	AA78	Lochgoilhead	Lochgoil Village Hall, Lochgoilhead, PA24 8AQ	No change
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA79	Strachur	Strachur Memorial Hall	AA79	Strachur and Strathlachlan	Strachur Memorial Hall, Strachur, PA27 8DG	Amalgamate polling districts AA79 and AA80 and remove Strathlachlan polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA80	Strathlachlan	Strathlachlan Community Centre			Strachur Memorial Hall, Strachur, PA27 8DG	Amalgamate polling districts AA79 and AA80 and remove Strathlachlan polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA81	Kilfinan	Kilfinan Community Hall			Kames District Recreation Club, Highgate, Kames, Tignabruaich, PA21 2AF	Amalgamate polling districts AA81 and AA82 and remove Kilfinan polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA82	Tighnabruaich	Kames District Recreation Club	AA82	Tighnabruaich and Kilfinan	Kames District Recreation Club, Highgate, Kames, Tignabruaich, PA21 2AF	Amalgamate polling districts AA81 and AA82 and remove Kilfinan polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA83	Kirn	Cowal Golf Club, Ardenslate Road, Kirn, Dunoon	AA83	Kirn	Cowal Dog Training Club, 49 Hunter Street, Kirn, Dunoon PA23 8JR	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA83A	Hunters Quay	Cowal Golf Club, Ardenslate Road, Kirn, Dunoon	AA83A	Hunters Quay	Cowal Dog Training Club, 49 Hunter Street, Kirn, Dunoon PA23 8JR	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA84	Rashfield	Uig Hall			Younger Hall, Shore Road, Kilmun PA23 8SD	Boundary change proposed, 17 voters from AA84 to AA75 Glendaruel. Amalgamate boundaries AA84 and AA86 with polling station being at Younger Hall and remove Uig Hall as a polling station.



Ward 6 - Cowal	AA85	Ardentinny	Ardentinny Bowling Club	AA85	Ardentinny	Ardentinny Village Hall, Ardentinny, Dunoon PA23 8TS	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA86	Strone	Younger Hall, Shore Road, Kilmun	AA86	<b>Kilmun</b>	Younger Hall, Shore Road, Kilmun PA23 8SD	Amalgamate boundaries AA84 and AA86 with polling station being at Younger Hall and remove Uig Hall as a polling station.
Ward 6 - Cowal	AA87	Sandbank	Sandbank Village Hall	AA87	Sandbank	Sandbank Village Hall, High Road, Sandbank, PA23 8QS	No change

### **Glendaruel**

1. Proposal to make an adjustment to the boundary between AA75 Glendaruel and AA84 Rashfield to accommodate a small number of voters to move from Uig Hall to Glendaruel Hall which will be closer for voting purposes and will also align the polling districts with the community council boundary.
2. Proposal to merge part of polling district AA84 Rashfield and all of AA86 Strone into one new **Kilmun** polling district. Glendaruel Hall will remain as the designated polling place for this area – AA75.

### **Strachur – Strathlachlan**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA79 and AA80 into one **Strachur – Strathlachlan** polling district due to the low number of voters at Strathlachlan. The Strachur Hall is now proposed as the designated polling place for this new district.

### **Kilfinan – Tighnabruaich**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA81 and AA82 into one **Tighnabruaich – Kilfinan** polling district due to the low number of voters at Kilfinan district. The Kames District Recreational Club is now proposed as the designated polling place for this new district.

### **Kirn – Hunter’s Quay**

Proposed permanent change of venue from Cowal Golf Club to the Cowal Dog Training Club which is currently the designed polling place and has been used for the recent elections and has worked well.

### **Rashfield**

1. Proposal to make an adjustment to the boundary between AA75 Glendaruel and AA84 Rashfield to accommodate a small number of voters to move from Uig Hall to Glendaruel Hall which will be closer for voting purposes and will also align the polling districts with the community council boundary.
2. Proposal to merge part of polling district AA84 Rashfield and all of AA86 Strone into one new **Kilmun** polling district. The Younger Hall is now proposed as the designated polling place for this new district.

**Ardentinny**

Proposed permanent change of venue from Ardentinny Bowling Club to the Ardentinny Village Hall which is currently the designed polling place and has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well.

**Strone**

1. Proposal to make an adjustment to the boundary between AA75 Glendaruel and AA84 Rashfield to accommodate a small number of voters to move from Uig Hall to Glendaruel Hall which will be closer for voting purposes and will also align the polling districts with the community council boundary.
2. Proposal to merge part of polling district AA84 Rashfield and all of AA86 Strone into one new **Kilmun** polling district. The Younger Hall is now proposed as the designated polling place for this new district and the Uig Hall would no longer be used as a polling place.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 7 - Dunoon	AA89	Hafton	St Mun's Church Hall	AA89	Hafton	St Mun's Church Hall, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AW	No change
Ward 7 - Dunoon	AA90	Dunoon	Castle House	AA90	Dunoon	Queen's Hall, Argyll Street, Dunoon PA23 7HH	Amalgamate polling districts AA90 and AA93. Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 7 - Dunoon	AA91	Ardenslate	Community Education Centre, 170 Edward Street, Dunoon	AA91	Ardenslate	Hanover Street Hall, 11 Hanover Street, Dunoon PA23 7ED	Permanent change to Polling Station.
Ward 7 - Dunoon	AA92	Innellan	Innellan Public Hall	AA92	Innellan	Innellan Public Hall, Innellan, Dunoon, PA23 7TH	No change
Ward 7 - Dunoon	AA93	Dunoon South	Castle House			Queen's Hall, Argyll Street, Dunoon PA23 7HH	Amalgamate polling districts AA90 and AA93. Permanent change to polling station.

### **Dunoon – Dunoon South**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AA90 and AA93 into one **Dunoon** polling district and that the Queen's Hall be the designated polling place for the new district.

Proposed permanent change of venue from Castle House to the Queen's Hall which is currently the designated polling place and has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well.

### **Ardenslate**

Proposed permanent change of venue from the Community Education Centre to Hanover Street Hall due to increased use of the community centre by other local groups. Difficult for Live Argyll to give elections priority and access without inconveniencing other groups. The Hanover Hall has level access at the rear of the building for disabled access. This hall was previously used as a polling station before moving to the Community Centre.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA94	Rothesay North	Isle of Bute Sailing Club	AA94	Rothesay North	Isle of Bute Sailing Club, Rothesay, Bute, PA20 OAX	No change
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA95	Port Bannatyne	Port Bannatyne Village Hall	AA95	Port Bannatyne	Community Hub, Marine Road, Port Bannatyne, Bute PA20 OLL	Proposed change of polling place.
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA96	Rothesay Central	The Moat Centre, Stuart Street	AA96	Bute Central	The Moat Centre, Stuart Street, Rothesay, Bute, PA20 OEP	Amalgamate polling districts AA96, AA97 & AA98.
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA97	Bute West	The Moat Centre, Stuart Street			The Moat Centre, Stuart Street, Rothesay, Bute, PA20 OEP	Amalgamate polling districts AA96, AA97 & AA98.
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA98	Bute East	The Moat Centre, Stuart Street			The Moat Centre, Stuart Street, Rothesay, Bute, PA20 OEP	Amalgamate polling districts AA96, AA97 & AA98.
Ward 8 - Isle of Bute	AA99	Kingarth	The Kingarth Hotel, Kilchattan Bay	AA99	Kingarth	The Kingarth Hotel, Kilchattan Bay, Bute PA20 9NP	No change

### Port Bannatyne

Proposed permanent change of venue from the Port Bannatyne Village Hall to the Community Hub in Port Bannatyne due to access issues at the village hall.

### Rothesay Central – Bute West – Bute East

Proposal to merge three polling districts AA96, AA97 and AA98 into one **Bute Central** polling district to enable a more proportionate split of voters in the three polling stations at The Moat Centre in Rothesay.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD01	Rhu South	Rhu Community Education Centre, Hall Road, Rhu	AD01	Rhu and Shandon	Rhu Community Education Centre, Hall Road, Rhu, G84 8RR	Amalgamate polling districts AD01 and AD07.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD02	Garelochhead	Gibson Hall, Garelochhead	AD02	Garelochhead	Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, G84 0AT	No change
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD03	Cove	Cove Burgh Hall	AD03	Cove and Kilcreggan	Cove Burgh Hall, Shore Road, Cove, G84 0LT	Amalgamate polling districts AD03 and AD08.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD04	Arrochar	The Three Villages Hall, Arrochar	AD04	Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui	The Three Villages Hall, Arrochar, G83 7AB	Amalgamate polling districts AD04, AD06 and AD10.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD05	Luss	Luss Village Hall	AD05	Luss	Luss Village Hall, Luss, G83 8NZ	No change
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD06	Tarbet & Ardlui	Arrochar Primary School, Tarbet			The Three Villages Hall, Arrochar, G83 7AB	Amalgamate polling districts AD04, AD06 and AD10. Remove Arrochar School as a polling station.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD07	North Rhu & Shandon	Rhu Community Education Centre, Hall Road, Rhu			Rhu Community Education Centre, Hall Road, Rhu, G84 8RR	Amalgamate polling districts AD01 and AD07.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD08	Kilcreggan	Cove Burgh Hall			Cove Burgh Hall, Shore Road, Cove, G84 0LT	Amalgamate polling districts AD03 and AD08.
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD09	Rosneath	St Modans Parish Church Hall	AD09	Rosneath	St Modans Parish Church Hall, The Clachan, Rosneath, G84 0RF	No change
Ward 9 - Lomond North	AD10	Glencroe	The Three Villages Hall, Arrochar			The Three Villages Hall, Arrochar, G83 7AB	Amalgamate polling districts AD04, AD06 and AD10.

### Cove – Kilcreggan

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AD03 Cove and AD08 Kilcreggan to one **Cove and Kilcreggan** polling district with the Cove Burgh Hall remaining as the designated polling place for the new district.

**Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui, Glencroe**

Proposal to merge the three polling districts AD04 Arrochar, AD06 Tarbet & Ardlui and AD10 Glencroe into one **Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui** polling district with the Three Villages Hall being the designated polling place for the new district. This will enable the removal of Arrochar Primary School as a polling place as a result of finding a school alternative.

**Rhu South – North Rhu and Shandon**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AD01 Rhu South and AD07 North Rhu & Shandon into one **Rhu and Shandon** polling district with the Rhu Community Education Centre remaining as the designated polling place for the new district.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD12	Kirkmichael	Kirkmichael Centre, Townhead Road, Kirkmichael, Helensburgh	AD12	Helensburgh Lower East	Templeton Building Annexe, Helensburgh & Lomond Civic Centre. 38 East Clyde Street, Helensburgh, G84 7PG	Amalgamate polling districts AD12 and AD13. Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD13	Helensburgh Lower East	Templeton Building Annexe			Templeton Building Annexe, Helensburgh & Lomond Civic Centre. 38 East Clyde Street, Helensburgh, G84 7PG	Amalgamate polling districts AD12 and AD13.
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD14	Helensburgh Upper West	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh	AD14	Helensburgh Upper West	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh, G84 8TU	Amalgamate polling districts AD14 and AD15.
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD15	Helensburgh West	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh			Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh, G84 8TU	Amalgamate polling districts AD14 and AD15.
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD16	Central	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh	AD16	Central	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh, G84 8TU	No change
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD17	Helensburgh East	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh	AD17	Helensburgh East	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh, G84 8TU	No change
Ward 10 - Helensburgh Central	AD18	Helensburgh Lower West	Helensburgh Parish Church Hall	AD18	Helensburgh Lower West	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh, G84 8TU	Permanent change to polling station.

### **Kirkmichael – Helensburgh Lower East**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AD12 Kirkmichael and AD13 Helensburgh Lower East into one **Helensburgh Lower East** polling district with the Templeton Building Annexe remaining as the designated polling place for the new district.

Proposed permanent change of venue from the Kirkmichael Centre to the Templeton Building Annex which is the current polling place and has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well.

### **Helensburgh Upper West – Helensburgh West**

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AD14 Helensburgh Upper West and AD15 Helensburgh West into one **Helensburgh Upper West** polling district with the Victoria Halls remaining as the designated polling place for the new district.

### **Helensburgh Lower East**

Proposed permanent change of polling place from the Helensburgh Parish Church to the Victoria Halls which will be more convenient for voters.

Current Electoral Ward	Current Polling District Number	Current Polling District Name	Current Polling Place	New Polling District Number	New Polling District Name	New Polling Place	Notes
Ward 11 - Helensburgh & Lomond South	AD20	Colgrain	Colgrain Primary School, Redgauntlet Road, Colgrain	AD20	Colgrain	Helensburgh Community Hub, 116 East Princes Street, Helensburgh G84 7DQ	Permanent change to polling station.
Ward 11 - Helensburgh & Lomond South	AD21	Helensburgh North East	Drumfork Centre Annexe	AD21	Helensburgh Upper East	Drumfork Centre Annexe, Churchill Square, Helensburgh, G84 9HL	Amalgamate polling districts AD21 and AD22.
Ward 11 - Helensburgh & Lomond South	AD22	Helensburgh Upper East	Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh			Drumfork Centre Annexe, Churchill Square, Helensburgh, G84 9HL	Amalgamate polling districts AD21 and AD22. Change polling station to Drumfork and remove Victoria Halls as a polling station.
Ward 11 - Helensburgh & Lomond South	AD23	Cardross	Geilston Hall, Main Street, Cardross	AD23	Cardross	Geilston Hall, Main Street, Cardross, G82 5PA	No change
Ward 11 - Helensburgh & Lomond South	AD24	Arden	Luss Village Hall	AD24	Arden	Luss Village Hall, Luss, G83 8NZ	No change

### Colgrain

Proposed permanent change of venue from Colgrain Primary School to the Helensburgh Community Hub comes of a result of finding a school alternative. The Helensburgh Community Hub has been used for a number of recent elections and has worked well.

### Helensburgh North East – Helensburgh Upper East

Proposal to merge the two polling districts AD21 Helensburgh North East and AD22 Helensburgh Upper East into one **Helensburgh Upper East** polling district with the Drumfork Centre Annexe remaining as the designed polling place for the new district. This merge will remove a polling station at the Victoria Halls.

**Where no change is proposed to a Polling Place this is because the existing Polling Place is deemed (a) to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors to enable them to vote by providing such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and (b) the Polling Stations within each of the Polling Places provide reasonable access for people with disabilities, with the exception of the Polling Places marked with an asterisk \*, where an assessment has failed to identify more suitable premises.**



## Comments from Stakeholders during Consultation

Representations received from 1 October 2023 to 30 October 2023

REF	DATE RECEIVED	REPRESENTATION MADE BY WHOM	REPRESENTATION/COMMENTS MADE	OUTCOME – STATEMENT OF REASONS
1	5 October	Returning Officer, West Dumbarton	We will not be submitting any comments on your review and therefore will accept whatever changes are made locally.	Noted
2	6 October	Constituent, Ward 11	Having reviewed the proposed changes to my location for polling district and polling place I note that my new venue is the Drumfork Community Centre. Excellent! No complaints from me.	Noted
3	9 October	Constituent, Isle of Bute, Ward 8	I propose the The Anchor Hub be as a polling station – it is user friendly with no steps or stairs.	Noted the support of change of venue to the Community Hub in Port Bannatyne.
4	9 October	Electoral Registration Officer	Having looked at our EMS and consulted with Idox & other EROs we would suggest NOT making one of the amendments listed for this annual publication. That amendment is the renaming of all the polling districts after the combining those at AA36 & AA37.	Noted, the polling district renaming and numbering will remain as is for 2024.
5	12 October	Constituent, Ward 9	I have considered all the information that has been provided as part of the above Review and can confirm that I fully support the proposed changes within Ward 9 - Lomond North. I have had 23 years experience as a councillor for the area in question and have experienced many elections across what is the Lomond North Ward and fully support the minor changes that are being proposed within the Review.	Noted the support of the proposed changes for Ward 9.

			The reduced number of polling districts and polling places will, I believe, be a benefit to all concerned.	
6	23 October	Community Councillor	Kilmore and Kilbride Hall is capable of providing space for elections, disabled parking and three doors that have ramps up to them.	Noted the support for the continued use of the renamed Kilmore and Kilbride Hall.
7	30 October	Community Councillor	<p>The proposals were discussed at the meeting of Strachur &amp; District Community Council on 11th October. The specific proposal that affects our area is the amalgamation of the Strachur (<b>AA79</b>) and Strathlachlan (<b>AA80</b>) polling districts, with Strachur Memorial Hall becoming the polling station for the new amalgamated district.</p> <p>Strachur &amp; District Community Council has no objections to this proposal. However, in view of the remoteness of much of Strathlachlan (AA80) from Strachur Memorial Hall, we request that Argyll &amp; Bute Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensures that the procedure for postal voting is well publicised, both via the local press and social media.</li> <li>2. Explores the feasibility of providing transport for residents who would otherwise find it difficult to reach the polling station.</li> </ol>	Noted the comments made.

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****FINANCIAL SERVICES****23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF POLICY IN NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 On 31 January 2019 the Scottish Government committed to devolving Empty Property Relief (EPR) to councils in time for the next revaluation. However, both the revaluation and the devolution of EPR were delayed because of the pandemic and the go-live date for the devolved EPR became 1 April 2023. In October 2022 the Council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed that from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 the existing rules for Empty Property Relief would continue effectively mirroring the Scottish Government scheme and the scheme would be reviewed prior to 2024/2025 (this position is similar to many other Scottish Local Authorities).
- 1.2 In January 2023 the Scottish Government announced funding of £0.608m per annum for Argyll and Bute for each of the three financial years from 2023/2024 to 2025/2026 as a contribution towards the cost of EPR in our area. As at 1 April 2023 the cost of EPR awarded was £0.758m therefore creating a deficit of £0.150 in 2023/24. The new policy for 2024/2025 onwards will be designed to maximise the use of these funds to revitalise local communities but will also ensure costs will be contained within the funding provided by Scottish Government. There will be another revaluation of Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) from 1 April 2026 at which point the Scottish Government will review arrangements for devolved EPR. At this time they have not committed any funding beyond 31 March 2026.
- 1.3 This decision allowed the Council time to consult stakeholders on any new policy and the issues that they believe are important when considering empty business properties and the impact it has on their communities. A consultation with stakeholders ended on 4 August and the feedback from 506 responses has now been evaluated.
- 1.4 Key findings from the consultation include:
- financial incentives for new businesses to move into empty properties were popular, business support grants, providing free rent and NDR in the first year,
  - penalising owners of empty business properties particularly if they are not being maintained,
  - some barriers were identified as matters that could stop people taking on empty properties including;
    - perceived regulatory barriers

- costs in relation to renovating long term empty properties to bring back into use
    - lack of available tradesmen,
  - there is support for the Council employing an empty business property officer to provide good quality local information to support businesses to take on empty premises,
  - ideas for alternative uses for empty business properties were well supported such as an alternative business use, temporary pop-up use, use of community groups, a hub for music and arts and conversion to affordable housing.
- 1.5 These matters were considered at meetings with Economic Development and Housing officers and options for the new policy were presented to Councillors for consideration at a members seminar on 6 November 2023
- 1.6 Following on from the report considered by Elected Members at the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023, and the agreement to bring forward a revised Policy, this report provides an update to Council on progress being made with regard to a new Empty Property Relief Policy on Non-Domestic Rates. The purpose of this being to incentivise the owners of empty business premises in Argyll and Bute to do all that they can to bring the property back into use.
- 1.7 The proposed new policy, as outlined in paragraph 3.19 Option A, is provided under section 140 of the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:-
- a) Approve Option A, Empty Property Relief provisions as outlined in paragraph 3.19;
  - b) Agree the creation of an Empty Property Officer post for a period of 2 years as outlined in paragraph 3.21; and
  - c) Agree the remaining Empty Property Relief funding is used towards a Business Grant Scheme with officers to bring forward the detail to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee Meeting in February 2024 for approval.

## **3. DETAIL**

- 3.1 On 31 January 2019 the Scottish Government committed to devolving Empty Property Relief (EPR) to councils in time for the next revaluation. However, both the revaluation and the devolution of EPR were delayed because of the pandemic and the go-live date for the devolved EPR became 1 April 2023. In October 2022, the Council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed that from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 the existing rules for Empty Property Relief would continue effectively mirroring the Scottish Government scheme and the scheme would be reviewed prior to financial year 2024-25 (this position was

similar to many other Local Authorities).

- 3.2 This decision allowed the Council time to consult stakeholders on any new policy and the issues that they believe are important when considering empty business properties and the impact it has on their communities. A consultation with stakeholders ended on 4 August and the feedback from 506 responses has now been evaluated.

### The Current EPR Scheme

- 3.3 The current EPR scheme mirrors the Scottish Government scheme:
1. Standard empty properties can get 50% relief from non-domestic rates for the first 3 months they are empty. They can then get a 10% discount after that in perpetuity.
  2. Empty industrial properties can get 100% relief from non-domestic rates for the first 6 months that they are empty. They can then get a 10% discount after that in perpetuity.
  3. Businesses can get 100% relief for the whole time a property is unoccupied, if:
    - It is a listed building;
    - it has a rateable value under £1,700;
    - it is owned by a trustee for sequestration, liquidation or executors;
    - the company who owns it has been wound up;
    - by law, the property cannot be occupied;
    - it is under a compulsory purchase order;
    - it has no buildings (empty ground);
    - the ratepayer is deceased.
- 3.4 The cost to the Council of the current EPR scheme in 2023/2024 is estimated as £758,000 for the full year compared to funding from the Scottish Government of £608,000. Any new policy will ensure that the cost of EPR to the Council will be contained within the funding provided by the Scottish Government wherever possible.

The cost to the Council is analysed to EPR category in the table below:

Type of Empty Property Relief	EPR Relief	EPR Charge	No of Subjects	Total Value of EPR (£)
Listed Building	100%	0%	46	330,884
Insolvency	100%	0%	2	285,300
Rateable Value Less Than £1700	100%	0%	155	56,470
Standard Empty Property Relief	50% for 3 months 10% thereafter	50% for 3 months 90% thereafter	103	48,865
Ratepayer	100%	0%	5	17,172

Deceased				
Ground – On Valuation Roll	100%	0%	4	15,886
Occupation Prohibited By Law	100%	0%	1	3,785
Industrial Property	100% for 6 months 10% thereafter	0% for 6 months 90% thereafter	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>316</b>	<b>758,361</b>

3.5 Note that the costs can be volatile as any big business closure can result in significant increases.

### Consultation

3.6 The Council has consulted various stakeholders on any new policy and the issues that they believe are important when considering empty business properties and the impact it has on their communities. This ended on 4 August and the feedback from 506 responses has now been evaluated in four different areas:

1. Identifying barriers and challenges – regulatory, financial and others;
2. Possible new roles for vacant buildings – alternative business use, temporary pop-up use, community use, local hub for music and arts, housing, storage;
3. Types of incentives or support measures to encourage businesses to occupy empty properties – financial incentives, consultancy support, other incentives;
4. Impact on the community.

3.7 Key findings from the consultation included:

- financial incentives for new businesses to move into empty properties, business support grants, providing free rent and NDR in the first year;
- penalising owners of empty business properties particularly if they are not being maintained;
- some barriers were identified as matters that could stop people taking on empty properties including;
  - perceived regulatory barriers;
  - costs in relation to renovating long term empty properties to bring back into use;
  - lack of available tradesmen;
- there is support for the Council employing an empty business property officer to provide good quality local information to support businesses to take on empty premises;
- ideas for alternative uses for empty business properties were well supported such as an alternative business use, temporary pop-up use,

use of community groups, a hub for music and arts and conversion to affordable housing.

- 3.8 Feedback from the consultation, benchmarking information from some other Scottish Local Authorities and two potential options for a new Empty Property Relief Policy was presented to colleagues in Economic Development and Housing on 10 October.

### **What are other Councils doing?**

- 3.9 Some information has been shared across the forums of the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV).
- 3.10 Aberdeen City Council were the only Council to change the EPR Policy with effect 1 April 2023 all other Scottish Councils continued with the Scottish Government scheme for 2023/2024.
- 3.11 Aberdeen City Council took the decision to make all categories of empty business premises, with the exception of the insolvency category, eligible for three months relief at 50% (50% charge) followed by 10% relief (90% charge) thereafter. In September 2023 the Council reported that the new scheme had been implemented with no complaints being received.
- 3.12 There is case law in relation to insolvency; P&O Holdings Ltd v Glasgow City Council, which supports a lease remaining in the name of the liquidator until a landlord terminates the tenancy and therefore there is no point in removing the 100% EPR relief for this category until the Local Authority can change a decision on rateable occupation to the landlord or owner. This will be the same consideration for options that we define for Argyll and Bute Council.
- 3.13 In Dumfries and Galloway the Council considered a draft Policy in October which mirrored the Aberdeen City Policy however limited the provision of relief to a total of 1 year. Therefore, from 1 April 2024 all properties would get 50% relief (50% charge), then 9 months at 10% relief (90% charge) and from 1 April 2025 if still empty then 0% relief 100% charge.

### **Principles for new EPR policy in Argyll and Bute**

- 3.14 The following are key principles for any new policy in our area;
1. The cost of the scheme to be contained within the overall funding given by Scottish Government;
  2. A motivational approach to bringing empty properties back into use similar to empty dwellings in Council Tax. Incentives such as rates relief, tax breaks and possible business grants to support reuse, with owners facing increased empty property charges staggered the longer the property remains empty;
  3. Keep the scheme simple, relief levels to match those already available on NDR system to prevent incurring significant additional administration

- costs, make administration of the new scheme no more complex than the current scheme otherwise additional staffing resources may be necessary for assessment purposes;
4. Improve communications with empty property owners and potential new business entrepreneurs combining relevant information from across the Council to support stakeholders;
    - a. New webpage and communications strategy to include;
      - i. Available NDR reliefs;
      - ii. Business grants from Business Gateway;
      - iii. Provision of any rent free schemes;
      - iv. General advice, guidance and knowledge at a local level.
  5. Consideration of a fast track planning/building standards/environmental health process for properties in these categories where it is possible to do so.

### **Incentivising reuse with business support grants**

- 3.15 A significant part of the consultation feedback supported the need for financial incentives such as grants for building works, internal decoration and fixtures and fittings to help incentivise owners to bring properties back into use.
- 3.16 There are numerous examples of grant schemes being used across the UK to help stimulate local businesses and make use of empty properties. In Argyll and Bute we have used a number of external funding sources to provide grant assistance to circa 150 shopfronts/small businesses to help them invest in their properties and businesses. We have also invested through area regeneration schemes bringing many buildings back into productive use working with private owners. This has had a very positive impact on our local communities and has helped the places become more investor ready and removed the need of greater interventions by the council through building standards for example.
- 3.17 Providing business grants as an added incentive to invest in a property will help deliver a positive outcome for our town centres. Applicants would have to demonstrate how this investment will benefit their property and the wider town centre. They would have to agree to pay the living wage and demonstrate a clear commitment to future maintenance of the property going forward. The grants could be used to cover a wide range of activities including internal and external building works, shopfront improvements, health and safety requirements and shop fittings.
- 3.18 It should be noted that currently the council has had to pay hundreds of thousands over the years in dealing with health and safety breaches with larger buildings that have become derelict. This would therefore be a spend to save option in that we would reduce the need to intervene as a council and better enable the harvesting of NDR as buildings are occupied.

### **Options for Argyll and Bute Council to Consider**

#### **Option A**

**50% relief for 3 months followed by 10% thereafter, with the exception of**



**EPR for Insolvency, similar to other approved schemes in Scotland. No relief will be granted after a property has been empty for over 12 months.**

3.19 The table below shows the estimated cost of EPR in Option A is £376,354 based on current empty property caseload, their rateable values and the Scottish Government set annual poundage rate for 2023/24. The proposal limits empty property relief to a maximum period of 12 months from 1 April 2024 for all empty properties with the exception of properties in the Insolvency category.

Type of Empty Property Relief	EPR Relief	EPR Charge	No of Subjects	Total Value of EPR (£)
Listed Building	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	46	33,043
Insolvency	100%	0%	2	285,230
Rateable Value Less Than £1700	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	155	5,593
Standard Empty Property Relief	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	103	48,865
Ratepayer Deceased	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	6	1,717
Ground – On Valuation Roll	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	4	1,527
Occupation Prohibited By Law	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	1	378

Industrial Property	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>317</b>	<b>376,354</b>

- 3.20 Currently the 10% EPR charge is given in perpetuity or until the property becomes occupied. It is recommended that the Council end the relief altogether after 12 months thereby increasing EPR charges the longer a property remains empty. This is to increase the level of NDR levied on empty properties further incentivising owners to do what is necessary to bring them back into use. This tactic is also being adopted by a number of other Scottish Local authorities. In doing so our costs will reduce to £285,000 for 2025/26 based on the current position and the relief for insolvency.
- 3.21 It is recommended, given the feedback from stakeholders and consideration of the complexities of the situation, that the employment of a two year temporary post as Empty Business Property Officer would be beneficial. The cost of this post is estimated at LGE 10 £43,261 in 2024/2025 and circa £46,500 in 2025/2026. The officer would be based in the Economic Growth Service and would work closely with colleagues in Non-Domestic Rates administration, Housing and the wider Development and Economic Growth Service. They would have an overarching knowledge of place and buildings, discounts, exemptions and reliefs available in local taxes, heritage led regeneration schemes and build a good working relationship with all stakeholders. They would be a single point of contact for the Council with property owners. They would help coordinate activity across council services and liaise with property owners.
- 3.22 An estimated £150,000 per annum would be set-a-side to offer business grant support in year 1 increasing to £200,000 in year 2. These grants will be administered through the Economic Growth Team. This could cover grants for matters such as the application for decoration costs, monies for building works, fixtures and fittings details have yet to be fully determined.
- 3.23 The table below shows the allocation of Scottish Government funds for empty property relief for **Option A**

<b>Cost</b>	<b>Year 1 2024/2025 (£'000)</b>	<b>Year 2 2025/2026 (£'000)</b>
EPR	376	285
Funding for Business Support Grants	150	200
New Post	43	46
Level of Tolerance for unanticipated business premises vacancies going	39	77

forward		
<b>TOTAL FUNDING PROVIDED BY SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>608</b>

\* note – allocations need to be flexible and adjusted given changes to the number of empty properties. The level of funding available for business grants would be adjusted depending on movements in EPR across all categories.

### Option B

**As Per Option A but target Listed Buildings taking level of relief to 0% in that category given the scale of the problem with empty listed buildings in Argyll and Bute**

- 3.24 The justification for Option B is the sheer volume of empty listed buildings in Argyll and Bute at 46 and that some are prominent buildings within our town centres and in a very poor state of repair. Officers believe this option should be considered as a result, additionally some feedback from the consultation clearly referenced empty listed buildings having a detrimental impact on our town centres. Other Councils in Scotland have reported through the Institute of Revenue Rating and Valuation (IRRV) that they are experiencing similar issues with dilapidated listed buildings and are considering similar actions as a result.

This option will allow us to charge full NDR quickly to the owners of these buildings in an attempt incentivise the works required to bring them into use. There is no scope in this proposal to continue offering any EPR if the owner starts work to bring the property into use. Incentives would be in the form of possible business support grants only.

- 3.25 The table below shows the estimated cost of EPR in Option B is £343,311 based on current empty property caseload, their rateable values and the Scottish Government set annual poundage rate for 2023/24. The proposal limits empty property relief to a maximum period of 12 months from 1 April 2024 for all empty properties with the exception of properties in the Insolvency category.

Type of Empty Property Relief	EPR Relief	EPR Charge	No of Subjects	Total Value of EPR (£)
Listed Building	0%	100%	46	0
Insolvency	100%	0%	2	285,230
Rateable Value Less Than £1700	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	155	5,593

Standard Empty Property Relief	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	103	48,865
Ratepayer Deceased	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	6	1,717
Ground – On Valuation Roll	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	4	1,527
Occupation Prohibited By Law	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	1	378
Industrial Property	50% for 3 months; 10% for 9 months; no relief thereafter	50% for 3 months; 90% for 9 months; 100% thereafter	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>317</b>	<b>343,311</b>

- 3.26 Like option A, currently the 10% EPR charge is given in perpetuity or until the property becomes occupied. It is recommended that the Council end the relief altogether after 12 months thereby increasing EPR charges the longer a property remains empty. This is to increase the level of NDR levied on empty properties further incentivising owners to do what is necessary to bring them back into use. This is with the exception of those in the category of insolvency. Our costs will then reduce to £285,000 for 2025/2026 based on the current position.
- 3.27 The employment of a two year temporary post as Empty Business Property Officer is required. The cost of this post is estimated at LGE 10 £43,261 in 2024/2025 and circa £46,500 in 2025/2026 as per paragraph 3.22.
- 3.28 An estimated £175,000 per annum would be set-a-side to offer business grant support in year 1 increasing to £200,000 in year 2. These grants will be administered through the Economic Growth Team. This could cover grants for matters such as the application for decoration costs, monies for building works, fixtures and fittings details have yet to be fully determined.
- 3.29 The table below is shows the allocation of Scottish Government funds for empty property relief for Option B

Cost	Year 1 2024/2025 (£'000)	Year 2 2025/2026 (£'000)
EPR	343	285
Funding for Business Support Grants	175	200
New Post	43	46
Tolerance for unanticipated business premises vacancies	47	77
<b>TOTAL FUNDING PROVIDED BY SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>608</b>

\*note – allocations need to be flexible and adjusted given changes to the number of empty properties. The level of funding available for business grants would be adjusted depending on movements in EPR across all categories.

### Analysis of the Options and Officer Recommendation

- 3.30 In terms of costs, both Options A and B offer a significant reduction in EPR costs that the Council need to pick up. Option B reduces EPR costs more quickly than Option A but the difference is not deemed material however the level of tolerance to unanticipated changes is less with Option A as it is with Option B.
- 3.31 Level of innovation to provide incentives to bringing properties back into use is similar with both Options. Option B providing slightly more funds for business support grants in year one than Option A. However, both Options provide real opportunities for us to use the remaining funds to put in place some innovative support mechanisms to help people bring these properties back into use.
- 3.32 If the Council accepts the officer recommendation that all EPR should end after 12 months, and not remain in perpetuity, with the exception of insolvency cases, then the effect of removing all relief for Listed Buildings between options is reduced as under **Option A** owners would get to relief after 12 months, and **Option B** any relief would be removed straight away.
- 3.33 Fairness and consistency is better with **Option A** where under all categories (except insolvency) empty business property will get 50% relief for 3 months followed by 10% relief for 9 months and then 0% relief thereafter. With Option B owners of listed buildings are more likely to feel targeted.
- 3.34 Officers therefore recommend **Option A** is taken forward as the new policy going forward.

### Members Seminar Feedback

- 3.35 On November 6, policy options were introduced during a seminar for members,

and the presentation was positively received. There was a high level of participation, and there seemed to be support for the implementation of Option A based on the proposal.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 The consultation provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with vacant properties in Argyll and Bute. Stakeholders across various backgrounds expressed a strong desire to help revitalise these properties for the benefit of the wider community and also look to reduce future financial burdens on the council through having to deal with unsafe buildings.

4.2 Two new Policy options have been prepared by officers for Members consideration with **Option A** being the recommended preferred option by officers.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Policy – This is a new policy for Empty property relief in non-Domestic Rates that required council approval.

5.2 Financial –Options are cost neutral for the Council but is designed to incentivise building owners to improve their properties.

5.3 Legal – New policy will be prescribed under section 140 of the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

5.4 HR – Proposed new temporary post in Development and Economic Growth.

5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - None

5.5.1 Equalities – None

5.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – This would help bring buildings back into productive use and create new employment opportunities

5.5.3 Islands Duty - None

5.6 Risk – None.

5.7 Customer Service - None

5.8 Climate Change Implications – Helping to invest in existing buildings helps capture their carbon footprint and in the majority of case support our town centres.

**Kirsty Flanagan,  
Section 95 Officer / Executive Director with responsibility for Financial  
Services**

**Councillor Gary Mulvaney, Policy Lead for Finance and Commercial Services**

**25 October 2023**

For further information please contact:

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****FINANCIAL SERVICES****23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**COUNCIL TAX TREATMENT OF SECOND AND LONG-TERM EMPTY HOMES**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has concluded its consultation on Council Tax charges for Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties, which ran from 17 April 2023 to 11 July 2023. A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Council Tax and Local Government funding sources is now reviewing the consultation results and proposing changes for consideration by Leaders and Ministers.
- 1.2 One significant change the JWG has proposed is aligning the Council Tax premium for second homes with long-term empty properties. This change, already approved by CoSLA leaders, will enable local authorities to charge a double Council Tax (100% levy) on second homes instead of the current full Council Tax. Legislation is being drafted to grant councils these new powers.
- 1.3 The proposal suggests implementing the double Council Tax charge for second homes from 1 April 2024 and these powers could help mitigate the Housing Emergency and encourage second home owners in Argyll and Bute to either sell or rent their properties.
- 1.4 The number of second homes in Argyll and Bute has increased from 3,045 in 2022/23 to 3,235 in 2023/24, and a review of self-catering units in Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) is expected to further increase these numbers before billing for the 2024/2025 year.
- 1.5 Charging double Council Tax on these 3,235 second homes could generate £4.9 million in additional revenue, with an estimated collection rate of 85%, resulting in £4.177 million for the 2024/2025 fiscal year.
- 1.6 However, implementing this policy will involve additional costs, including staff resources to manage the changes, the increased customer inquiries and recover the extra debt. These costs are estimated at £94,000. Additionally, the Council Tax operating system OPENRevenues needs modifications to accommodate the double charges, with an estimated cost not exceeding £20,000 upfront plus £4,000 per annum support and maintenance.
- 1.7 In parallel, other changes to Council Tax have been considered, including a Scottish Government derived Council Tax freeze for 2024/2025 and a potential postponement of proposed increases in Bands E to H. Additional proposals, requiring primary legislation changes, include a possible 300% premium on Council Tax for second and long-term empty homes. This change, if implemented, could significantly impact Council Tax revenues in Argyll and Bute from 2025/26 onwards and put more pressure on property owners to bring these dwellings back into use or onto the Housing market which would mitigate the current Housing Emergency in the area.
- 1.8 It is being proposed that Councils be granted the power to charge double Council Tax on Second Homes, much like what is currently applied to Long-term Empty Properties. This strategic move aims to motivate second home owners to either sell or

rent their properties. Furthermore, the potential financial implications, associated costs, and other proposed changes to Council Tax are being considered in light of these evolving circumstances.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Council agrees:

- (i) to implement the double charge, 100% Council Tax premium on second homes from 1 April 2024 should the legislation granting these powers be passed.
- (ii) that £0.020m of one-off costs are funded from existing earmarkings within the Service that are no longer required and recurring costs of £0.098m for staffing and system maintenance associated with the implementation of this charge be funded from the additional income recovered in excess of the £4m already built into the Budget Outlook.

## 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The Scottish Government has recently evaluated feedback from its consultation on Council Tax charges for Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties. The consultation, which opened on 17 April 2023 and closed on 11 July 2023, asked 25 questions. The Council's response to the consultation was approved at its meeting of 29 June is included in Annexe A. The Scottish Government's published outcome of the consultation can be found [here](#) .
- 3.2 A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Council Tax and Local Government funding sources is considering the consultation outcome and bringing forward suggested changes for consideration by Leaders and Ministers. This group includes members of the CIPFA Directors of Finance Group, the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV), CoSLA and the Scottish Government. To date the JWG has brought forward one change regarding bringing the Council Tax premium for second homes in line with long term empty properties, which in Argyll and Bute will allow us to move away from charging full Council Tax on Second Homes to charging a levy of 100% ie:- a double charge. CoSLA leaders agreed this change at their September meeting. Legislation is currently being drafted to reflect the new powers that this change brings for Councils.
- 3.3 It is proposed that, given the current Housing Emergency, the Council prepares to use these new powers when they become available to charge double Council Tax on Second Homes from 1 April 2024 just as it currently does for Long-term Empty Properties. This could incentivise existing second home owners to sell or let their properties in our area.
- 3.4 The number of properties classed as second homes in Argyll and Bute has increased from 3,045 in 2022/23 to 3,235 in 2023/24 following a review carried out by the Council Tax team during the year. In addition the Assessor at Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board is conducting a review of self-catering units in Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) with many expected to move to Council Tax as a second home or a long-term empty property between now and the end of the current calendar year. Therefore these numbers are likely to continue to increase before we bill Council Tax for the 2024/2025 year.
- 3.5 Charging double Council Tax on the 3,235 properties classified as Second Homes in September 2023 will generate £4.9 million in additional Council Tax charges.

Assuming in year collection of 85% of these charges, similar to the amount recovered in year for long-term empty properties, we can expect to recover £4.177 million in the 2024/2025 year as outlined in the table below.

Council Tax Band	No of properties at 30 September 2023	Rate of Council Tax 2024/2025 based on Council Tax Freeze (£)	total additional charge 2024/2025 (£)	Possible in year collections 2024/2025 (£)
Band A	758	986.13	747,486.54	635,364
Band B	545	1,150.49	627,017.05	532,964
Band C	573	1,314.84	753,403.32	640,393
Band D	420	1,479.20	621,264.00	528,074
Band E	482	1,943.50	936,767.00	796,252
Band F	249	2,403.70	598,521.30	508,743
Band G	170	2,896.77	492,450.90	418,583
Band H	38	3,624.04	137,713.52	117,056
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,235</b>		<b>4,914,623.63</b>	<b>4,177,430</b>

- 3.6 There will be some costs associated with implementing the new policy. Additional staff resources will be required to administer the changes and deal with the extra customer contact that will be generated. These are estimated at £94,000 per annum or 1 FTE Senior Council Tax Officer at LGE8 to deal specifically with the volume of increased complaints and 2 LGE 6 Council Tax Assessment Officers to process the changes to accounts and collect the additional debt.
- 3.7 The Council Tax operating system OPENRevenues is not currently capable of allocating double charges to Second Homes. The supplier, Civica has been asked to provide a quote for the works required, this has not yet been returned. It is anticipated that the cost will not exceed £20,000 upfront with a maximum of £4,000 per annum support and maintenance. It is hoped that the cost could be shared by other Civica users in Scotland who will likely need to have the same functionality applied to their systems.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the initial systems costs are funded by earmarkings with ongoing support and maintenance from the additional revenue that is generated from the scheme.

### Other potential changes to Council Tax

- 3.9 The First Minister recently announced that the Scottish Government would fund a Council Tax freeze for 2024/2025 to help people with the cost of living. In addition it is understood that plans to increase the level of charges in Bands E to H are likely to be postponed.
- 3.10 The JWG on Council Tax and Local Government funding sources has considered further areas of change which is currently being considered by Leaders. Proposals will require changes to primary legislation and therefore will not be introduced in time for 2024/2025.
- 3.11 One such change the JWG has considered is a possible 300% premium on Council Tax for second and long-term empty homes. The response to the Scottish Government consultation on the matter indicates that there is support for this change. The JWG has had initial discussions on the principle of introducing such a premium

and have agreed to consider its progression alongside the publication of the consultation analysis and to test the interest for the change internally.

- 3.12 There are circa 900 long-term empty properties in Argyll and Bute so together with 3,235 second homes this would make over 4,000 properties eligible for a premium going forward. A move to increase the premium on these properties to 300% could have a significant impact on the amount of Council Tax that could be levied in Argyll and Bute from 2025/26 onwards and is something the Council will consider should the JWG and the Scottish Government progress further with this matter.
- 3.13 In Wales local authorities have had the power to increase the Council Tax on second homes by up to 300% since 1 April 2023. To date there has been no formal evaluation of the impact of the move however there are reports that despite the move being controversial it is increasing the number properties onto the market for sale.
- 3.14 Whilst it makes sense to use these new powers from 1 April 2024 to generate revenue and encourage houses to come onto the housing market for sale or let, the Council will explore its options to review the policy for charging double council tax on both long-term empty properties and second homes in 2024 to ensure that the policy is updated and producing the results that are required. At this time more information will be available from wales and from the work of the JWG in this area in Scotland.
- 3.15 Colleagues in Housing have been consulted and support the proposed changes.

### **Next Steps**

- 3.16 The policy to increase the Council Tax charges on second homes to a 100% premium is recommended for approval at the Council meeting on 23 November

## **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Scottish Government's thorough evaluation of feedback from the Council Tax charges consultation, which encompassed Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties, has initiated a series of significant considerations and proposals for policy changes. A Joint Working Group (JWG) is at the forefront of these discussions, with one notable proposition being the alignment of Council Tax premiums for second homes and long-term empty properties in the immediate term. This step, approved by CoSLA leaders, could be used in Argyll and Bute to mitigate the current Housing Emergency and incentivise second home owners to consider selling or renting their properties.
- 4.2 With the number of second homes on the rise in Argyll and Bute, this change could significantly impact Council Tax revenues. However, implementing this policy will come with associated costs, including staff resources and system modifications. In addition, the broader landscape of Council Tax is evolving, with the potential introduction of discretionary powers to introduce a 300% premium on second and long-term empty homes being considered for future years. These developments will be monitored closely and underscore the dynamic nature of Council Tax policies and their potential influence on Argyll and Bute's fiscal landscape in the years to come.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Policy – This is a new policy for charging double Council Tax on Second Homes
- 5.2 Financial – Circa £4.915 million additional Council Tax billed per annum with

anticipated in year returns of circa £4.177 million. Total administrative costs of circa £0.118 million.

- 5.3 Legal – secondary legislation being drafted to allow change from 1 April 2024.
- 5.4 HR – Possibility of 3 new posts to administer the levies
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - None
  - 5.5.1 Equalities – None
  - 5.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – None
  - 5.5.3 Islands Duty - None
- 5.6 Risk – None.
- 5.7 Customer Service - None
- 5.8 Climate Change Implications - None

**Kirsty Flanagan, Section 95 Officer/ Executive Director with Responsibility for Financial Services**

**Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services**

25 October 2023

Policy Lead for Finance and Corporate Services: Councillor Gary Mulvaney

**For further information please contact:-**

Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager Tel 01586-555237

**ANNEXE A – COUNCIL RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****FINANCIAL SERVICES****29 JUNE 2023**

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**RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: COUNCIL TAX FOR SECOND AND EMPTY HOMES AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES THRESHOLD**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 On 17 April 2023 the Scottish Government published its consultation on Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds. The consultation closes on 11 July 2023 and a response has been drafted on behalf of the Council. This report seeks Council approval in respect of that response.
- 1.2 The issue of second homes and their impact on local communities has gained significant attention in Scotland in recent years. To address this concern, there has been a proposal to charge double council tax on second homes.
- 1.3 In response to the consultation we have considered the double charging of Council Tax on second homes and its potential effects on homeowners, communities, and the overall housing market as well as the impact on tourism.
- 1.4 Overall we believe it would be of benefit for the Council to be given the direction in law to charge up to a 100% increase in Council Tax on second homes in the expectation that it will help to alleviate a lot of the pressure on the local housing market and local communities whilst generating some additional income for the Council to use to support the delivery of services in these areas.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council approves the consultation response attached as appendix 1 to this report.

**3. DETAIL**

- 3.1 There are circa 3,000 second homes in Argyll and Bute, 6.2% of our overall Council Tax register, higher than any other local authority area in Scotland and much higher than the national average of 0.9%.
- 3.2 There are a number of advantages that increasing the Council Tax charge on second homes can bring around economic fairness, encouragement of long-term rental and the deterrence of speculation and property market distortion.
- 3.3 There are also some potential disadvantages around the impact on homeowners, tourism and the local economy and enforcement and administration challenges.

**Advantages****3.4 Economic Fairness**

**Revenue Generation:** Charging double council tax on second homes could provide a significant source of revenue for the Council, based on the current rate of Council Tax and an 85% collection rate on double charges, this could be as much as £4 million. This could be utilised to fund essential services, infrastructure development, and community projects.

**Redistribution of Wealth:** Increasing tax on second homes may help promote greater economic equity by reducing the concentration of wealth among property owners and potentially supporting affordable housing initiatives.

**3.5 Encouragement of Long-Term Rental:**

**Increased Housing Availability:** Higher taxes on second homes may discourage owners from keeping properties vacant or underutilised, leading to increased availability of rental housing for residents in need or increasing the number of properties for sale in the housing market.

**Boosting Local Rental Markets:** By encouraging owners to rent out their second homes, the policy could strengthen local rental markets, creating a more vibrant and sustainable community.

**3.6 Deterrence of Speculation and Property Market Distortions:**

**Market Stability:** The implementation of double council tax on second homes could discourage speculative investment in the housing market, thereby reducing volatility and the risk of housing bubbles dramatic price increases followed by dramatic reductions in prices.

**Promoting Homeownership:** Discouraging excessive investment in second homes may redirect resources towards primary residences, potentially increasing homeownership rates.

**Disadvantages****3.7 Impact on Homeowners**

**Financial Burden:** Owners of second homes would face increased tax liabilities, potentially leading to financial strain for individuals or families who rely on such properties for personal use or as future retirement assets. Capping such an increase at 100% in law would at least reduce the possible burdens.

**Property Value Impact:** Higher taxes on second homes may diminish property values in the longer term, negatively affecting homeowners' equity and potential returns on investment. However if we want younger local people to get a better chance to get onto the housing ladder locally then this can be an advantage.

### 3.8 **Tourism and Local Economy**

Tourism Sector: Second homes often contribute to the tourism industry by attracting visitors who spend money in local businesses. Increased taxes may discourage property owners from making their homes available for short-term rentals, impacting the tourism sector.

### 3.9 **Enforcement and Administrative Challenges**

Identifying Second Homes: Determining which properties qualify as second homes can be challenging, requiring accurate data collection and monitoring systems.

Compliance Issues: Ensuring compliance with the double council tax policy may require additional administrative resources, and enforcing the tax on non-compliant property owners could be cumbersome.

- 3.10 These details are largely outlined within the proposed consultation response attached in Appendix 1.

#### **Other important considerations in the proposed reply to the consultation**

- 3.11 In terms of economic fairness, the paper does consider the giving Council's similar powers here as in Wales where they can charge an increase in Council Tax of up to 300% on second homes. In our view that would not be fair and a 100% increase like we can do at present for long-term empty properties would strike the right balance for us. We want these owners to have a chance of renovating their properties before bringing them to the market. Charging 300% increase in tax would reduce their capacity to make any changes to improve their property.
- 3.12 Similarly in terms of the enforcement and administration challenges bringing the second home charges to a maximum 100% like the charges on long-term empty properties will ease the administrative burden somewhat on the Council Tax team. The team are due to conduct a second home review shortly and this will be even more important now given the details within the consultation document.
- 3.13 The consultation document talks about the thresholds for defining self-catering units in Non-Domestic Rates. This is important as this could be an avoidance tactic used by second homeowners if the Council increase its Council charges on second homes. Increasing the number of days that properties need to be advertised and actually let to be classed as non-domestic properties is reasonable and would help to minimise the chances for tax avoidance.
- 3.14 Any extra income generated as a result of this change in policy needs to be made available for Council's to use as they see fit and must not be ring-fenced to cover Scottish Government priorities. This is made clear in the response.



#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The opportunity to charge double council tax on second homes in our area presents a number of key benefits and challenges. While it may promote economic fairness, encourage long-term rentals, and deter property market distortions, it could also impact the tourism sector. Balancing these factors is crucial for us when considering the implementation of such a policy, with careful consideration of its potential short-term and long-term effects on individuals, communities, and the overall housing market. However we currently don't have this opportunity and we strongly support the Scottish Government's proposal to allow us the discretion to increase these charges should we want to in the future.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Policy - None at present, any legislative change made by the Scottish Government could allow us to bring a new policy to Council in the future over the double charge of Council Tax on second homes.
- 5.2 Financial - none at present. However if the Council get the powers to vary the tax and we implement these powers it could generate circa £4million in extra income annually.
- 5.3 Legal – None.
- 5.4 HR - None at present, may need more processing/visiting staff if we implement any potential changes in the future.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – None.
- 5.5.1 Equalities – None.
- 5.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – None.
- 5.5.3 Islands Duty - Possibly positive change for the Islands with more housing availability for locals.
- 5.6 Risk - None.
- 5.7 Customer Service – None.
- 5.8 Climate Change Implications – None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with Responsibility for Financial Services/Section 95 Officer**

**Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services**

**5 June 2023**

**Policy Lead for Financial Services and Major Projects: Councillor Gary Mulvaney**

For further information please contact-  
Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager Tel 01586-555237

Non-domestic rates/ council tax on second and empty homes: Consultation



## Respondent Information Form

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

Phone number

01586 555237

Address

KILMORY,  
LOCHGILPHEAD

Postcode

PA318RT

Email Address

Feraus.walker@aravll-bute.aov.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name  
 Publish response only (without name)  
 Do not publish response

### Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes  
 No

## Questionnaire

### Question 1

Do you think the current definition of a second home should continue to apply?:

More information:

For council tax purposes, the current definition of a second home is, 'a dwelling which is no one's sole or main residence and that is lived in for at least 25 days during the 12 month period of the council tax charge'.

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

We are satisfied with the current definition of a second home. It is fairly straightforward to administer for the purpose of assessing Council Tax liability and it gives a clear definition of a second home.

### Question 2

Do you think the discount eligibility for job related dwellings and purpose built holiday accommodation is appropriate?:

More information:

Eligible job related dwellings and purpose built holiday accommodation are entitled to a council tax discount of 50%.

Purpose built holiday accommodation is defined as a dwelling that is used for holiday purposes and has a licence or planning permission limiting its use for human habitation throughout the whole year. An example might be chalets or other types of holiday accommodation that are either unsuitable to be occupied all year round (their construction may mean they are only suitable to be lived in during the warmer months) or are not allowed to be lived in all year due to planning, licensing or other restrictions.

Job-related dwellings are defined as homes owned by someone who has to live elsewhere for most or all of the time as part of their job, or the home the person occupies to undertake their job if the person has another home that is their main residence.

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

The discount eligibility for Purpose Built Holiday Homes is fine. Most owners of chalets will only use the property during periods of the spring or summer months and are likely to be paying full Council Tax on their main residence. Often the park the chalet is in is not licenced for the full year so the owners of the chalet cannot use it for a period of the year. Therefore a 50% discount is reasonable on the chalet type accommodation in these circumstances.

Likewise a job related dwelling is not a person's sole or main residence for Council Tax. It is important to rural businesses to be able to attract workers to job related dwellings in order to deliver goods and services in these settings therefore the 50% discount should remain in place. Also as the occupant be paying full Council tax at their main residence elsewhere then a 50% discount is suitable at their job related dwelling.

### Question 3

Do you think councils should be able to charge a council tax premium on top of regular council tax rates for second homes?

More information:

A premium is charging more than the full rate of council tax.

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

With 6.2% of the council tax register taken up with second homes in Argyll and Bute, proportionately the highest in Scotland and well above the Scottish average at 0.9%. It is very difficult for local residents to be able to buy a property in many of our remote rural communities given local housing market conditions and number of second homes that we have in our area does not help. Second home owners do not contribute to the local economy all year round and additionally having a significant number of second homes in our area makes it harder to grow our population and increase the size of our local communities. By increasing the Council Tax charged on second homes we would encourage people to sell or let their second properties and if they decide not to then they will at least contribute more to the economy with increased local taxes.

### Question 4

If you have answered yes to question 3, what do you think the maximum premium councils could charge should be?

More information:

50% premium is the same as one and a half times the normal rate of council tax.

100% premium is double the normal rate of council tax

150% premium is two and a half times the normal rate of council tax

200% premium is three times the normal rate of council tax

250% premium is three and a half times the normal rate of council tax

300% premium is four times the normal rate of council tax

Answer:

50%

100%

150%

200%

250%

300%

Other (specify)

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100%

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Please give reasons for your answer.

Practically it would be easier to charge an increase of 100% to bring second homes into line long-term empty properties. The impact on the rural communities of second homes and empty properties has parallels although properties being empty does have a larger negative impact. If the council were to increase the second home charges to beyond those of empty properties ie:- by 200% or 300% it may encourage second home owners to leave their properties empty due to the lower level of Council tax charged. This would be counter-productive, at least second home owners tend to maintain their properties well and visit them at least 25 days per annum when they will spend monies in the local community. A similar increase in premium to empty properties would incentivise second home owners to sell or let their property or just pay the extra taxes, they would not benefit at all from leaving it empty.

### Question 5

What factors should be taken into account by councils when deciding whether to introduce a premium on council tax for second homes?

#### More information:

A non-exhaustive list of potential factors is set out below:

- numbers and percentages of second homes in the local area
- distribution of second homes and other housing throughout the council area and an assessment of their impact on residential accommodation values in particular areas
- potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry
- patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes

- potential impact on local public services and the local community
- other existing measures or policies that are aimed at increasing housing supply and the availability of affordable housing

Councils may also decide not to use the powers or to disapply a premium for a specific period of time.

A non-exhaustive list of examples of where a council might consider doing this include:

- where there are reasons why the home could not be lived in as a permanent residence
- where there are reasons why a home could not be sold or let
- where the owner's use of their accommodation is restricted by circumstances not covered by an exception from the premium
- where charging a premium might cause hardship

**Answer:**

Please list the factors and provide reasons for your answer:

All of the factors above should be considered when setting a policy for charging extra Council Tax on second homes. Other factors in a local policy could include the availability of local tradesmen to assist homeowners to upgrade properties before selling or letting them. In rural areas these tradesmen can be difficult to find meaning that any renovation works can take some time to complete. This may contribute to the larger proportion of second homes and empty properties being in remote rural communities.

There are also circumstances where people have been left a property by a relative who is deceased, this has been traditionally a significant reason for long term empty properties in the past. Some beneficiaries in these circumstances have no funds to do any works to the properties making it hard to sell or let. Being charged double Council Tax in these circumstances could be counterproductive. These factors could be considered though by individual council's as part of their policy setting process in respect of second homes/long term empties using their discretion to best fit this to their area..

**Question 6**

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do if the applicable rate of council tax were to increase, and the 'thresholds' to be classed as self-catering holiday accommodation for non-domestic rates purposes stayed the same?

**More information:**

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

A private residential tenancy is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

**Answer:**

D The home is (or would be) already used as self-catering accommodation and liable for non-domestic rates

D The home is (or would be) already used as a private residential tenancy and the tenant is liable for council tax

D I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay the higher rate of council tax

D I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use, and pay council tax

D My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. Rather than pay the higher rate of council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the non-domestic rates thresholds

D My second home is purely for personal use. However, in order to stop paying council tax, I would make it available as self-catering accommodation for 140 days or more and actually let it for 70 days or more in order to be liable for non-domestic rates

D I use my second home purely for personal use but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy

D I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy

D I will seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax

D I will sell the second home

Not applicable, this response is provided on behalf of organisation not from the point of view of a second home owner.

### Question 7

Do you think councils should be able to charge a higher premium than the current 100% (double the full rate) of council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months?

#### More information:

Councils currently have the discretion to charge up to 100% premium on council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months.

#### Answer:

D Yes

x0 No

D Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

100% increase in Council Tax is the right level of increase, it provides an incentive to homeowners to bring the property back into use. Tradesmen in rural areas are hard to get so the length of time these properties take to bring back into use can be considerable. The price of materials is also increasing. Any further increase in council tax charges could make the cost of bringing properties back into use totally unaffordable. We don't want to tax people so much that they can't afford to pay for the works required to bring properties back into use.

### Question 8

If you have answered yes to question 7, what do you think the maximum premium councils could charge should be?

More information:

This question is asking what the maximum premium should be for homes that have been empty for longer than 12 months.

The current maximum is 100% premium, which is double the normal rate of council tax.

Answer:

- 150%
- 200%
- 250%
- 300%
- Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

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Not applicable

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### Question 9

Do you think there should be a stepped approach to charging higher rates of council tax on long-term empty homes?

More information:

By 'stepped approach' we mean only giving councils powers to charge higher rates of council tax the longer the home is empty. For example, 100% premium at 12 months, 200% premium at 2 years, 300% premium at 5 years.

100% premium is the same as double the normal amount of council tax.

200% premium is the same as three times the normal amount of council tax



300% premium is the same as four times the normal amount of council tax.

Answer:

D Yes

x0 No

D Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

No, it is important to get the right balance between people willingly paying extra and simply being unwilling or unable to pay going forward. Our experience suggests 85% of people are prepared to pay the extra 100% increase for long-term empty properties until they are bought back in use. Increasing these charges beyond that level is likely to squeeze the taxpayer too much and they are unlikely to pay. Additionally the older the debt is the harder it is to collect in general terms so an increased Council Tax rate would only compound matters here. Efforts to recover arrears could lead the Council to taking sequestration action and even in these circumstances where sequestration is successful, if the debtor has no cash and the property is not in a condition to sell then there may be little or no return for the debt in any case. Finding a balance is important in terms of taxpayers paying more and not being able to pay at all, this sort of stepped arrangement doesn't strike that balance.

**Question 10**

Are there any exceptions that are not already taken into account, that should be, when charging a premium of council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months?

More information:

**Current discretionary powers for councils to change council tax liability for empty homes**

<b>Status of empty home</b>	<b>Up to 6 months</b>	<b>6-12 months</b>	<b>12 months+</b>	<b>2 years+</b>
No work underway and not for sale or let	Owner may apply for an unoccupied and unfurnished exemption	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10%	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied
If undergoing repair work to make them habitable	50% discount cannot be changed	Owner may apply for a major repairs or structural alterations exemption.	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of

		Discount can be varied between 50 and 10%.	up to 100% can be applied.	up to 100% can be applied.
If being actively marketed for sale or let	50% discount cannot be changed	50% discount cannot be changed	50% discount cannot be changed	a premium of up to 100% can be charged

The current list of exemptions to council tax are:

<b>Exemption</b>	<b>Period of Exemption</b>
Dwellings last occupied by charitable bodies	Up to 6 months
Dwellings last occupied by persons living or detained elsewhere	Unlimited
Deceased owners	Unlimited up to grant of confirmation
	6 months after grant of confirmation
Dwellings empty under statute	Unlimited
Dwellings awaiting demolition	Unlimited
Dwellings for occupation by ministers	Unlimited
Dwellings occupied by students, etc.	Unlimited
Repossessed dwellings	Unlimited
Agricultural dwellings	Unlimited
Dwellings for old or disabled persons	Unlimited
Halls of residence	Unlimited
Barracks, etc.	Unlimited
Dwellings occupied by young people	Unlimited
Difficult to let dwellings	Unlimited
Garages and storage premises	Unlimited
Dwellings of persons made bankrupt	Unlimited
Visiting forces	Unlimited

Dwellings occupied by severely mentally impaired persons	Unlimited
Prisons	Unlimited
Prescribed housing support services accommodation	Unlimited

**Answer:**

Please tell us about exemptions that you feel should apply and give reasons for your answer. Do not include exemptions that are already provided for.

There could be some additional flexibility built into the discretionary powers to extend discounts where there is significant works planned that have been subject to planning delays, or where it has been really difficult to get tradesmen especially in remote rural and/or island communities.

**Question 11**

What factors should be taken into account by councils when deciding whether to introduce a premium on council tax for homes empty for longer than 12 months?

**More information:**

A non-exhaustive list of potential factors might be:

- numbers, percentages and distribution of long-term empty homes throughout a local area
- potential impact on local economies and the community
- patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes
- potential impact on local public services
- impact on neighbours and local residents

Councils may also decide not to use the powers or to disapply a premium for a specific period of time. A non-exhaustive list of examples of where a council might do this include:

- where there are reasons why a home could not be sold or let
- where an offer has been accepted on a home but the sale has not yet been completed and the exception period has run out
- if the home has been empty for longer than 12 months but has been recently purchased by a new owner that is actively taking steps to bring the home back into use
- if an owner has submitted a timely planning application or is undergoing a planning appeal that is under consideration by the council or Scottish Government. This means they cannot undertake work to bring the home back into use until that process is concluded
- where charging a premium might cause hardship or act as a disincentive to bringing the home back into use e.g. where extensive repairs are actively being carried out

**Answer:**

Please list factors and give reasons for your answer.

All of the factors above would form part of the decision to charge a premium on Council Tax for homes empty for longer than 12 months or indeed to disapply a premium going forward.

### Question 12

If you do, or were to, own a home that has been empty for longer than 12 months, please tell us what you would do if your council decided to increase the maximum council tax charge above 100% premium?

#### More information:

Council tax premium:

- 100% premium is the same as double the normal rate of council tax. This is the current maximum councils can decide to charge. This question asks what you would do if councils are given powers to charge more than this e.g. up to 300% premium/ four times the normal rate and the council where your empty home is located decided to apply an increase.
- You may find it helpful to view what we mean by some of the options given e.g. short-term lets and private residential tenancies.

Short-term lets:

- In this consultation, short-term lets is a term used to refer to the whole or part of accommodation provided to one or more guests on a commercial basis that does not become the main residence of the guest/s. Self-catering accommodation is a type of short-term let and may be liable for council tax or non-domestic rates depending on the number of days they are available to let and actually let in the financial year.
- Self-catering accommodation must be available for let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the financial year, to be exempt from council tax and liable for non-domestic rates

Private residential tenancies:

- A private residential tenancy is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

#### Answer:

- D Leave the home empty and pay the higher council tax
  - D Sell the empty home
  - D Use the home as a private residential tenancy
  - D Use the home as a short-Term Let
  - D Other (specify)
- 
-

Please give reasons for your answer.

Not applicable, response is on behalf of an organisation not the owner of an empty property.

### Question 13

Do you think that the letting thresholds for self-catering accommodation for non-domestic rates should be changed?

More information:

The owners, tenants or occupiers of self-catering accommodation (who may be businesses, the public or the third sectors) may be liable for either council tax or non-domestic rates. This includes owners of second homes who use them for self-catering accommodation.

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

If the proposals to levy double Council Tax charge on second homes goes ahead then there is likely to be a large increase in requests from property owners to the Assessor to move their property off of the Council Tax register and onto the Valuation roll for rates. An increase to current threshold would be the best way to discourage this and prevent a significant reduction in the overall value of the tax base.

### Question 14

If you have answered yes to question 13, what do you think the threshold for the number of days self-catering accommodation must actually be let for should be?

More information:

The current threshold is self-catering accommodation must actually be let for 70 days in the financial year.

Answer:

50 days

100 days

- 0 140 days  
 0 180 days  
 0 Other (specify)
- 
- 

Please give reasons for your answer.

The season in Scotland is short, typically running from the start of April to the end of September with some extra weeks in October and December for short holiday periods.

Therefore the season is roughly 200 days long so if a property is advertised for the season and actually let for 50% of the season, then a threshold of 100 days for actually letting out a self-catering unit is fair in our view.

#### Question 15

If you have answered yes to question 13, what do you think the threshold for the number of days self-catering accommodation must be available to let should be?

#### More information:

The current threshold is self-catering accommodation must available to let for 140 days in the financial year.

#### Answer:

- 120 days  
 160 days  
 200 days  
 250 days  
 Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

In Scotland a property should be available for let at least 50% of the year, April to September additionally at the Christmas period and for a short period in October. Therefore 200 days in our view would be a reasonable threshold in the definition of a self-catering unit.

**Question 16**

Do you think councils should have discretion to change the self-catering accommodation 'days actually let' threshold, for their local area?

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Letting thresholds should be determined by the Scottish Government, if discretion is given to local authorities they could end up competing with each other to offer the best conditions to property owners. It could become a bit of a postcode lottery for the owners of these units in respect of whether their self-catering unit is rated on NOR or Council Tax depending on rules that would vary from one Local Authority area to another, this could be confusing for the public.

**Question 17**

If you answered yes to question 16 do you think that councils should have discretion to:

Answer:

Increase the number of days actually let only

Decrease the number of days actually let only

Increase or decrease the number of days actually let

Please specify if you think councils should have discretion to do something else

Please give reasons for your answer

Not applicable

**Question 18**

Do you have any other comments on the non-domestic rates system in respect of self-catering accommodation?

Answer:

Please provide your views

Consideration should be given to making the Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) less generous in NOR for self-catering units. These units normally attract a very low rateable value and are eligible for 100% relief through SBBS and therefore don't make any contribution to local tax in the area. There is a significant difference between a second home potentially paying double Council Tax in the future on a property and the property being on the NOR roll and attracting 100% relief. Limiting the relief to 25% or doing away with it altogether should be considered.

**Question 19**

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do in the event that the applicable rate of council tax and non-domestic rate thresholds both increased?

More information:

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

A private residential tenancy is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

Answer:

- D The home is already used as a private residential tenancy
- D I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay the higher rate of council tax
- D I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the thresholds to be liable for non-domestic rates) and personal use, and pay council tax
- D My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. Rather than pay the higher rate of council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the non-domestic rates thresholds
- D My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (above the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. Rather than revert to paying council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the higher non-domestic rates thresholds



- D My second home is purely for personal use. However, in order to stop paying council tax, I would make it available as self-catering accommodation and let it for the number of days I needed to in order to be liable for non-domestic rates
- D I use my second home purely for personal use but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- D I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- D I would seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax
- D I would sell the second home
- D Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

Not applicable, response is provided on behalf of the local authority.

### Question 20

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do in the event that:

- a) council tax powers remained as they are for second homes (i.e. no provision for councils to charge a premium), but
- b) the 'thresholds' to be classed as self-catering holiday accommodation for Non-domestic rates purposes increased?

#### More information:

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

.A. private residential tenancy is \When a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

#### Answer:

- D The home is already used as a private residential tenancy
- D I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay council tax

- D I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the thresholds to be liable for non-domestic rates) and personal use, and pay council tax
- D My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (above the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the higher non-domestic rates thresholds
- D I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (above the current non-domestic rates threshold). If I was not able to meet the new thresholds, I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- D I would seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax
- D I would sell the second home
- D Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer:

Not applicable responding on behalf of the local authority

**Question 21**

Please tell us how you think changes to council tax and/or non-domestic rates thresholds for self-catering accommodation might affect businesses in your area.

Answer:

Please provide your views

Increase in Council Tax being charged on second homes may lead to the properties being sold or let and turned into primary residences for people to assist with the supply of housing locally to accommodate key workers.

An increase in applications to move from second homes in Council Tax to self-catering units in NOR may actually reduce the gross local tax chargeable by the local authority. However there may be an increase in tourism if second homeowners are forced to let out their second homes to other tourists to meet the definition of self-catering accommodation in NOR. This more transient tourism model would likely boost the local economy with more people visiting for shorter periods of time tending to eat out.

### Question 22

Please tell us how you think changes to the maximum council tax rate for second and/or empty homes and non-domestic rates thresholds might affect your local area or Scotland as a whole (social, economic, environment, community, cultural, enterprise).

#### More information:

We have prepared a partial Business Regulatory Impact Assessment and undertaken screenings to initially consider other impacts. We would welcome your views and comments to help us expand on these assessments.

#### Answer:

Please provide your views

Argyll and Bute currently has the highest proportion of second homes in Scotland at 6.2% of the overall Council Tax base. This is well above the 0.9% average in Scotland. There is a lack of affordable housing available for local people and a lack of both temporary and permanent accommodation for workers and key workers who may need to reside in the communities to work on specific projects. In addition recent experiences show that people from urban areas are buying houses as second homes at inflated prices effectively taking these properties out of reach of local people. Average earnings of rural populations are lower than householders living in urban areas. Applying increased levels of Council Tax on second homes in our area may incentivise second home owners to sell or let their properties freeing up housing that is available. This may encourage young people to stay in the area to live and work if there is more affordable housing available. If they don't want to sell or let their property then they will at least be pa' y ng more in local tax to support the delivery of vital local services.

### Question 23

Please tell us how you think the changes identified might affect island communities.

#### More information:

We have prepared a partial Island Communities Impact Assessment and undertaken screenings to initially consider other impacts. We would welcome your views and comments to help us expand on these assessments.

Answer:

Please provide your views

These problems are particularly concentrated on island communities. Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree and Islay and Jura all feature in the list of datazones with the highest proportion of second homes in Scotland, with 1 in every 4<sup>th</sup> /5<sup>th</sup> property a second home lived in for 25 days per annum minimum. The local population is ageing and declining and tourism whilst welcome is pushing up house prices making it very difficult for young local people who want to stay, live and work on the islands, to make a start in life there. Charging more Council Tax for second homes on these islands should help to free up some of this housing and bring it back into use for the local community or at the very least give the Council the opportunity to recover more local taxes and use these to further support remote rural and island communities.

**Question 24**

Do you think there are any equality, human rights, or wellbeing impacts in relation to the changes set out in the consultation?

Answer:

Yes

No

Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Typically families with more than one property are wealthier than families with one or no properties so the additional local taxes is aimed at the correct cohort of the population.

Additionally we agree with the Scottish Government research which concludes that it does not consider there to be any equalities issues affecting people with protected characteristics arising from these proposals.

**Question 25**

Is there anything else you would like to tell us in relation to this consultation?

Answer:

Please provide any further comments on the proposals set out in this consultation in the box below.

We strongly believe that local authorities should have the discretion to vary the Council Tax on second homes and long term empty properties particularly local authorities with a low population density.

No additional income should be ring fenced by the Scottish Government for any specific purpose. This should be left to the discretion of the local authority.

### About you

Please tell us which of the following categories best describe you (select all that apply):

- Owner of a Second Home
- Owner of a Long-term Empty Home
- Short-Term Let/Self-Catering accommodation operator
- Council or Assessor
- Organisation e.g. third sector or industry body
- Member of the Public
- Other, please specify

Council

Please tick whichever council areas apply to you (or select all of Scotland)?:

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire Council
- All of Scotland
- Angus Council
- X Argyll and Bute Council X
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Dunbartonshire Council
- East Lothian Council
- East Renfrewshire Council

- Falkirk Council
- Fife Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Highland Council
- Inverclyde Council
- Midlothian Council
- Moray Council
- Na h-Eileanan Siar Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Orkney Council
- Perth and Kinross Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- Shetland Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- West Lothian Council



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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****COUNCIL****DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH****23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**ROYAL NATIONAL MOD OBAN OCTOBER 2024 – FINANCIAL REQUEST**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Royal National Mòd (RNM) will take place from 11<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in Oban, where the very first RNM took place in 1892. Oban is often referred to as the cradle of the Mòd as a consequence. The Council is supporting the RNM in recognition of, its cultural and educational significance of supporting the development of the Gaelic language and the provision of local national Mòds, the boost this gives to the local economy and business including the tourism sector. The estimated economic impact of the Oban RNM in 2015 was £2.5m and the Dunoon RNM in 2018 was £2m, therefore a significant economic impact is expected for Oban 2024.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Consider and agree a financial resource of up to £25,000 to Live Argyll to provide staffing for the use of Corran Halls for the duration of the RNM to be funded from the unallocated general fund.
- ii. Consider and agree the additional funding request of up to a maximum of £20,000 to An Comunn to be funded from the unallocated general fund.

**3.0 DETAIL**

- 3.1 A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with An Comunn Gaidhealach (An Commun), who deliver the RNM, is in place for £120,000 and to date £100,000 has been paid out as a contribution for delivery of the RNM in Oban 2024. The remaining £20,000 is due to be paid out this year and is still to be drawn down

by An Comunn. The SLA also states that 'Council, working with Live Argyll, will secure the use of the Corran Halls for the duration of the RNM in 2024 at no cost to the RNM'. Representatives from Customer Services Department discussed this with Live Argyll who confirmed that the venue use will be free of charge however the Council will need to set aside up to £25,000 for staffing at the Corran Halls. In order to claim this money Live Argyll will be required to submit evidence for scrutiny by officers.

- 3.2 In addition An Comunn have raised the issue of rising costs, including accommodation, which have led to a significant increase in their budget since the SLA was agreed. These costs cannot be met within their current budget. They have therefore submitted a request for £20,000 to contribute to these. They are also exploring other sources of funding to help with this deficit including HIE and Bòrd na Gàidhlig and a decision on these is expected in January 2024. Should these be successful the full amount of £20,000 may not be required however costs provided for this report are by necessity at this stage, indicative, and may continue to rise.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Council recognises the importance of the RNM in Oban in 2024 and as such has an SLA in place to support this. This was agreed in 2019 by Policy and Resources Committee however as the RNM approaches, Live Argyll have identified a requirement of up to £25,000 for staffing of the Corran Halls, whilst providing the venue for free. In addition, a rise in costs since 2019 has resulted in An Comunn requesting additional funding of £20,000.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Policy - The provision of support to the RNM fits with the Council's Gaelic Plan and specifically the Council recognises the cultural and educational significance of supporting the development of the Gaelic language and the provision of local and national Mods.

- 5.2 Financial - An SLA for £120,000 over five years and in-kind support for venues and staffing was agreed by Council however budget needs to be identified to cover the Live Argyll staffing element of up to £25,000.

A further funding request from An Comunn for £20,000 to meet rising costs.

- 5.3 Legal – An SLA is in place.

- 5.4 HR – Resources from existing staff.

- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty

- 5.5.1 Equalities-protected characteristics - An Commun and Live Argyll are required to comply with relevant equalities regulations.

- 5.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – None.



5.5.3 Islands – RNM promotes the use of Gaelic across our islands and mainland.

5.6 Climate Change – None.

5.7 Risk – An Comunn have an experienced track record of delivering the RNM.

5.8 Customer Service – None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth**

**Councillor Robin Currie, Policy Lead for Strategic Development**

October 2023

**For further information contact:**

Audrey Martin, Transformational Projects and Regeneration Manager,  
Transformation Projects and Regeneration

Arlene Cullum, Senior Economic Regeneration Officer, Transformational Projects  
and Regeneration

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**
**COUNCIL****DEVELOPMENT AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH****23 NOVEMBER 2023**


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**STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN (SHIP) 2024/25 - 2028/29**


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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report details the proposed annual Strategic Housing Investment Plan which will cover the period 2024/25 - 2028/29 and summarises the proposals for the revised SHIP, in line with statutory requirements and the latest guidance.
- 1.2 The SHIP document required to be submitted to the Scottish Government on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan, as attached at Appendix 1, was submitted to comply with that deadline on the basis of it being subject to ratification by the Council at their meeting on 23 November 2023.
- 1.3 In July 2021 The Scottish Government allocated Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs) to local authorities for the five years to the end of March 2026. The Scottish Government have confirmed that the figures for 2027, 2028 and 2029 can be based on the allocations from previous years although they are not formal definitive allocations:

<b>Year</b>	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	<b>Total</b>
<b>RPA</b>	£18.328m	£18.632m	£18.632m	£18.632m	£18.632m	£92.856m

- 1.4 In 2022/23, the SHIP delivered 180 new affordable homes. This SHIP identifies potential for around 106 units to be completed in 2023/24 and over 1000 additional homes to be completed or approved in subsequent years.
- 1.5 As well as addressing unmet local need and contributing to national targets, the proposed programme will:
- generate additional investment in the local economy, support additional jobs including new apprenticeships in the construction sector and associated labour market;
  - stimulate community regeneration and sustainability;
  - help to attract and retain residents and employees for local businesses;
  - encourage movement within, and more effective operation of, the local housing system;
  - also contribute to improving general health and well-being;

- generate additional Council tax revenue.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council:

Approve the SHIP 2024/25 – 2028/29 which will then be submitted to the Scottish Government as the Council's approved SHIP document.

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC  
GROWTH**

**23 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN (SHIP) 2024/25 - 2028/29**

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The core purpose of the SHIP is to set out strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over a five year period to achieve the outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 The SHIP document required to be submitted to the Scottish Government on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan, as attached at Appendix 1, was submitted to comply with that deadline on the basis of it being subject to ratification by the Council at their meeting on 23 November 2023.
- 2.3 The SHIP remains a continuous, iterative process: individual projects are subject to a variety of factors which can lead to slippage or revision; and the overall programme requires constant monitoring. Formal updates are now required on an annual basis.
- 2.4 The revised SHIP has potential for delivery of around 106 units in 2023/24, and over 1000 new affordable homes in subsequent years.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

Approve the SHIP 2024/25 – 2028/29 which will then be submitted to the Scottish Government as the Council's approved SHIP document.

**4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 From 2017, the Scottish Government, COSLA and Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) agreed that SHIPs would revert to being submitted on an annual basis. In June 2023 revised guidance was issued to assist local authorities prepare their SHIPs, with a requirement to submit to

Scottish Government by October 2023. Our SHIP was submitted noting that we would be seeking Council approval in November.

- 4.2 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out the strategic policy approach of the council and its partners to delivering high quality housing and related services across all tenures to meet identified need in the area. SHIPs are directly informed by the LHS and its policies and are developed in consultation with key stakeholders. Therefore, the SHIP is operational in nature and not considered as a policy document.
- 4.3 The core purpose of the SHIP remains to set out strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over a five year period to achieve the outcomes contained in the LHS. The plan reinforces the council as the strategic housing authority; the importance of the outcomes and targets set out in the LHS; and informs Scottish Government investment decisions.
- 4.4 The SHIP should therefore:-
- Set out investment priorities for affordable housing;
  - Demonstrate how these will be delivered;
  - Identify the resources required to deliver these priorities;
  - Enable the involvement of key partners.

The SHIP should contain a succinct narrative in PDF form, submitted as a supporting document to the SHIP in the Housing and Regeneration Programme (HARP) system, which explains the context to the SHIP including:

- A statement on alignment with the LHS demonstrating that priorities identified in the SHIP are consistent with what the local authority outlined in its LHS (and any subsequent updates) and how the SHIP priorities will contribute to delivery of LHS Outcomes;
- A summary of the methodology used to prioritise projects;
- Details of how the local authority has responded to and resolved development constraints on projects prior to the site start date;
- Details on how the local authority's own resources and other funding are supporting the delivery of affordable housing in its area;
- Details of progress towards the delivery of its Affordable Housing Supply Programme across all tenures by completions;
- Details of affordable housing projects for Gypsy/Travellers;
- Details of Housing Infrastructure Fund projects where these are linked to affordable housing delivery;
- Details of local plans to support the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing within its area;
- A statement that strategic housing priorities are aligned and are consistent with Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan priorities;

- Details of affordable housing projects that are aligned with the local authority's Child Poverty Action Report;
- Details that duties under the Islands (Scotland) Act have been followed by the local authority if appropriate;
- Details of any empty homes services and actions to bring homes back into use;
- Details of how Council Tax on Second and Empty Homes has been used to assist affordable housing;
- Details of how Developer Contributions have been used to assist affordable housing;
- The type and level of consultation undertaken with RSLs, communities, developers and other stakeholders in developing the SHIP and how this has helped with the development of strategic investment priorities.

#### 4.5 **Key Aspects of the SHIP Guidance Issued in June 2023**

Building on previous guidance, the Scottish Government's most recent guidance includes an emphasis on ensuring that any specific requirements for key worker housing and the actions that the Council and its RSL partners will take forward over the period of the SHIP.

The guidance makes reference to the Affordable Rural Homes for Key Workers Fund which was announced in April 2023. Council officers are in discussion with the Scottish Government over several housing projects which they consider may be eligible for the Fund.

The guidance also requires details on how the SHIP supports and enables the local authority to deliver duties required under the Islands Act.

The guidance continues to include an enhanced emphasis on the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing in support of action 62 of the Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Action Plan.

The latest guidance continues to emphasize the specific linkages between the SHIP process and the duty on local authorities to produce Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, essentially ensuring that the delivery of the SHIP will have direct impact on homelessness in the local authority area.

#### 4.6 **Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs).**

In July 2021 The Scottish Government allocated Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs) to local authorities for the five years to the end of March 2026. The Scottish Government have confirmed that the figures for 2027, 2028 and 2029 can be based on the allocations from previous years although they are not formal definitive allocations:

Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
RPA	£ 18.328m	£ 18.632m	£18.632m	£18.632m	£18.632m	£92.856m

It should be noted that this is potential investment for Argyll and Bute, dependent on actual need and deliverability of suitable projects. While obviously very welcome, this level of funding will also present real challenges for the Council and its partners. This would be subject to sufficient complementary funding being available from the Council and RSLs themselves to support the programme; and the capacity of the constrained local construction industry to gear up to such an enhanced level of productivity. Officers will continue to explore with Scottish Government and through COSLA, areas of flexibility in uses of the RPA which will help us to maximise its utilisation.

- 4.7 Additional funding is required to complement the Scottish Government investment, and in Argyll and Bute this includes a contribution from the Council's Strategic Housing Fund (SHF) as well as Housing Association investment drawn from private sector borrowing. The council's SHF is primarily based on the revenue raised from reduced tax discounts on holiday and second homes. The SHIP sets out plans to fully utilise the SHF over 5 years to support the affordable housing development programme, including empty homes grants and loans. The projected income to the SHF over the next 3 years is approximately £2m per annum. An indicative estimate of around £2.29m would be required to support in full the Scottish Government investment outlined in the 2024/25 RPA above based on the Scottish Government's updated baseline benchmark of £95,500 per unit.

#### 4.8 Consultation and Collaboration

The preparation of the SHIP is intended to be viewed as a corporate activity with close working relationships fostered across housing, planning, economic development and other internal services. It is also crucial that the SHIP process is based on collaboration between the Council, RSLs, communities, developers, the Scottish Government and other stakeholders such as the Health and Social Care Partnership; and that the SHIP document should provide a detailed narrative about how consultation and collaboration has been undertaken with all stakeholders. In Argyll and Bute, while the Council remains the strategic authority with overall responsibility for the plan, local RSLs and developers are engaged formally and informally throughout the process, and do lead on delivering most of the individual projects. Regular review meetings are held with SHIP officers from the Council, RSLs, and the Scottish Government, and all proposals and decisions are considered by the overarching, multi-agency Strategic Housing Forum. Updates are also being tabled at local area community planning groups; and at the level of specific projects, sites and settlements, a range of community representatives and individual residents are routinely engaged and consulted. In recent years, a



number of local community councils and development trusts have pro-actively engaged in the SHIP process, undertaking localised Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs), with Council support, to feed into the process and contributing to discussions on the project proposals. Additional engagement has been promoted across the local business sector.

- 4.9 A primary focus for the new SHIP has been continued engagement with the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to ensure adequate specialist provision is included in the new build programme. The HSCP's new 3 year strategic plan was launched in 2022 and incorporates a Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) outlining the essential role housing plays in supporting and maintaining independence, health and well-being of residents. The current LHS consolidates the partnership working with the HSCP and sets out a high-level outcome which is:

**“To enable people with particular needs to live independently in their own homes and to remain in their communities”**

The post of dedicated Housing Occupational Therapist which was established in October 2018 to co-ordinate and promote these needs through the SHIP group, was made permanent in 2021.

#### 4.10 **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)**

The Scottish Government introduced a Housing Infrastructure Fund in 2016 to support housing development through dedicated loans and grants. The HIF will prioritise sites which are of strategic importance and cannot proceed or have stalled due to exceptional infrastructure works. The Council secured a £2.1 million HIF grant to address the costs of upgrade works at Kirk Road/Lorn Road. This work is now complete and has enabled delivery of the 300 unit affordable housing development at Dunbeg, which remains a high strategic priority for the Council and its partners. The SHIP annual update contains proposals for 4 further HIF projects in Argyll.

#### 4.11 **Other Affordable Housing Provided Without Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) Assistance**

SHIPs should contain details of all proposed affordable housing projects within the local authority area including those which will be provided without AHSP support. This could include off the shelf purchases, buybacks of ex-council/RSL stock, projects where councils have exclusively used their own resources, pension funds or other sources of funding, including Scottish Government non-AHSP funds to develop housing.

The Council will continue to explore these and all other appropriate options to increase the supply of affordable housing. The Council agreed an Open Market

Purchase Statement with the Scottish Government in January 2022. In June 2023 the Council launched a buy back initiative in partnership with the local RSLs. 26 enquiries have been received as at the end of September.

SHF has contributed to 3 Rural and Islands Housing Fund projects in Argyll during 2022/23 – the refurbishment of 5 properties for affordable rent at Glengorm, Mull, the development of 9 affordable houses on Colonsay and the development of 5 affordable houses on Gigha. In addition a Community Housing Network Group has been established by the Council to support community groups to take forward housing projects which meet identified need.

The potential impact of the Rural Growth Deal (RGD) for Argyll and Bute will be significant, and the SHIP and the housing sector in general can contribute to this strategic agenda.

#### 4.12 Current Progress: Outputs 2022/2023

Table 1 details the affordable housing delivered by the SHIP in 2022/23.

**TABLE 1: SHIP New Build Homes by HMA & Project, 2022/23**

<b>Project address</b>	<b>Developer</b>	<b>Units</b>
Sawmill Field Helensburgh	LORETTO	36
Dunbeg Phase 3 (remaining units)	LINK	119
Jura	WHHA	10
Millknowe Campbeltown	ACHA	1
Oakfield, Tarbert	ACHA	4
Inveraray	ACHA	10
<b>Argyll &amp; Bute 2022/23 Total Completions (est.)</b>		<b>180</b>

#### 4.13 The Revised SHIP Programme

The current year, 2023/24, is covered by a Strategic Local Programme Agreement while the new SHIP is intended to commence from 2024/25. The following tables summarise all proposals at the time of writing, including those projects which were completed in the first quarters of this year and for which funding has already been drawn down. It should be noted that the status of many future projects, particularly in the later years, remains provisional and purely indicative at this stage; some may not proceed within the timescale. However there is also scope for additional proposals to be brought forward or included in earlier years.

**TABLE 2: SHIP Projects Completions/Anticipated Completions in 2023/24**

Project address	Developer	Units	Anticipated Completion Date
Eton Avenue, Dunoon	ACHA	4	October 2023
Dunbeg Phase 3 (remaining units)	LINK	66	August 2023
Imeraval Phase 4 Islay	WHHA	20	March 2024
Port Appin	WHHA	6	March 2024
Buyback Acquisitions	ACHA	8	March 2024
Buyback Acquisitions	FH	2	March 2024
<b>Argyll &amp; Bute 2023/24 Total Completions (est.)</b>		<b>106</b>	<b>March 2024</b>

**TABLE 3: SHIP Core Programme - Potential Completions by March 2029**

Project Address	Developer	Total Units	Anticipated Completion
Bowmore Phase 4	ACHA	17	Year 1 (24/25)
Dalintober, Campbeltown	ACHA	20	Year 1 (24/25)
Acquisitions	ACHA	5	Year 1 (24/25)
Tighcargaman, Port Ellen	ACHA	50	Year 2 (25/26)
East Clyde Street, Helensburgh	ACHA	14	Year 2 (25/26)
Coll	ACHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Acquisitions	ACHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Glenmachrie, Islay	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Tarbert Phase 1	ACHA	15	Year 3 (26/27)
Kilcreggan	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Tayvallich	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunoon Phase 1	ACHA	35	Year 3 (26/27)
Keils, ISLAY	ACHA	4	Year 4 (27/28)
Tarbert Phase 2	ACHA	15	Year 4 (27/28)
Tiree	ACHA	10	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunoon Phase 2	ACHA	35	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunoon Phase 3	ACHA	30	Year 5 (28/29)
Dunoon Phase 4	ACHA	20	Year 5 (28/29)
Jeanie Deans, Helensburgh	DUNBRITTON HA	12	Year 1 (24/25)
18th Tee, Helensburgh Golf Club	DUNBRITTON HA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Cardross	DUNBRITTON HA	35	Year 3 (26/27)
Helensburgh Golf Club	DUNBRITTON HA	62	Year 5 (28/29)
Succoth Phase 2, Arrochar	DUNBRITTON HA	12	Year 5 (28/29)
Riverside Drive, Lochgilphead (Baddens)	FYNE HOMES	6	Year 1 (24/25)
Ballochgoy	FYNE HOMES	8	Year 1 (24/25)
Rothesay - acquisition	FYNE HOMES	8	Year 1 (24/25)
Inveraray Phase 1	FYNE HOMES	16	Year 2 (25/26)

Rothesay Academy	FYNE HOMES	50	Year 4 (27/28)
Lochgilphead Phase 6	FYNE HOMES	80	Year 4 (27/28)
Inveraray Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	10	Year 4 (27/28)
Rothesay Academy Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	30	Year 5 (28/29)
Tighnabruaich Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	10	Year 5 (28/29)
Rosneath	LINK GROUP	49	Year 2 (25/26)
Hospital Field, Oban	LINK GROUP	50	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunbeg Phase 4	LINK GROUP	129	Year 3 (26/27)
Glencruitten	LINK GROUP	100	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunbeg Phase 5	LINK GROUP	97	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunbeg Phase 6	LINK GROUP	123	Year 5 (28/29)
Colonsay	WHHA	5	Year 1 (24/25)
Port Charlotte Phase 1	WHHA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Imeraval Phase 5	WHHA	20	Year 2 (25/26)
Tobermory Shillinghill Phase 3	WHHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Dalmally	WHHA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Salen	WHHA	8	Year 4 (27/28)
Lochawe Phase 1	WHHA	16	Year 4 (27/28)
Baliscate, Tobermory	WHHA	12	Year 5 (28/29)
Port Appin Phase 2/3	WHHA	24	Year 5 (28/29)
Bunessan Phase 2	WHHA	4	Year 5 (28/29)
Port Charlotte Phase 2	WHHA	17	Year 5 (28/29)
Craignure	WHHA	24	Year 5 (28/29)
<b>Argyll and Bute Total</b>		<b>1395</b>	<b>2024-2029</b>

<sup>1</sup> NB. Timescales are indicative and subject to change; and will be monitored on a regular basis. Some projects could also revise their final number of units.

4.14 Alternative sites are also being considered either to replace or enhance some of the sites listed in above tables. The Council also continues to provide support for communities considering the use of the Government's Rural and Island Housing Funds and other resources to deliver affordable housing out with the core AHSP development programme. The table below provides details of these projects.

**TABLE 4 : Community Housing Projects**

ARGYLL AND BUTE - COMMUNITY LED HOUSING PROJECTS			
COMMUNITY GROUP	PROJECT AREA	NOTES ON PROJECT STAGE	TOTAL UNITS (if relevant)
<b>Colonsay community Development</b>	Scalasaig, Isle of Colonsay	Houses complete bar commissioning, external works stalled	<b>9 units + 3 self build plots</b>

<b>Luig Community</b>	Isle of Luig	Finalising Housing Needs Assessment. Detailed housing proposals prepared and to be submitted in Local Place Plan	<b>12</b>
<b>Mull and Iona Community Trust</b>	Worker Accommodation	Report commissioned to determine scale of housing issue	<b>n/a</b>
	Worker Accommodation Tobermory	Supporting A & B Council in the provision of worker accommodation in Tobermory	<b>12</b>
	Glengorm affordable housing	MICT supporting the Glengorm estate with their allocations policy for their affordable housing	<b>5</b>
<b>South West Mull and Iona Development</b>	Ardmeanach View Bunessan	Working with WHHA demonstrating Feasibility	<b>6</b>
	Bunessan Village	Exploring feasibility of site, funding for site purchase	<b>5 or 6</b>
<b>Tiree Community Development</b>	Tiree	SLF Stage 1 approved, awaiting RIHF	<b>12</b>
<b>Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust</b>	Ardminish	Expected completion: July 2024	<b>5</b>
<b>North West Mull</b>	Isle of Ulva	Post Construction Management	
<b>Tayvallich Initiative</b>	Gifted Property, Tayvallich	About to advertise and allocate this 2 bed property	<b>1</b>
	Farmhouse, Tayvallich	About to take ownership of this 4 bed property which is currently tenanted	<b>1</b>
	Archie's Land, Tayvallich	Housing needs assessment completed. In discussions with housing agencies regarding different models. Further feasibility works required and to engage with planning	<b>10</b>

#### 4.15 Impact Assessments

In preparing the SHIP, as in all aspects of housing policy and planning, the Council has taken account of the housing needs of all the communities we serve, and continues to address equalities issues and adhere to principles of diversity and inclusion. In addition to the robust baseline evidence of specialist accommodation and support needs across the range of equalities client groups contained in the HNDA, the Council is proactively pursuing engagement with the Health and Social Care Partnership to inform the SHIP programme. An overarching equality impact assessment will be completed for the LHS and this will inform our assessment of the impact of the SHIP, and how the strategic

aims are embodied in the housing priorities of the programme. Housing Services will also consider requirements for Health Inequalities Impact Assessments, Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments or other potential policy implications. However, as the responsible authority for the purposes of the relevant 2005 Act, the Council has determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required for the LHS or SHIP.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 The Scottish Government will review the SHIP in line with the process agreed jointly with COSLA. Their appraisal will therefore take account of the following:

- the extent to which the SHIP delivers LHS Outcomes;
- the extent to which it is feasible to deliver;
- the local authority's contribution to the delivery of the programme, both in terms of its facilitation role and in terms of maximisation of resources;
- evidence that the Council is supporting the efficient delivery of the SHIP;
- evidence of stakeholders' involvement in developing the SHIP and in the implementation of proposals; and
- the extent to which it takes account of equality issues.

5.2 In March 2023, the Scottish Government provided positive feedback on the previous SHIP, submitted last year, and their comments have also continued to inform this latest version of the SHIP moving forward.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Policy - Proposals are consistent with current Council policy, including the revised policy in respect of the use of Strategic Housing Fund monies. The SHIP supports the Local Housing Strategy vision and outcomes which are directly aligned with the overarching objectives of the Outcome Improvement Plan, in particular Outcome 2 – we have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.

6.2 Financial - The proposals are based on the Resource Planning Assumptions provided by the Scottish Government; the Strategic Housing Fund and RSL private finance. There will be an ongoing requirement to retain and target SHF resources to support the proposed programme.

6.3 Legal - The submission of the SHIP will meet our statutory duties, and following its approval, Strategic Local Programme Agreements will be concluded between the Council and Scottish Government.

- 6.4 HR – None.
- 6.5 Equalities (Fairer Scotland Duty) - The proposals are consistent with aims and objectives set out in the local housing strategy, which is subject to an EQIA.
  - 6.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics - There are targets set within the SHIP to deliver housing which meet the needs of specialist groups
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - The delivery of affordable housing across Argyll and Bute facilitates socio-economic opportunities for all. The SHIP links with the Child Poverty Strategy.
  - 6.5.3 Islands - The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment process takes full account of housing need on the islands. New build developments on the islands are included in each of the SHIP tables.
- 6.6 Risk - Risk assessment is an integral part of each development and will be considered as the programme moves forward. The SHIP is required to show how risk will be managed. Failure to deliver a robust SHIP could result in loss of substantial government investment for the local authority area. Alternatively, however, failure to forward plan judiciously and to programme development in line with identified needs could result in over supply; generating imbalances in the local housing market, and creating risks for RSLs and the management of their existing stock, with consequent adverse effects on local neighbourhoods and communities.
- 6.7 Climate Change – None.
- 6.8 Customer Service - The proposals will deliver increased access to a range of suitable, affordable housing options.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with Responsibility for Development and Economic Growth**  
**Councillor Robin Currie, Policy Lead for Strategic Development**

November 2023

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Appendix 1 – SHIP document



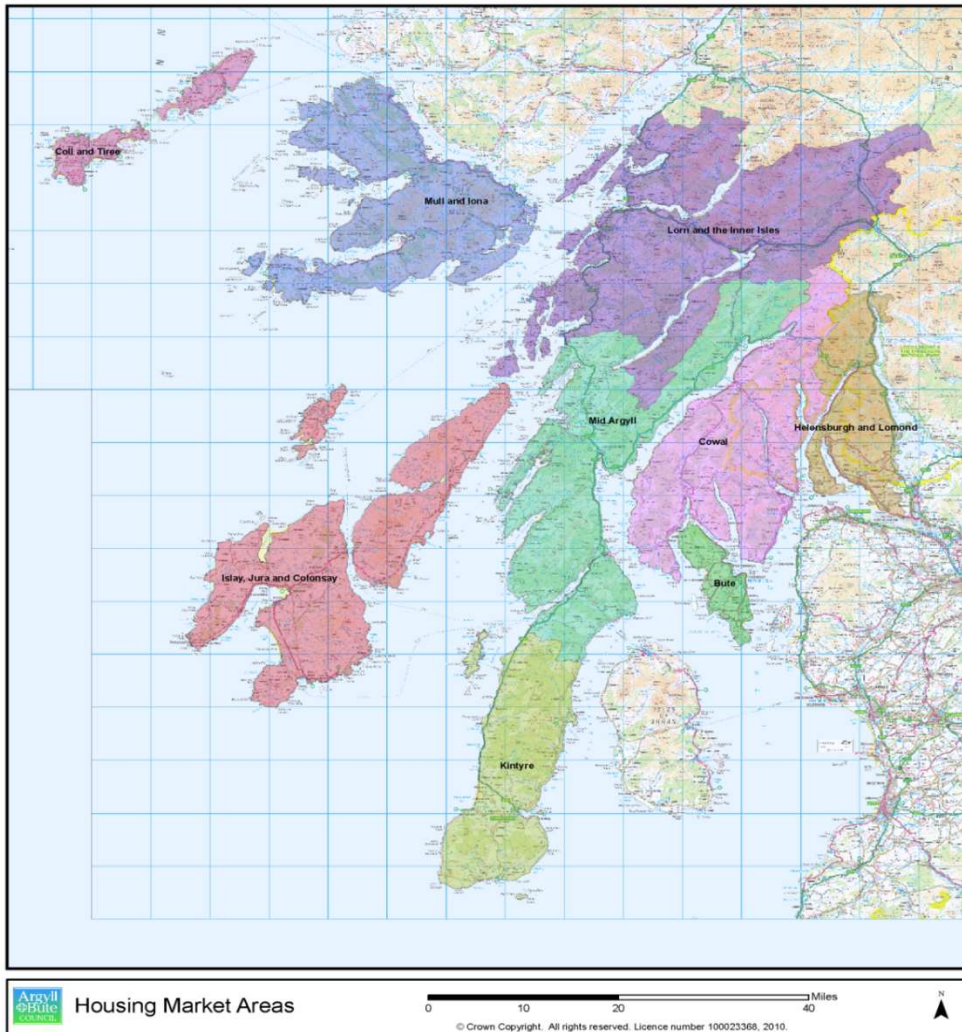
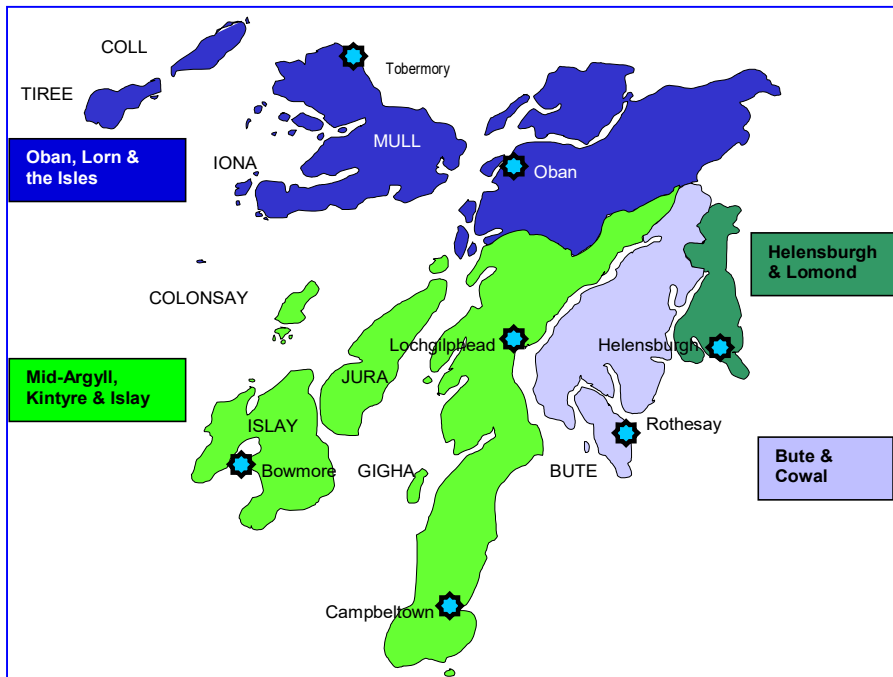


**ARGYLL and BUTE  
STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN  
2024/25 - 2028/29**

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## Argyll and Bute Council area



## INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) is a key operational document produced annually by the local authority which identifies priority housing projects to support the delivery of local and national strategic housing targets, to increase the supply of housing.

The SHIP is directly informed by a number of strategic policy documents, primarily the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and its associated policies, which details the strategic policy approach of the council and its partners to deliver housing services across the area to meet identified needs.

As per the Scottish Government guidance, the SHIP is the key document for specifically identifying:

1. Proposed strategic affordable housing projects which require Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding support.
2. Proposed affordable housing projects which are to be provided without Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding support.

The focus of the SHIP is affordable housing provision via new build, replacement, rehabilitation, or re-modelling. “Affordable housing” in this context refers to accommodation made available at a cost below full market value to meet an identified need and includes:

- Social rented housing.
- Subsidised low-cost housing for sale (discounted, shared ownership or shared equity);
- Low-cost housing without subsidy (entry level housing for sale); and
- Mid-market rental housing provided by social landlords.”

[\(Guidance on the Preparation of SHIP, Scottish Government, July 2016\)](#)

This SHIP plan covers the five years from **2024/25 to 2029/29**, and details how it will deliver the LHS priorities and outcomes through a five-year strategic investment programme.

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to working closely with the Scottish Government, local housing associations, community groups, and other key partners to increase the effective supply of affordable homes across the area. The SHIP plan reinforces the council’s role as the strategic housing authority; informs Scottish Government housing investment decisions; and the preparation of Strategic Local Programme Agreements (SLPAs).

Developed in consultation with key stakeholders this SHIP builds on the previous plan published in 2022. The finalised SHIP was submitted to the Scottish Government in October 2023 and approved by full Council in November 2023.

The SHIP narrative provides a context to the SHIP and includes the following:

- A statement outlining the role the SHIP investment priorities plays in delivering LHS outcomes.
- Details of stakeholder consultation undertaken in developing the SHIP;
- A summary of the project prioritisation framework;
- Prioritisation by house size;
- How the SHIP addresses duties placed on the council by the Islands (Scotland) Act; and
- The council's investment priorities for housing in town centres
- A list of the risks and key issues constraining the delivery of the programme and identifying the actions that are required to mitigate against these constraints.
- Using different construction methods to deliver SHIP projects.
- Resourcing the programme, including :
  - Details of how the council's own resources, such as Council Tax on Second and Empty Homes, support affordable housing delivery;
  - Details of other funds that are supporting the delivery of affordable housing;
  - Details of Developer Contributions that have been used to assist affordable housing delivery; and
  - The role of the Housing Infrastructure Fund in delivering new affordable housing;
  - Details of any housing projects where funding has been or will be sought from the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme.
- A summary of the empty homes services and actions being taken by the council to bring homes back into use.
- Aligning the SHIP programme with the requirement specified in the Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Report.
- Details of specialist housing provision delivered over the SHIP period, including wheelchair-accessible housing.
- An outline of capital works undertaken on Gypsy/Traveller sites and whether funding has been sought through the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund.
- Outlining how the strategic housing priorities are aligned with Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan priorities.
- A statement on the council's approach to buybacks, second-hand acquisitions and off-the-shelf purchases.
- Details of progress towards delivery of the affordable housing supply programme across all tenures by completions;
- Detail any specific requirements for key worker housing and the actions that the Council or Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners will take forward over the period of the SHIP;
- A summary of the projects in this SHIP. Full details of these projects can be seen in the Scottish Government's electronic system HARP (Housing And Regeneration Programme)
- Details of how the SHIP will be monitored and reviewed including how the SHIP programme impacts upon:
  - Equalities and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
  - Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment
  - Health Impact Assessment
  - Islands and Communities Impact Assessment
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment

## 1. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### Argyll & Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP)

As the overarching strategic document for local partners, including the council, the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013-2023 (ABOIP) provides the high-level context for a wide range of strategies, plans and policies, including both the Local Housing Strategy and the SHIP. The ABOIP sets out the Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) vision for achieving long term outcomes for communities in Argyll and Bute. The overall objective of the plan is:

***“Argyll and Bute’s economic success is built on a growing population”***

To achieve the overall objective six long-term outcomes were identified: -

1. The economy is diverse and thriving.
2. We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.
3. Education, skills and training maximises opportunities for all.
4. Children and young people have the best possible start.
5. People live active, healthier and independent lives.
6. People live in safer and stronger communities

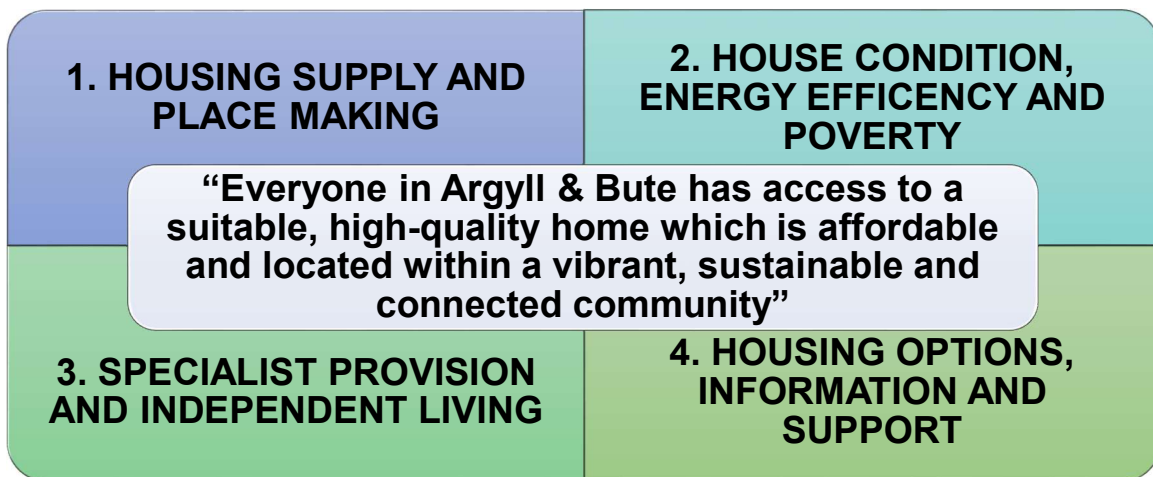
While the housing sector has a role to play in achieving all of these outcomes, the provision of affordable new build housing, particularly the delivery of the SHIP, primarily focuses on Outcome 2.

The council and its partners have been reviewing and consulting on the new ABOIP for 2024-2034 and the new draft document is expected in December 2023.

Community Engagement has identified ‘housing’ as a continued priority and future SHIPs will align with the priorities of new Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

### Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2022/23 - 2026/27

The investment programme and priorities set out in the SHIP are consistent with the vision, aims and objectives of the LHS; and that these build on the latest Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). Our strategic priorities and outcomes continue to be ratified and supported by partners and stakeholders via the Argyll and Bute Strategic Housing Forum. In 2022 the council published its new LHS which covers a five-year planning period from 2022/23 to 2026/27. The LHS sets out our core vision and underpinning this vision are four high-level outcomes:



The SHIP plays a key role in promoting the overall LHS vision and delivering on LHS, particularly Outcome 1. The Council produced a new HNDA in 2021, which was approved by the Scottish Government. The council’s LHS housing supply target of providing 1075 affordable homes from 2022/23 to 2026/27 (215 homes per year) is significantly higher than the baseline HNDA estimate to take account of local and national strategic aspirations for repopulation, economic recovery, and overall growth throughout the authority area.

- **Housing supply target** 2022/23 to 2026/2027 is 1,450 units across all tenures (290 per annum).
- **Affordable housing supply target** 2022/23 to 2026/27 is 1,075 (215 per annum)

In summary, the SHIP aims to deliver sufficient suitable and affordable new homes to attract and retain young people and families, to support a sustainable and thriving business sector, and to meet the needs of the elderly/ageing population, and those with particular needs.

- Potentially, up to 10% of the five-year provision could be for alternative tenures such as shared equity; and
- 10% should comprise some form of “specialist provision” including 5% which should be fully wheelchair habitable.

### **Scottish Government Priorities and Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI)**

One of the Scottish Government’s priorities is to ‘*support a more balanced population across Scotland.*’ To achieve this aim, the Scottish Government has developed a strategy called- ‘[A Scotland for the future: Opportunities and Challenges of Scotland’s Changing population](#)’ to ensure all areas have a more balanced population “so *all our communities can flourish*”.

The Scottish Government's [National Islands Plan](#) aims to address population decline and ensures a healthy, balanced population profile. In particular, the National Islands Plan commits to supporting the repopulation of rural and island communities.

A Ministerial Working Group was established in June 2023 to oversee the development of a '[Rural Delivery Plan](#)' within this parliamentary term. The aim of the Plan is *"showing how all parts of the Scottish Government are delivering for rural Scotland. As well as policies on agriculture, land reform, marine, and our Islands Plan, this will cover areas such as transport, housing, social justice, repopulation, digital connectivity and economic development."*

[Housing to 2040](#) aims to deliver the vision for everyone in **Scotland**, including island communities, by understanding and identifying what positive measures need to be taken forward to address, promote and ultimately reduce inequality in housing outcomes across all housing tenures by 2040 and build strong sustainable communities.

The Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI) group was established to strengthen alignment between the Scottish Government and member organisations in order to support sustainable economic growth and to enable the exchange of ideas on strategic issues affecting the people of the Highlands and Islands. Argyll and Bute Council is a member of [CoHI](#) group and is participating in the pilot projects. The Council has identified the following areas as repopulation zones:

- Rosneath Peninsula
- Kintyre (Tarbert to Southend)
- Coll and Tiree
- Bute

Three Settlement Officer Posts were established across Argyll and Bute, Highland, and Western Isles Council. The posts were initially joint funded by HIE/ relevant local authority for 12 months. These positions have been extended for one year through joint funding between the Scottish Government and Local Authority.

The aims of the Argyll and Bute Settlement Support Officer include:

- Providing guidance and support to people wanting to remain/ relocate.
- Gathering information on the barriers to population retention and growth.
- Support the development of projects and initiatives to help address population decline.

## 2. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

As outlined in previous SHIPs, the preparation of this plan, as well as the planning and delivery of individual projects, remains a continuous process. The SHIP reflects a strong collaborative approach with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs, or housing associations), the Scottish Government, communities, developers and other stakeholders.



Key strategic partners include:

- The Scottish Government: More Homes Scotland Division
- Argyll & Bute Council
- Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership
- Argyll Community Housing Association
- Fyne Homes Housing Association
- Dunbritton Housing Association
- West Highland Housing Association
- Link Group Ltd
- Bield Housing Association
- Trust Housing Association
- HMNB Clyde/ MOD
- Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
- Rural Housing Scotland
- Communities Housing Scotland
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Veterans Housing Scotland
- Scottish Water
- Scottish and Southern Energy Networks
- Scottish Power Energy Networks
- Home Energy Scotland
- Allenergy

At local level, on a site-by-site basis, RSLs and Council officials continue to liaise closely with private developers, local landowners, local community groups and development trusts, and a range of other stakeholders to negotiate, facilitate, enable and deliver viable projects within the context of the LHS and the framework of the SHIP. Updates are also tabled at local Area Committee's. Community representatives and residents are routinely consulted regarding specific projects, sites and settlements.

**The Argyll & Bute Strategic Housing Forum**, comprising a wide range of key partners, the Strategic Housing Forum constitutes the overarching Housing Market Partnership with ultimate responsibility for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the LHS and the SHIP; and is chaired by the Council Leader. The Strategic Housing Forum is also responsible for making appropriate recommendations to Council Members and lobbying the Scottish Government regarding housing issues in Argyll and Bute. The Terms of Reference for the Forum, as the formally constituted local housing market partnership within Argyll and Bute, were reviewed and agreed in September 2022 and is available on request.

**The SHIP Officers Development Group** - In addition to regular programming meetings between the council, the Scottish Government and individual RSLs, a dedicated SHIP Officers Group continues to bring partners together on a quarterly basis to address and progress operational development matters which are then reported to the overarching Strategic Housing Forum.

**Community Housing Network Group-** Argyll and Bute Council, as the strategic housing authority, recognises the importance of community groups and their role in delivering affordable housing. The Community Housing Network Group was established to improve communication and partnership working. The group exists to fulfil the following aims:

- Provide a forum for community groups interested in developing affordable housing to come together and discuss important aspects of their work to deliver housing solutions in their communities;
- Provide guidance to the community groups on relevant areas of policy and practice;
- Facilitate external speakers on areas of subject expertise relevant to the group members; and
- Encourage sharing complex issues between members, understanding that no one organisation has all answers.

Many of the community groups within the network have successfully attracted funding from the Rural and Islands Housing Fund or the Scottish Land Fund to provide affordable housing. More details are outlined in Section 5 and 14.

**Housing Delivery Group** – As well as our effective strategic partnerships, to help address the acute shortage of housing across all tenures, the Council have established an internal working group which is focusing on:

- Identifying existing, and new housing sites that can make potential strategic contributions to all tenure housing supply;
- Identify key barriers/constraints to development and possible solutions to help deliver these sites;
- Engage with key housing stakeholders to identify solutions and improve collaboration;
- Identifying solutions to effectively tackle market failure in the supply of private new build;
- Consider innovative approaches and direct intervention including radical delivery models such as Council funded development and property purchase;
- Consider any policy measures that could be employed by the council or government to address housing market failure.

**Rural Growth Deal (RGD) Housing Sub-group** - The Rural Growth Deal housing sub-group allows partners to contribute to the housing elements within the RGD. The RGD housing proposals are to:

- Construct housing for sale;
- Place rural burdens and planning conditions on homes financed by the RGD to ensure they are used as principal homes for occupants; and
- Develop proposals relating to the delivery of worker accommodation.

**Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group** - The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group recognises that it is vital that the council, Health Board, the third sector and communities work together to tackle child poverty. Housing is an essential component in tackling child poverty; and the service has been represented in the group since its inception. The SHIP programme will deliver housing investment, enabling some families to be allocated affordable, energy-efficient homes.

### Health and Social Care Partners



The Council continues to work closely with the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) at all levels. The HSCP's current three-year Joint Strategic Plan was launched in 2022, incorporating a revised and updated Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) which outlines the essential role that housing plays in supporting and maintaining independent living and the health and wellbeing of residents. The SHIP has a direct and significant contribution to make to this outcome.

**“People in Argyll and Bute will live longer healthier independent lives”**

To realise this vision, people need access to appropriate housing models, and support from care staff to enable them to live at home or in a homely setting. The balance between care in residential and community settings has shifted considerably over recent years towards looking after people at home. The Strategic Plan estimates that 52.8% of those aged 65+ with long term care needs are looked after at home with approx. 10+ hours of home care per week<sup>1</sup>. The provision of care at home can be restricted by staff numbers and it has been identified that a lack of affordable housing can be a barrier to attract and retain health and social care staff. The SHIP and Rural Growth Deal will provide homes which could help attract health and social care staff to the area. In addition, the delivery of suitable specialist provision via the SHIP programme will be critical to enabling people with needs to live independently in their own home.

A dedicated Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) facilitates the close partnership between the council, RSLs and the HSCP. This includes reviewing the circumstances and requirements of households with particular needs, developing a better understanding of the accommodation and support needs of wheelchair users, and facilitating early interventions, particularly concerning adaptations and property layouts and design. The Housing OT and relevant HSCP Officers participate in the SHIP Operational Group and the Strategic Housing Forum to identify specific new build requirements and inform targets for wheelchair accommodation.

The Council Housing Services also fund a dedicated Mental Health/Addictions Housing Practitioner. This post is focused on supporting the delivery of the Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan and supporting households; further enhancing the strategic and operational links between housing, health and social care.

<sup>1</sup> Health and Social Care Joint Strategic Plan 2022-25

**Community Engagement** - The council has enhanced its approach to localised housing need and demand assessment, building on a number of years' experience with community councils, development trusts, local study groups, green belt groups, tenants and residents' associations, and various other local bodies across mainland Argyll and throughout the Islands. The Community Housing Assessment Tool (CHAT) is a detailed resource for local communities and third-party support agencies to carry out surveys, stakeholder engagement, and data analysis, with the support of council staff, in order to assemble "high quality, fit for purpose" evidence base required to secure public funding and help to deliver practical housing solutions<sup>[1]</sup>.

**HMNB Clyde / MOD engagement-** As reported in previous SHIPs, the Strategic Delivery and Development Framework (SDDF) is established between the Council and HMNB Clyde to achieve maximum benefit for the base the wider community as a consequence of the proposals for increasing the naval presence at Faslane.

A key issue in relation to housing and potential requirements for the SHIP was the implementation of the Future Accommodation Model (FAM), which the MOD piloted from September 2019 to March 2023. The way people live, and work is changing, and the FAM reflected this, giving more choice to more Service personnel and their families over where, how, and with whom they live. The FAM pilot has now ended and a review of the evidence is underway which will take into account accommodation measurements cut across a wide section of issues from accommodation type, standard, location and preference, all of which will be measured against the existing MOD housing stock nationwide. Whilst personal were not required to disclose the location of accommodation during the FAM pilot, the anecdotal evidence received was that service personnel were not necessarily looking or secured accommodation in the Argyll and Bute area. Early indicators from the Faslane pilot include:

- Over 600 personnel benefited from the monthly FAM Core Payment which allowed them to offset the cost of owning a home away from base while they lived in Single Living Accommodation during the week;
- 10 serving personnel applied to buy a home in the surrounding areas; and
- Approx. 100 personnel applied to enter into the Private Rental Sector. Although were made and approved, this does not mean that they will have found or moved into a private rented property.

We will monitor the outcomes of the FAM pilot review and incorporate any proposed changes or alternative models into futures SHIP's to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable capacity within the local housing system to address any increased demand. The council carried out a dedicated in-house study of the particular needs of veterans and serving military personnel to inform the HNDA in 2021 and LHS in 2022. This involved engagement with local and national organisations such as Veterans Housing Scotland and Poppy Scotland, among others. Veterans Housing Scotland are key partners of Strategic Housing Forum.  
[hnda technical paper 09 - veterans and armed services.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

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<sup>[1]</sup> The Argyll and Bute Community Housing Assessment Toolkit (CHAT) is available on demand from Council Housing Services. See contact details on the final page of this Plan.

**Wider Stakeholders, Local Business, and Economic Development** - Increasingly, given the overarching strategic aims, economic development and regeneration partners are key associates in the SHIP and LHS process. Other stakeholders and strategic partners are engaged on an ad hoc basis as appropriate.

**Housing Emergency - Wider Engagement** - The Council declared a housing emergency in June 2023 due to the shortage of housing to meet demand in the area. This was driven by a complex range of issues including increasing house prices and rents, reducing household incomes, rising construction costs, a decrease in new homes being built, a shrinking private rented sector, increase in demand for worker accommodation, and an ageing population. There is no single solution to these issues and the Council will continue to work with a wide range of local partners to programme a broad range of activities, in the short and long term, to target action where it is needed most.

A Housing Summit is being held in November 2023 which will bring together a range of delivery partners, housing organisations, community stakeholders, and businesses to debate, prioritise, and programme solutions to increase the supply of housing. Ahead of the Housing Summit we have launched two surveys, one for local residents and another for businesses to identify emerging issues and gain wider feedback and ideas on how the housing emergency should be tackled. There will also be pre-engagement workshops with stakeholders on key themes to identify barriers and to help define potential delivery options and interventions.

### 3. PRIORITISING THE PROGRAMME

The SHIP has a clear and transparent framework for prioritising projects to be delivered. Investment is targeted at Housing Market Area's (HMA), communities and settlements where the HNDA has identified the most acute housing pressures. These priorities recognise the importance of investing in smaller, fragile rural communities as well as larger urban areas. The areas have been identified through consideration of:

- the relative and absolute pressure on the existing affordable housing;
- the ability to meet the need in the wider housing market area;
- deliverability (site ownership, infrastructure or planning constraints, etc.);
- the council's strategic priorities e.g potential contribution to population growth and economic growth.

Given that localised "hotspots" or pressured areas may still be masked within the wider geographic HMAs, a further refinement of the evaluation process is also required at the localised settlement (or letting area) level to reflect the complex rural and island geography of Argyll and Bute. Therefore, the council continues to employ the following key indicators: -

**TABLE 1: Key Indicators/Evidence Base**

Criteria	Indicator/Evidence
Identified need	HNDA & local updates – total shortfall in affordable housing.
Pressure ratios	CHR - waiting list applicants per available let on annual basis.
Homeless Pressure	HL1 statistics - applicants & time to close cases; temporary accommodation; % of RSL lets to homeless cases.
Social stock levels	Proportion of existing RSL stock to total number of dwellings on Council Tax Register.
Wider Strategic Fit	Synergies with LDPs; economic development plans or regeneration initiatives; the local improvement plan; and the primary objective of reversing population decline.
Specialist Provision	HNDA/CHR/Health & Social Work caseload – total shortfall for special needs accommodation & evidence from waiting lists or bespoke research.
Risk/Deliverability	Satisfies key development criteria (site ownership; planning consent; resourced; infrastructure constraints; contractor capacity). Early liaison with planning remains critical.
Affordability (of proposed rent)	Compared to Scottish Government benchmarks and other RSL rents; as % of LHA; and as % of local household incomes.

**Prioritisation by Housing Need –**

Dunbeg remains a key development priority for the Council, although the SHIP has several other projects in the Oban and Lorn HMA.

Strategically, Helensburgh & Lomond is also a high priority in terms of need and potential growth opportunities. The Helensburgh Golf Club housing development is a key site and other opportunities in the area are being explored.

The LHS concluded that there is high levels of housing need and demand across the local authority area particularly on the Islands. Small-scale developments could significantly and positively impact the Atlantic Islands.

Analysis suggests that all housing market areas in Argyll and Bute are experiencing significant increases in housing need and demand.

The 2021 Mid-year population estimates by the National Records for Scotland identified Argyll and Bute as the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest growing local authority, with the population growing by 0.9% from 2020-21, which exceeded the ambitious LHS growth target of 0.5%. The Council continually monitors pressures in each of HMAs and will modify investment priorities accordingly.

**Prioritisation by Tenure –** The majority of the SHIP programme will deliver houses for social rent; however, alternative affordable tenures such as shared equity, other low-cost home ownership options or below-market rent will be considered on a site-by-site basis in line with local market conditions and needs, and actively encouraged where appropriate, subject to a robust business case being made.

**Prioritisation by Size** – The HNDA and the HOMEArgyll common housing register identify that the most significant demand continues to be for one and two-bedroom properties; hence, the SHIP will continue to promote the delivery of smaller properties. As of April 2023, 59% of the active waiting list applicant's required 1 bedroom accommodation, 25% require two bedrooms, while 11% required three beds and 5% required four or more bedded properties.

Although waiting list demand for larger properties is lower, the HNDA process identified demand for larger, family-sized accommodation. "Bright Start, Bright Future" by the Scottish Government identified larger families as one of the vulnerable family types which are more likely to experience child poverty. The council is committed to addressing child poverty, and hence the SHIP partners will consider economically viable options, to deliver larger homes where there is a specific need, including private acquisitions and off-the-shelf properties. (See section 11).

**Prioritisation by Particular Needs** – Specialist housing provision is often required for:

- those who have impairments such as cognitive, physical, sensory developmental or a combination of impairments;
- older people with mobility or other health care needs;
- those with mental health conditions.

To provide suitable accommodation for those with disabilities/ impairment and the ageing population, the LHS specifies a target of 10% of new build should be purpose designed as specialist provision to suit households with medium to high-level particular needs.

As far as possible, all general needs new builds are designed to the minimum lifetime, Housing for Varying Needs Standards, to maximise the accessibility for residents whose circumstances and needs will change over time.

In addition, the extent and nature of the future ageing population, for instance, will necessitate strategic investment in developing and delivering housing-based care, support and aids, and adaptations. To this end, the council has developed a more cohesive partnership with the Integrated Health & Social Care body to ensure that the SHIP process is fully aligned with the health and social care integration agenda and other relevant plans such as the "Keys to Life" strategy for persons with learning disabilities, the Integrated Children's Services Plan, the refreshed national housing strategy for Older Persons published in August 2018, "Age, Home and Community: the next phase"; and the Fairer Scotland for Disabled People strategy published by the Scottish Government in 2016; among others. Further refinement of the wheelchair housing targets in line with the Scottish Minister's directive is set out in Section 8 of this plan.

The finer detail of the programme will be established through specification of suitable type and size of accommodation for individual developments, taking into account the needs of actual households on the waiting list, information gathered through local housing need and demand assessments, and in consultation with HSCP coordinated through the Housing OT.

### **Prioritising projects which align with the council's overarching vision to grow the population**

The Argyll and Bute Rural Growth deal aims to facilitate the delivery of a range of housing tenures to provide market level housing for sale and also deliver accommodation for workers. The intension is to support business growth in the initial pilot areas of Tobermory and Bowmore. The Islay and Mull SHIP projects will complement the RGD housing proposals.

### **Prioritising projects which improve town centres**

In addition, to supporting remote rural and island communities, the SHIP programme also supports projects which improve town centres. This SHIP has the following town centre projects on site:

- Jeanie Deans, Helensburgh
- Eton Avenue, Dunoon

**SHIP projects should provide Rural and Island Proofing<sup>2</sup>** – the Council's Housing Service will continue to apply a policy of rural-proofing housing plans and strategies to ensure the more remote and isolated areas, or those designated as "fragile", are not disadvantaged or adversely affected by investment and development decisions. Critical to this aim is joint working with local planners to support the development and sustainability of designated key rural settlements across Argyll and Bute, as well as supporting the aims of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park.

Key factors influencing the prioritisation of rural developments include:

- the ratio of waiting list applicants to lets;
- the ratio of social housing to second homes;
- proportionate historic losses through Right to Buy;
- the percentage of social housing to total dwelling stock;
- the ratio of local earnings to average or lower quartile house prices and private rents;
- resilience of communities; and
- population demographics.

While existing, evidenced need remains the primary concern, consideration will also be given to rural areas of potential economic development and/or population growth in liaison with Economic Development colleagues and the local business sector.

The rural/urban housing differential is acknowledged nationally in the structure of the Scottish Government's benchmark framework for grant funding, whereby Argyll and Bute receives a rural uplift to address the additional costs involved in remote rural and island development. The council previously commissioned dedicated

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<sup>2</sup> Rurality is defined in the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, see: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>. In addition, one definition of fragility is outlined in the report: Review of Fragile Areas and Employment Action Areas in the Highlands and Islands, HIE, November 2014.



studies of island housing markets, specifically for Mull and Islay<sup>3</sup>, which provided evidence of the disproportionate uplift development costs for these areas and highlighted specific issues and barriers to development in these contexts. The Council continues to work with local communities to gather further evidence and identify solutions.

This SHIP has also been developed within the context of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, which introduced measures to support and help the unique needs of Scotland's islands now and in the future. The Act also seeks to help create the right environment for sustainable growth and empowering communities. With around 23 inhabited islands in this local authority area (more than any other Scottish authority), Argyll and Bute is committed to supporting and sustaining population and economic growth in these communities and will always ensure to engage directly with the islands when new policies and strategies are being developed that may impact on them.

The publication of the Scottish Government's '**Rural & Islands Action Plan (R&IAP)**' in October 2023 acknowledges that in remote, rural and island areas, small-scale actions can bring about significant impacts and a small number of additional homes can make a generational difference, supporting the long-term resilience of communities. The R&IAP sets out a range of actions in four key areas:

1. Enable the delivery of more high-quality affordable homes;
2. Making best use of existing homes and support for home ownership;
3. Supporting community-led development;
4. Housing and local economies;

The Council supports the key principles and the identified short, medium and long term actions, many of which have already been taken into account in this SHIP.

The SHIP aims to support the priorities of the island communities, and our consultation reflects this commitment. In addition to the aforesaid island studies, we ensure that our overarching HNDA process allows for a significant, representative sample of local households on individual islands to participate and register their housing needs and voice their general views on local housing. A formal Islands Impact Assessment has been developed as part of the LHS process, and this document also covers the SHIP. See Section 14 for details.

To tackle the lack of sufficient housing in island communities the SHIP in the last 5 years (2018/19- 2022/23) has delivered 68 units on the islands, equating to 12% of all units provided within Argyll and Bute. Of the seven SHIP projects completed during 2022/23, two (10%) were located on the islands, and three (70%) were in rural locations out with larger towns including Dunbeg. A further two projects (20%) were located in the main towns of Helensburgh and Campbeltown. This reflects a spread of new developments across the local authority area. The Council will continue to explore opportunities to deliver more island and rural homes with our partners and wider community groups.

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<sup>3</sup> "Islay Strategic Housing Overview", Community Housing Scotland (2019); "Isle of Mull Strategic Housing Review", Rural Housing Scotland (2019).

### **Future prioritisation process**

The implementation of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) requires councils to support communities undertaking Local Place Plans. This will place greater pressure on councils to address the needs identified by community plans. In the future, the council will revise its prioritisation process to include a robust scoring system to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.

**AFFORDABILITY** – as a basic rule of thumb, an affordable house price is reckoned to be no more than 3.5 times the annual income of the household, and in terms of renting a property, the affordable benchmark is often considered to be around 25% of the household's income.

The volatile financial markets are having an impact on mortgage affordability. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) classifies 'higher risk' lending as a loan-to-value ratio over 90% and an income multiple greater than or equal to 3.5 for single income purchasers, or 2.75 for joint income purchaser/s. (SG website, September, 2023)

[Background and historic data - HNSA modelling mortgage impacts: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2023/09/Background_and_historic_data_-_HNSA_modelling_mortgage_impacts_guidance_-_gov.scot.pdf)

## **4. DELIVERING THE PROGRAMME: MITIGATING RISKS AND RESOLVING DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS**

It is important to identify, assess and respond to any risks or potential constraints that might impact the overall programme or individual projects; and that effective measures are taken to mitigate these as far and as early as possible. The SHIP aims to assure that, if funding is secured, any other constraints will be resolved by the time of the estimated site start of the relevant project. The main risks or constraints that tend to apply to the SHIP programme include:

- Increased construction costs which are being impacted by supply chain issues, unprecedented fuel costs and inflation.
- The constrained capacity of the local construction sector and tight labour market.
- Development and Infrastructure constraints.
- Effective land supply and legal procedural constraints.
- Planning issues.
- Financial assumptions.

### **Mitigating Constraints**

The council and its partners are working continuously to minimise these risks and mitigate constraints as far as possible

#### **a) Increased construction costs and a constrained labour market**

The constrained capacity of the local construction sector has a huge impact on delivering new homes. Local contractors sometimes are forced to rely on tradespeople from the central belt to fill in gaps in provisions. The on-going impacts of Brexit and Covid 19 have reduced the number of people in the labour market.

Therefore, employees are able to be more selective in the jobs they undertake. A shortage of labour combined with the exorbitant fuel costs have placed additional hurdles in the way of recruiting construction workers who are prepared to travel to Argyll and Bute to undertake construction work.

The Scottish Government issued revised benchmark costs in June 2023 to reflect the increased construction costs. However, the cost of labour and materials appear to have increased more sharply in remote rural and island communities. In addition, RSLs and contractors continue to highlight concerns in balancing cost and quality considerations, especially given the ongoing cost of securing private finance in a high-interest financial environment. These factors will make delivering new homes within the revised benchmark extremely challenging.

To mitigate against higher construction costs and shortages of labour the Council and its partners continue to explore innovative construction solutions, including utilising technological solutions and modular construction methods if appropriate for development.

**b) Rapidly changing economic landscape**

The HNDA published in 2021 included a range of scenarios such as:

- the worst-case scenario of severe demographic and economic decline in the short term;
- less severe and stabilising scenarios;
- to more optimistic growth scenarios;

While the years following lockdown have resulted in increased population and higher house prices in Argyll and Bute the economic landscape is extremely volatile and uncertain. High energy costs, high inflation and higher interest rates have had an adverse impact on the economy. This has resulted in further pressures on the social rented sector.

The prioritisation framework underpinning the SHIP must be flexible to address emerging need and demand trends.

- c) Development Constraints** (such as infrastructure issues: roads, utilities, ground condition problems/ abnormal costs) - The core SHIP programme has always aimed to focus on sites that are not subject to significant development constraints, such as contaminated brownfield sites, designated greenbelt areas, or sites with restricted infrastructure capacity in terms of access roads or water supply. However, in certain instances within some highly pressured areas where a substantial shortfall in affordable housing is evidenced or in areas of wider strategic importance, it may be necessary to consider such sites in the absence of more practicable or easily progressed sites. Apart from the site constraint, there may be costs associated with carrying out remedial works, preliminary feasibility studies, or mitigating the potential impact on areas of archaeological significance or historic buildings, which further constrain on-site development. Mitigation may be aided by ensuring site investigation is carried out at early stages and seeking to ensure land values reflect any remediation costs. Regarding infrastructure constraints, such as

Scottish Water connections/ capacity/ access, early discussions with the Utility companies are part of the SHIP process in order to address potential issues and find solutions. Where possible, abnormal costs should be deducted from the land purchase price, and unforeseen costs may be met from alternative sources such as the council's Strategic Housing Fund, developer contributions, or other funding sources.

The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), in particular, has already proven to be a significant factor in supporting housing development in this authority through grants for sites which are of strategic importance and cannot proceed or have stalled due to exceptional infrastructure works (out with the curtilage of the development); and can help facilitate the unlocking of these sites for the delivery of housing. The council successfully prioritised the further development of Dunbeg, for instance, as a key site for delivery of housing utilising this fund and was awarded £2.1m in total, in line with the eligibility criteria and guidance set out by the Scottish Government.

- d) **Effective Land Supply** – The RSLs and the Council are working actively in partnership to identify landbank opportunities. A notable feature of a rural and island authority such as Argyll and Bute is the dominance of large estates in terms of land ownership in many areas exhibiting housing need. This can present additional challenges in respect of accessing and assembling suitable sites for development. Nevertheless, through collaborative efforts with planning colleagues, the council and National Park are confident that a supply of land for affordable housing continues to be sustained, as seen in the table below.

The land supply figures in the table below are based on 2022 Housing Land Audit. Work is on-going for the 2023 figures and these will be taken into account in the next SHIP.

**TABLE 2: Land Supply within the Local Authority by Housing Administrative Area 2021-2026**

Administrative Area	Local Development Plan Allocated Sites and Potential Development Areas (1)	Large Windfall Sites (2)	Small Windfall Sites (3)	25% Future Windfall Allowance (4)	Effective Housing Land Supply
Helensburgh and Lomond	399	81	57	86	623
Bute and Cowal	202	61	71	48	382
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	580	109	233	139	1061
Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands	373	14	130	101	618
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1554</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>2684</b>

Source: Housing Land Audit 2022.

Occasionally, proposed projects are subject to complex or protracted negotiations with private owners and their agents, which can impact on the timing and ultimately on their deliverability. Therefore, effective liaison with the Scottish Government to prioritise projects and progress site acquisitions to enable projects to be pulled forward if required is essential.

In addition, the impact of both the Council and National Park Affordable Housing Policies continues to prove valuable; there is an obvious need to sustain practical negotiations with landowners, Estates, private developers and others. Some RSL partners have, however, raised concerns that in the current climate, the application of the Council's Affordable Housing Policy will make site development less attractive, and sites are only likely to be developed where there is pressure to secure a return in the short term. In the medium to long term, the private ownership of many sites in Argyll and Bute means that the Affordable Housing Policy will continue to have a definite role in securing a sufficient supply of affordable housing through developer contributions.

Partners continue to carefully consider the timing and possible phasing of developments to make realistic assumptions on when affordable housing will proceed. We aim to ensure that a sufficient supply of sites has been identified to accommodate unforeseen project slippage and to ensure the spending of allocated funding.

In situations where projects cannot be taken forward due to land supply issues, the council will consider a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) approach where there are compelling benefits to the public interest.

- e) **Planning issues** - Early discussions will continue to be prioritised with planning services (both Council & National Park) regarding road layouts/ car parking requirements, flood risk assessments, school catchment areas, and other possible issues. The provision of adequate footpaths adjacent to new developments, for instance, has been a particularly prominent issue in a number of recent SHIP projects. All of the development sites included in the SHIP programme should be effective given that they will, in most cases, require to be already allocated for housing development in the relevant local development plans. Many of the sites identified in the SHIP are of relatively small capacity. The costs associated with progressing smaller sites in the more remote rural areas are likely to be higher if developed as standalone projects. However, it is envisaged that where SHIP sites form part of a larger allocation identified in the LDP/ LDP2, through partnership working with private developers on adjacent sites, the risk of such sites not being developed on cost grounds will be reduced.

RSLs in Argyll and Bute have recently made significant progress in delivering alternative tenures such as shared equity units. The future provision for tenures other than social rent will require detailed business plans and must reflect a robust and credible assessment of local needs before approval. The Council intends to evaluate the impact of these projects to inform the future programme. The Council is keen to encourage and support alternative, intermediate tenures when appropriate, to enhance the housing mix and to increase the range of potential housing options.

## 5. RESOURCING THE PROGRAMME & THE COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

The three primary funding sources for the SHIP remain as follows:

- a) Scottish Government Grant (the Affordable Housing Supply Programme – AHSP)
- b) Council grant or long-term loan (the Argyll & Bute Strategic Housing Fund – SHF; which may be supplemented from Council central reserves)
- c) Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Private Finance Borrowing

The majority of developments will require a complex package of funding from at least all of these sources (additional investment from other sources may also be required – some of these are outlined below).

### a) Scottish Government Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs)

In July 2021, the Scottish Government confirmed local authorities' RPAs up to 2025/26 however the current SHIP runs until 2028/29. The Scottish Government have not yet agreed the RPA for years three (2026/27), four (2027/28) and five (2028/29) of the SHIP programme. To address this the council has agreed to an assumed RPA for these later years however it is important to note that the figures for 2026/27 to 2028/2029 are not a formal definitive allocation.

**TABLE 3: RESOURCE PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS (RPA) 2023- 2028 (£m)**

Argyll & Bute	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Minimum RPA	£18.328	£18.632	£18.632*	£18.632*	£18.632*	£92.856m

Source: Scottish Government Letter to Councils – AHSP RPA 2021-26, July 2021

The actual AHSP spend in 2022/23 was lower than the original RPA for that year. The council will continue encouraging RSLs/developers to maximise funding opportunities and utilise the available RPA as much as possible. This might include increasing off-the-shelf / buy-back acquisitions, land banking in areas of identified need or designated future economic growth spots.

### b) The Council's Contribution – The Strategic Housing Fund (SHF)

Resourcing the SHIP programme also requires a significant contribution from the council's Strategic Housing Fund (SHF). This fund is primarily based on the revenue raised from reduced tax discounts on empty and second homes. Where local authorities have used discretionary powers and reduced the empty and second homes tax discounts, the additional revenue **must** be used to support affordable housing delivery in their areas. In addition, since 2013, local authorities have had the flexibility to remove the discount and apply a levy of up to 100% on long-term empty properties. These revenues are not ring-fenced, although their use to bring long-term empty properties back into use, or to support affordable housing provision, is encouraged by the Scottish Government.

The SHF in Argyll and Bute is used for the following eligible expenditure:

- Expenditure incurred in relation to assets formally held on the Housing Revenue Account;
- Expenditure relating to the acquisition of sites for the landbank;
- Expenditure related to the delivery of the Empty Homes Initiative;
- Payments to enhance infrastructure where this is restricting the development of affordable housing;
- Payments to registered social landlords (RSLs) to partially fund proposed projects to deliver homes in accordance with the local housing strategy. Since April 2016, the council has provided grant funding of £12k per unit to supplement the Scottish Government grant;
- Following the council's annual policy review of the Strategic Housing Fund in 2018, grant funding of £12k per unit is available to community organisations, who have been awarded Scottish Government support from the Rural or Island Housing funds, to deliver affordable homes. Awards greater than £12K may be awarded in certain instances to ensure the deliverability of projects with particular challenges however this will be decided on a case by case basis.

The balance of this fund as of 31st March 2023 was £10.183m, of which £1.474m was already committed, with £8.709m available to help fund the SHIP programme. It is anticipated that the SHF will continue to accrue annual revenue in the order of £2m over the SHIP planning period.

**TABLE 4: Argyll & Bute Council Strategic Housing Fund, balance as of March 2023**

Income 2022/23	Expenditure 2022/23	Balance March 2023	Committed Spend	Available to support SHIP
£2.231m	£1.574m	£10.183m	£1.474m	£8.709m

An indicative minimum estimate of circa £14.9 m would be required to support the core projects outlined in this SHIP (£12k x 1241 units),

In addition, the council has also used its financial reserves on occasion to advance long-term loans to support RSL projects, and this commitment is subject to ongoing review.

#### c) RSL's Private Finance Borrowing

Banks and other lenders in the private sector also remain vitally important partners in the delivery of affordable housing. RSLs are required to demonstrate that sufficient borrowing capacity or reserves exist to ensure the delivery of the proposed development programme. The impact of rising interest rates on RSLs' ability to borrow will have to be kept under review.

#### Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

The Housing Infrastructure Fund supports housing development through grants and loans, with priority given to sites of strategic importance that cannot proceed or have stalled due to infrastructure requirements. Grant is available to local authorities and RSLs for works which are out with the curtilage of the affordable housing site and/or of scale and will open up larger sites for housing development. Loans are available for viable non-public sector-led sites to support infrastructure delivery.

The council's main priority for HIF funding remains focussed on the Lorn HMA but the Council also continues to explore opportunities across the local authority area. As reported in previous SHIPs, the Scottish Government awarded a Housing Infrastructure Fund grant amounting to £2,129,247 for upgrade works to Kirk Road to enable the development of 300 new affordable homes.

The council and RSL partners will continue to propose potential projects within the SHIP that could benefit from HIF investment. Details of current projects are in the table below.

**TABLE 5: SHIP Projects with potential HIF requirements, as of August 2023**

Project	RSL	Total Units	Estimated HIF Requirement
Glencruitten, Oban	LINK	100 (tbc)	£0.72m
Hospital Field, Oban	LINK	50	£2.0m
Dunbeg Phases 4-6	LINK	150	£2.5m
Bowmore (Phase 4)	ACHA	17	£0.75m

### **Rural and Islands Housing Funds (R&IHF)**

The Scottish Government administers a £25 million Rural Housing Fund and a £5 million Islands Housing Fund. Both funds are aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing of all tenures in rural Scotland and to contribute to the national affordable homes targets. The Scottish Government have confirmed that these funds will continue beyond 2021.

During 2021/22 a private developer in Argyll and Bute accessed support from the R&IHF to renovate and bring an empty building back into use as affordable housing on the Island of Mull in conjunction with Mull and Iona Community Development Trust (MICT). This was the first example of a local private developer using the R&IHF to increase the supply of housing in the area.

### **The Scottish Land Fund**

The Scottish Land Fund is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership with the National Lottery Community Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The SLF supports rural and urban communities with grants of up to £1 million to help communities become more resilient through ownership of land and buildings, as well as practical support to develop projects.

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) continues to provide support to housing projects in Argyll and Bute. With a recent award made to:

- Tayvallich Initiative Ltd - The group are looking to purchase land and will use the site to deliver affordable housing for rent, along with a number of environmental initiatives.

### **Key Worker £25m Fund - 2023/2028**

The announcement of the new £25m fund to help local authorities and registered social landlords to make best use of underused or empty properties by making them available as affordable homes for key workers and others in need in rural communities is welcomed in Argyll and Bute.



The Council will aim to maximise all funding opportunities and work with partners to identify projects that could deliver worker housing to sustain our communities and support economic growth.

## **Rural Growth Deal**

The housing element of the Rural Growth Deal is £3m. Two projects are being taken forward, the project in Bowmore, Isle of Islay will focus on housing for sale for principal occupation, and the one in Tobermory, Isle of Mull will provide accommodation for workers.

## **Islands Programme Funding**

The Council were successful in securing £700k from the Islands Programme funding to enable the delivery of the infrastructure to support the development of worker housing in Tobermory, Isle of Mull.

## **Developer Contributions**

Argyll and Bute falls within the purview of two planning authorities: while the council covers most of the mainland and islands, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park is the planning authority for parts of Cowal and Lomond. Both authorities have set out formal Affordable Housing Policies in their respective Local Development Plans. These policies outline mechanisms and options to secure developer contributions where there is a demonstrated need for affordable housing.

The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 includes a policy on the provision of housing to meet local needs including affordable housing. This expects all new housing developments of 8 or more units to deliver a minimum of 25% of the total number of units on site as affordable housing. Given the revised and reinforced strategic vision of growth and repopulation for the whole of Argyll and Bute and the Council's declared housing emergency, a technical note on the delivery of affordable housing (including housing for key workers) to accompany LDP 2 will be prepared in 2024.

Developer contributions can be delivered by a variety of means, including social rented housing, mid-market rented housing, payment of commuted sums and also the building of houses/apartments designed to meet the needs of first-time buyers (provided these are available at affordable levels as defined by the council's HNDA and with reference to the relevant local housing market).

The sequential mechanisms for securing Affordable Housing via the policy are applied in the following order:

- on-site provision;
- off-site provision;
- commuted payment;
- discounted low-cost sale;
- affordability by design without subsidy.

To date, no commuted sums have been received, and the preferred approach has been to engage with an RSL to deliver the affordable quota on site.

The LLTNP policy follows a similar approach, with a requirement for 25%, 33% or 50% affordable provision on sites of 4 or more units depending on the location. Sites of up to 3 units in accessible rural areas may also have a policy requirement under certain circumstances. A formal policy for calculating commuted sums within the LLTNP has been established. There has been one recent commuted sum within the LLTNP for an application approved in 2020 which was in relation to the erection of a new dwelling house incorporating conversion of former kennel building. The policy required development within the site to provide for 100% affordable housing, the project costs for the development had been provided and it was recognised that works involved in converting the existing building would mean that that resultant dwelling would not be affordable. Whilst this was a departure from the approved Housing Policy 2, due to the particular circumstances, and the benefits of restoring the traditional building, it was considered that the payment of a commuted sum towards affordable housing would be acceptable which was accepted by the applicant and secured through a Section 75 Agreement.

The delivery of unsubsidised affordable housing for purchase via the Affordable Housing Policy, but without Scottish Government funding, will normally target a different client group and requires close working between Housing Services and Planning colleagues to ensure these models are in fact affordable in accordance with the LHS and SHIP priorities.

### **Other Initiatives**

The council will also continue to explore and, where appropriate, promote non-AHSP financing models such as Build-to-Rent, Low-cost Initiative for First Time Buyers (LIFT), and Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE), which may fall out with the remit of the SHIP.

## **6. EMPTY HOMES**

Supporting empty homeowners to take action to bring properties back into use remains a priority for the council as this will help to maximise the use of existing resources to meet housing need; contribute to number of the council's wider strategic objectives; and provide cross-service benefits both within the council and with external partners. The council has an Empty Homes Officer who can support owners with a range of practical options to help them make informed choices about the best outcome for them and their property.

During 2022/23 the Empty Homes Officer assisted in bringing **41** empty homes back into use which was 37% above target. Over the last 3 years, the council's approach has enabled owners to bring 108 vacant properties back into use against a baseline target of 30 per year. The length of time that properties had remained empty prior to being brought back into use varies, the average is between 1-5 years, with the longest empty for 15 years.

**TABLE 6: Length of time a property had been empty 2022/23**

Length of time property had been empty 2022/23	No of Empty Homes
less than a year	5
between 1-2 years	13
between 2-5 years	13
between 5-10 years	9
longer than 10 years	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

Over the last five years, according to the Council Tax Register, the number of long-term empty properties has reduced by 14%, whilst the number of second/holiday homes and the total dwelling stock has remained relatively static with slight variations in the overall numbers.

**TABLE 7: Estimated Ineffective Stock Argyll and Bute 2017-2022**

Council Tax Register	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
All properties	48,906	48,285	48,166	48,570	48,971
2 <sup>nd</sup> /holiday homes	2,939	2,881	2,689	2,821	2,874
Long-term empty including those subject to levy	1,479	1,363	1,230	1,135	1,263
No of long term empty subject to double charge (200% levy)	586	644	644	640	795
Long-term empty homes as % of total	3.02%	2.82%	2.55%	2.33%	2.58%
Empty + 2 <sup>nd</sup> /holiday homes as % of total	9.03%	8.79%	8.14%	8.14%	8.45%

Source: Council Tax Register

### **Empty Homes Officer – Key Worker HSCP / Shelter Project**

The Councils empty homes service was expanded in 2022/23 with an innovative new project. Following a successful funding bid to Shelter Scotland and A&B Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), a new Empty Homes Officer post has been created in 2022/23 who will specifically work with partners to bring empty homes back into use for HSCP staff. The post will be managed within Councils Housing Service team and build on the work of existing Empty Homes Officer post. This post will help to address the acute shortage of housing which is hindering recruitment of key health and social care staff, and to support local service delivery.

### **Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)**

The use of Compulsory Purchase Orders legislative powers allow councils to acquire empty homes under certain circumstances and subject to specific conditions. The Scottish Government refreshed the guidance in 2018, which has refined the legal process and made it less complex and time-consuming for local authorities to submit an application to Ministers for consideration. Whilst the CPO has historically been considered a last resort and has not been standard practice, it is the council's view that these powers do have a strategic role to play and could be used more effectively where there are no other practical solutions to address the issues of the most problematic buildings in the area. This has been reinforced by feedback to the LHS early engagement consultation: when local residents and community groups were asked to rank the top housing challenges currently facing Argyll & Bute, 38% of

respondents highlighted the impact of empty properties and second/holiday homes, making it the third highest issue among the local population.

CPO powers were successfully utilised in 2019, to acquire an empty property that had no legal owner. The council then facilitated back-to-back sale to enable the property to be brought back into use. Without legal intervention the property would have remained empty indefinitely having a detrimental and financial impact on the other owners in the tenement.

A CPO policy and process will be incorporated into our revised Scheme of Assistance as an action for the LHS, targeting resources to the most difficult cases where there are no alternative options to bring them back into use.

## **7. CHILD POVERTY AND FUEL POVERTY**

In line with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, the council, together with the Health Board, produces on an annual basis the Argyll & Bute Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR). This report sets out progress against the four statutory, income-based targets, to be achieved by 2030. These targets are:

- Less than 10% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

The Scottish Government's Delivery Plan for tackling child poverty 'Bright Start, Bright Futures' places the tackling of child poverty at the heart of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. Bright Start Bright Futures states: "Housing has a vital role to play in tackling child poverty; it forms not only the foundation for family life – as a safe place for children to grow and learn, and for families to come together – but it also one of the most significant costs which families must continue to meet on an ongoing basis. If families lose their home, the effects can be devastating – and cause lasting damage to children's lives."

Research suggests that living in temporary or insecure housing negatively impacts children's development and education, locking them into a cycle of poverty. Therefore it is vitally important to provide homeless families with children permanent accommodation. The council and its partners have substantially reduced the number of homeless families with children in temporary housing. Table 8 shows that both the number of households and the numbers of children in temporary accommodation increased last year.

**TABLE 8: Number of homeless households and the number of children in temporary accommodation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

<b>HOMELESS STATISTICS 2019/20 to 2022/23</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Change 2022 to 2023 Number</b>	<b>Change 2022 to 2023 %</b>
Households with children or a pregnant woman in temporary accommodation	30	25	30	25	30	5	20%
Number of children in temporary accommodation	65	55	60	45	60	15	33%

Source: Scottish Government, "Homelessness in Scotland: 2022-23", October 2023

The numbers of homeless children or children threatened with homelessness within Argyll and Bute increased between 2021/22 to 2022/23. The Cost of Living Crisis could have an impact of figures as wages are not keeping track with inflation resulting in families paying exorbitant amounts for food and energy. This, coupled with higher interest rates, will mean, for some, higher mortgage payments or private landlords passing on increased mortgage costs to their tenants. The consequences of energy, food, accommodation as well as many other products all costing substantially more will mean many families will be unable to finance the necessities and for some this may result in them becoming homeless. Therefore, having an adequate supply of affordable housing is more important than ever.

**Table 9: Number of children associated with applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Change</b>
						21-22 to 22-23	21-22 to 22-22
						Number	%
Argyll & Bute	164	153	161	166	183	17	10%

Source: Scottish Government, "Homelessness in Scotland: 2022-23", October 2023

In 2022/23, the HOMEArgyll RSLs rehoused 305 households who had at least one household member under 16 years of age. This equated to 528 children housed in 2022/23 which was 38% of the total lets that year.

Although housing 528 children last year was a considerable achievement, as of September 2023, there were 970 applicants over a third (33%) of the waiting list, with a household members under 16 waiting to be housed. This equates to 1,821 children currently on the housing waiting list. Some of these households (130) have been awarded the maximum 200 points and are deemed to be in extreme housing need and hence will be a priority for rehousing. However, not all families with children will receive priority assistance for rehousing, with 224 applicants with children not being awarded any housing points under the allocations policy.

The Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (see section 14) undertaken as part of the LHS process highlighted the negative impact on educational attainment of children living in overcrowded accommodation. As of September 2023, 448 households with children under 16 years of age are overcrowded. Bright Starts Bright Futures identified families with more than three children are one of the six family types at greatest risk of poverty. There were 144 applicants with children equating to 4% of HOMEArgyll waiting list who required a larger family home (4 or more bedrooms). The SHIP housing planning process will place additional focus on housing those with a need for a particular size of property in a specific location. This approach will ensure that larger family homes are delivered where they are required. This may include RSLs purchasing appropriate 'off the shelf' properties' (see section 11).

**TABLE 10: Minimum number of bedrooms required by families on the HomeArgyll waiting list**

<b>HOMEARGYLL WAITING LIST SEPTEMBER 2023</b>	<b>1 bed</b>	<b>2 bed</b>	<b>3bed</b>	<b>4 bed</b>	<b>5 + bed</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Number of Applicants (with members under 16)	2	493	331	105	39	970
as % of total	0.21%	50.82%	34.12%	10.82%	4.02%	100.0%

Source: HOMEArgyll waiting list September 2023

In most households housing and energy costs are the largest financial outgoing. The SHIP not only provides access to affordable homes for families living on low incomes but it also provides energy efficient homes. In the current economic climate, energy costs are unprecedentedly high, making it more important than ever to reduce the amount of energy needed to keep a home warm. Therefore, the council will ensure that 100% of the SHIP programme will meet the green standards.

Promoting energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty remain strategic priorities for the LHS and key commitments for the council; and maximising opportunities for sustainability in development remains a key principle underpinning the SHIP. As with all public bodies, this council is also required to meet its statutory duties arising from the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and the LHS and SHIP have been developed to ensure that the provision of new affordable housing complies with the Act; and that all housing activities and outputs should contribute to the overarching net zero targets and principles. The Council are also developing a Local Heat Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan, which will set out strategic aims and priorities for achieving net zero across the Argyll and Bute area.

## **8. SPECIALIST PROVISION INCLUDING WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING**

The SHIP aims to address the housing needs of all the communities we serve and continues to reflect a positive approach to equalities issues in line with the policies of the council and its partners, and the principles of diversity and inclusion in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The HNDA (2021) provides robust evidence of accommodation and support needs across the range of protected equalities characteristics, and these have been translated into the SHIP priorities. The joint Argyll

and Bute Health, Care & Housing Needs Assessment, completed in 2018, provided supporting evidence of the requirements for wheelchair accommodation, supported housing, and other forms of specialist provision. In 2019/20, the council undertook further specific studies on the need and demand for specialist provision for wheelchair users, gypsy/travellers, military personnel and veterans, and persons who are autistic or have learning disabilities. The findings have informed the 2021 HNDA and the revised LHS which was published in 2022. An equalities impact assessment (eqseia) was undertaken during the development of the LHS, and this will inform the SHIP.

All SHIP projects, seeking public subsidy from the Council or Scottish Government, are required to meet basic design and building standards (of the Housing for Varying Needs Standard as a minimum) and should incorporate adequate provision to meet any additional identified particular needs. Prioritisation of projects will give due weight to those which incorporate elements of design or additional specifications for specialist forms of housing where the local profile of need and demand indicates such a requirement. The committed and planned programme include provision for elderly and disabled residents and through the close partnership working with Health & Social Work, including Occupational Therapists, the SHIP will continue to ensure the strategic aims of the LHS in this respect are carried forward.

In particular, the dedicated Housing OT post to co-ordinate and promote these needs through the SHIP group, was made permanent in 2021, funded in full by the council Housing Services but working very closely with RSLs and the HSCP. In practice, this commitment to equalities principles will ensure:

- building all new affordable housing to HfVN Standards;
- implementing design solutions which help to meet the needs of disabled and infirm households;
- assessing and seeking to resolve the needs and aspirations of households with community care needs in partnership;
- developing communities with a good mix of households;
- allocating housing via HOME Argyll and national RSL partners who have strong commitments to equal opportunities; and
- providing affordable housing in rural areas which enables young and old people to remain within their communities.

Housing for Varying Needs (HfVNs) is a Design Guide published in two volumes (Parts 1 and 2). While not mandatory, the standards outlined in the guide have been used as the basis for standards for housing developments seeking grant funding support. The standards are intended to ensure that the housing is accessible, adaptable for different needs and over its lifetime represents good value for money. They are based on the principle that the design of a property should not hinder a person's ability to live as independently as possible and should recognise the needs of people as they age, become less able or whose mobility, dexterity, cognitive function, hearing or sight is impaired.

The idea of designing all housing to accommodate the needs of less able people is known as "barrier free" design and this is reflected in the core guidance of the design guide; but the guide also recognises that barrier free design in itself is not a substitute

for homes designed specifically for people with particular needs so it identifies additional features that should be included to address these needs.

Analysis of the HOMEArgyll Common Housing Register in September 2023 suggests that over 21% of applicants could benefit from some form of specialist provision such as amenity, sheltered, or wheelchair housing (this will include an element of double counting as applicants can select more than one type of housing). Three percent (106) applicants requested wheelchair accessible accommodation; although 72 of these applicants also selected some other form of accommodation, including general needs/mainstream housing. Only 27 applicants only selected wheelchair housing.

Applicants requesting wheelchair provision required homes with the following number of bedrooms:

- 58 (55%) of wheelchair applicants required a 1 bedrooms
- 30 (28%) of wheelchair applicants required 2 bedrooms
- 15 (14%) of wheelchair applicants required 3 bedrooms
- 3 (3%) of wheelchair applicants required 4+ bedrooms

The Health, Care & Housing Needs Assessment (2018) identified the following key points:-

- Over 1,300 people in Argyll and Bute have wheelchairs on issue
- Around 350 wheelchairs are issued each year to people in Argyll & Bute
- The majority of wheelchairs issued are manual chairs
- 55% of people with wheelchairs are aged 75+
- Up to 280 people a year may be new wheelchair users
- There could be 240 additional people needing wheelchairs by 2027
- The most common reason for a wheelchair is cerebrovascular disease (stroke) but the main reasons for wheelchair vary by age with Cerebral palsy being the most common reason in people under 25.

Correlating the data sources may suggest that a majority of wheelchair users are satisfactorily housed or do not aspire to social rented properties. However, some wheelchair users who could benefit from specialist provision in the social rented sector may not apply due to lack of awareness or misperceptions regarding the suitability and availability of stock. This was identified as a key area for further research and analysis, and in 2019/20 an in-house study completed jointly by the council's strategy team and the Housing OT. A key finding of this study, collated with national research, is that wheelchair users and those who might benefit from wheelchair accommodation are not a homogenous group and a variety of housing solutions are required.

Solutions such as aids and adaptations or support services will have a crucial role to play, nevertheless, the SHIP will continue to require a target of 10% of the new build programme to provide some form of specialist provision (to include retirement housing, amenity housing, and other specially adapted properties); and within that, half (i.e. 5% of the total new builds) should be built to the fully wheelchair habitable standard as defined in the relevant Section of the current HfVN standards guidance. In 2022/23 there were a total of 36 affordable homes designed for particular needs delivered within the SHIP programme, amounting to **19%** of the year's total, which exceeds the annual target of 10% overall (5% wheelchair and 5% other models of specialist



provision, excluding adaptations to existing stock). The new build units included 14 wheelchair accessible homes (7.45% of total) and 16 adapted/amenity/older person units (11.7%).

As far as possible, the wheelchair housing targets will also be encouraged within the private sector, across all tenures, on all developments where this would be appropriate. The SHIP Officers Group and the Strategic Housing Forum approved this policy with immediate effect in 2020. RSL partners also continue to explore with the HSCP requirements for extra care provision and possible new housing models for people being housed in the community which is in accordance with the HSCP aspiration to enable those with additional needs to live as independently as possible. The council will strive to incorporate housing models which promote independent living within the SHIP programme as it rolls forward.

## 9. GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITES

Argyll and Bute Council continues to support the Scottish Government's commitment to improve the lives of our Gypsy/Traveller communities; and to prioritise joint working with ACHA (who own and manage the two official, operational, Travelling Person sites in Argyll and Bute) and other stakeholders to drive forward positive improvements for this client group.

The council continues to allocate ACHA an annual grant from the Strategic Housing Fund as a contribution towards the operation and maintenance of the two remaining Travelling Persons Sites at Bayview near Oban, and Duncholgan near Lochgilphead. A Minute of Agreement set up at the point of stock transfer in 2006 set the sum at £30k plus annual indexation. In 2018, the sum payable was reduced to reflect the withdrawal of the Torlochan site near Dunoon, which was deemed to be surplus to requirements due to the lack of demand. Recent council investment in the official sites is summarised below:

**TABLE 11: ACHA Gypsy/Traveller Sites – Annual Council Funding**

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	5 year Total
<b>Grant</b>	£31,001	£28,939	£29,338	£31,639	£35,881	<b>£156,798</b>

As part of the comprehensive refresh of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment for Argyll and Bute, the council carried out a dedicated study to assess the accommodation and support needs of Gypsy/ Travellers in the area. This included an assessment of any “bricks and mortar” mainstream accommodation that may be required. The study has involved extensive primary engagement with Gypsy/Travellers and their representatives; and this work has informed the development of the latest LHS for Argyll and Bute.

### **Gypsy/Traveller Working Group**

In 2019 the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) launched the ‘Improving the Lives of Scotland’s Gypsy/Travellers’ strategy. One of the key aims of the strategy is for the Gypsy/Travellers community to ‘*have a seat at the table, are listened to, and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives*’.

The Housing Service established a Gypsy/Traveller Working Group (GTWG) in 2022 as the forum which aims to make this happen in Argyll and Bute. The Terms of Reference of the GTWG include:

- Understanding the accommodation needs and preferences of Gypsy/Travellers to inform future provision
- Work with Gypsy/Traveller communities to raise awareness of rights and entitlements
- Ensure that our public services are responsive to Gypsy/Travellers needs and preferences
- Provide leadership to tackle racism and discrimination
- Strengthen community development and engagement
- Work with Gypsy/Travellers to improve their involvement in national and local decision making

The GTWG has been instrumental in improving partnership working, co-ordinating action, and facilitating engagement with the community.

### **Gypsy/Traveller Site Upgrades**

ACHA secured £108k from the Scottish Government's Capital Fund for Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites. This was invested during 2021/22 and works completed in 2022/23 to make interim improvements to both official sites at Bayview (near Oban) and Duncholgan (near Lochgilphead).

To develop longer term plans for the future of both the sites in Argyll, ACHA engaged consultants to work with the community over the last year. A number of consultation sessions have been held and plans on the future of the sites are being developed in conjunction with the community to ensure that these meet their housing needs. The main round of Capital Funding to enable Gypsy/Traveller site improvements across Scotland, was oversubscribed and we are awaiting an update from COSLA/Scottish Government to identify if the Capital Fund will be extended to enable long-term proposals to be taken forward in the near future.

## **10. HOMELESSNESS/ RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLANS & RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLANS**

Scottish Ministers have made an ongoing commitment to end homelessness in Scotland and consequently set up a national Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) to bring forward recommendations to address this. A key proposal was that each local authority should develop a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) by December 2018, covering a 5-year period, or longer if required, to enable the implementation of this new approach. The RRTP maximises prevention and sets out the council's approach to minimise the time a household remains homeless and to ensure that they can access appropriate suitable accommodation as soon as possible.

Local Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans should be reflected in the LHS and also be fully integrated into Health & Social Care Partnership strategic plans. The Argyll and

Bute RRTP has consequently been included in the current Housing Contribution Statement to ensure it forms part of the planning framework. This SHIP's strategic housing priorities are aligned and consistent with the proposed RRTP priorities and outcomes. A crucial objective is to facilitate and deliver more affordable housing via the SHIP.

Argyll and Bute Council continues to liaise with RSL partners and other key stakeholders to develop and implement the RRTP; and will aim to ensure that homelessness remains a critical factor in the SHIP process. This includes homelessness as one criterion for assessing need, prioritising projects, and awarding grants from the Strategic Housing Fund. SHIP projects are expected to contribute directly or indirectly to alleviating homelessness across Argyll and Bute. The performance of developing landlords in respect of the proportion of allocations to homeless households and time taken to rehouse these clients will continue to be material considerations in SHIP programming decisions and resource allocation moving forward.

RRTP funding was made available for a 5 year period which comes to an end in March 2024. The main Argyll and Bute projects which continued to be funded in 2022/23 include:

1. **Mental Health / Addictions Housing Practitioner** – There have been over 81 referrals for support. The post was vacant for period of time in 2022/23.
2. **Housing First** – Four new Housing First cases were supported. All seven Housing First tenancies are being sustained although progress in creating new tenancies has been slower than originally planned. The Housing First Delivery Group are committed to continue creating Housing First permanent tenancies across Argyll and Bute.
3. **Rent Arrears Prevention Project** – Working with RSL partners, 95 households in rent arrears were prevented from becoming homeless.
4. **Flexible Emergency Fund** – 211 households have received assistance to prevent them becoming homeless.
5. **Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) Decoration Project** – 104 households have been assisted through the project to set up their permanent tenancy.

## **11. BUYBACKS, SECOND-HAND ACQUISITIONS AND OFF SHELF**

Argyll and Bute Council agreed a statement (Annex 1) with the Scottish Government in 2022 which would provide a streamlined approach for acquiring second-hand stock where the acquisition and work costs do not exceed £75k of ASHP grant.

This approach will help increase the supply of affordable housing especially for priority property types and sizes in areas of high demand (particularly where stock has historically been depleted through Right to Buy). The AHSP funding will help enable the purchase of existing properties for people with particular needs, or to meet specific demands.

### **Buy-backs**

To help address the challenges in the housing market, the Council have created a scheme to promote the option for 'buy back' of properties to increase the supply of social housing stock. In June 2023, in conjunction with our RSL partners / SHIP Group we agreed for a statement to go on the Council's website to promote the Buy Back Initiative in Argyll and Bute. There are restrictions on the types of properties that can be purchased and it must not lead to current occupant being left with no alternative housing options. A property will be considered if it meets the following criteria.

- There is demand for the type and size of property in that area;
- The combined cost of buying the property and bringing it up to letting standards would represent value for money;
- Properties, where a tenant would have to leave the property to enable a sale, cannot be considered;
- Priority will be given to purchasing properties which would enable an RSL to take complete, or majority, ownership of blocks of flats making communal repairs much easier to complete.

Whilst the Council are monitoring the enquiries received, the details are passed directly to the appropriate RSLs for consideration and follow up with the owner if they have an interest in acquiring. If a suitable property is identified, the Scottish Government will be approached directly for any units that RSLs are interested in acquiring to discuss potential benchmark subsidy level for acquisition.

During the first three months since the statement was released (end June to September 2023), there have been **26** enquiries received. 7 of these have been general enquiries and 19 with specific properties offered for sale including a mix of residential and commercial. The range of enquiries has varied from one bedroom flats to large detached properties. Our RSL partners are currently considering a number of these enquiries.

### **Off-the-shelf purchases**

While it is expected that the majority of homes will be delivered through the SHIP occasionally, the most appropriate approach to meeting particular needs may be best satisfied by an 'off the shelf' purchase from developers. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Other opportunities**

In addition to the buy-back initiative, to help to maintain viable, sustainable communities, the Council are exploring the possibility of buying properties on the open market for resale with title burdens which require primary occupancy.

## **12. WORKER ACCOMMODATION**

The remote geography of Argyll and Bute means that many communities are isolated and require a degree of self-provision in terms of local services. At a local level, employment opportunities are often interlinked and contribute to the general cohesion of the community, for example a fish farm may rely on local transport providers, but in turn be relied upon by local hospitality and food providers. Such is the fragility of these

situations that a reduced capacity caused by a lack of staff anywhere in this chain can impact on the wider range of services and sustainability of communities.

The definition of key workers can vary and is often determined by individual local authorities based on local priorities. To reflect the fact that housing workers of all types can affect the local economy, and especially in light of the evidence given by the pandemic of how important all workers are, it is proposed in Argyll and Bute to use the term '**worker housing**' to capture the important role all workers have in sustaining communities and the economy in the widest possible context.

Worker housing has been identified as a key issue and increasing the supply of housing options to retain and grow Argyll & Bute's working age population is being prioritised. The lack of housing is frequently cited by employers as one of the main difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, and it is important to address this within the LHS and SHIP.

As referred to in Section 2, Argyll and Bute Council have declared a housing emergency and have been undertaking wider engagement with local households and employers. To help inform how the workforce housing shortages should be tackled, we have issued a survey to local businesses to understand how a lack of housing is affecting employee recruitment, retention, and business growth; and to obtain feedback on what local employers think needs to happen to increase housing options and choice for working age households across the area. The survey findings will help inform future priority areas and tenure types to increase the supply of worker housing.

The Council are continually exploring opportunities to increase supply of worker accommodation to support businesses and the local economy. There are already some specific projects being taken forward, including a new Empty Homes Officer post in conjunction with Shelter and Health and Social Care Partnership to bring properties back into use for HSCP staff; using a Council owned property for the provision of worker accommodation on Isle of Mull in partnership with Mull and Iona Community Trust; and proposals for the development of worker housing in Mull via Rural Growth Deal. We are working within the Council and with our RSL and community group partners to identify suitable projects to utilise the £25m Scottish Government funding, including potential of repurposing of two office spaces in Oban.

### **13. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS SHIP**

#### **SHIP 2017/18 to 2022/23:**

Building on the 448 units completed between 2017/18 and 2021/22, there were a further 180 units completed in 2022/23; bringing the five-year cumulative total to 628 affordable homes.

The **180** completions during 2022/23 are below our ambitious annual affordable housing target of 215. Given the extremely challenging conditions over the last few years, resulting from the pandemic and the resultant supply chain issues this is still a very positive outcome. This equates to **87%** of the annual affordable Housing Supply Target outlined in the LHS.

**TABLE 12: LHS 2022-2027 Housing Supply Targets (HST)**

Argyll & Bute	2022/23 - 2026/27		2027/28 - 2031/32		2022/23 - 2031/32
	Annual Target	Total	Annual Target	Total	10 Year total
<b>Total HST</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>1,615</b>
Affordable Housing	215	1,075	13	65	1,140
Private Market Housing	75	375	20	100	475

During 2022/23 five of the local RSLs contributed to the total programme. Loretto developed 36 new affordable units; ACHA delivered 15 new homes; West Highland completed 18 new builds; and Link completed 119 units in Dunbeg Phase 3, with the remaining units to be completed during 2023.

In terms of tenure, 162 units (86%) were for social rent and 26 (14%) were new supply shared equity (NSSE). Whilst the majority on units were for general needs housing (152), there were 20 amenity units and 16 wheelchair/specialist units delivered.

**TABLE 13: SHIP Completions 2022/23**

Project	Housing Market Area (HMA)	Developer	Tenure	Type of provision	Number units
Sawmill Field, Helensburgh	H&L	LORETTO	Social rent	32 x General 4 x Amenity	36
Jura	Islay, Jura & Colonsay	WHHA	Social rent	8 x Amenity, 2 x General	10
Millknowe, Campbeltown	Kintyre	ACHA	Social rent	1 x wheelchair	1
Dunbeg Phase 3	Lorn	LINK/ WHHA	Social rent x 95 & NSSE x 24	102 x General 11 x Wheelchair 6 x Amenity	119
Oakhill, Tarbert	Mid-Argyll	ACHA	Social rent	4 x General	4
Inveraray	Mid-Argyll	ACHA	Social rent	6 x General, 2 x wheelchair 2 x specialist	10
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>180</b>



**Map of completed units via SHIP 2022/23**

## 14. THE REVISED PROGRAMME

The current year, 2023/24, is covered by the Strategic Local Programme Agreement (SLPA) between the council, the Scottish Government, and the developing RSLs, and the previous SHIP (approved in 2022); while this new SHIP will commence from 2024/25. The programme is subject to ongoing change as either barriers to progress or windfall opportunities arise. Consequently, the following tables simply summarise all proposals at the time of writing, including those projects which are expected to complete in 2023/24 and for which funding has already been drawn down. It should be noted that the status of many future projects, particularly in the later years, remains provisional and purely indicative at this stage; some may not proceed, or complete, within the timescale. However there is also scope for additional proposals to be brought forward or included in the programme.

Further details of the programme and individual projects are outlined in the electronic reports recorded on the Scottish Government's Housing and Regeneration Programme (HARP) system.

**TABLE 14: SHIP Projects Completions/Anticipated Completions in 2023/24**

Project address	Developer	Units	Anticipated Completion Date
Eton Avenue, Dunoon	ACHA	4	October 2023
Dunbeg Phase 3 (remaining units)	LINK	66	TBC
Imeraval Phase 4 Islay	WHHA	20	March 2024
Port Appin Phase 1	WHHA	6	March 2024
Buyback Acquisitions	ACHA	8	March 2024
Buyback Acquisitions	FH	2	March 2024
<b>Argyll &amp; Bute 2023/24 Total Completions (est.)</b>		<b>106</b>	<b>March 2024</b>

If this programme is successfully delivered in full within the planning period (plus completions in 2023/24), it could provide over **1,395** new affordable homes across Argyll and Bute by March 2029. Projects on islands account for 22% of properties to be developed by the SHIP, the rural mainland accounts for 17% of the programme; while 36% of units are in the key strategic settlements of Oban and Dunbeg; 7% in Helensburgh; with 16% in the other main towns of Dunoon, Campbeltown and Lochgilphead.

There is an expectation that the majority of these units will be built to allow for future adaptation to meet changing needs over time; and in addition approximately 10% (i.e. 128 units, if the above programme is delivered in full) should be purpose-designed to medium or high dependency standards with potentially 64 of those units (5% of the total) being fully wheelchair accessible.

In addition to this core programme, a number of other potential proposals are being developed for further consideration in later years of the SHIP, subject to robust assessments of need and demand, site assembly or acquisition, and available funding. Some of these projects therefore remain notional at this stage or are subject to development constraints that require to be addressed/ mitigated before they can proceed. These projects are also dependent on clarification of local need or potential demand to support growth and recovery agendas; and will be considered in future updates of the SHIP.

The council will also continue to actively explore other sites and projects out with the core SHIP funding programme, as outlined in previous sections of this plan, where these are consistent with LDP policy/housing land provisions and align with high quality fit-for-purpose assessments of local housing need and demand.



**TABLE 15: SHIP Core Programme - Potential Completions by March 2029**

Project Address	Developer	Total Units	Anticipated Completion
Bowmore Phase 4	ACHA	17	Year 1 (24/25)
Dalintober, Campbeltown	ACHA	20	Year 1 (24/25)
Acquisitions	ACHA	5	Year 1 (24/25)
Tighcargaman, Port Ellen	ACHA	50	Year 2 (25/26)
East Clyde Street, Helensburgh	ACHA	14	Year 2 (25/26)
Coll	ACHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Acquisitions	ACHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Glenmachrie, Islay	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Tarbert Phase 1	ACHA	15	Year 3 (26/27)
Kilcreggan	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Tayvallich	ACHA	10	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunoon Phase 1	ACHA	35	Year 3 (26/27)
Keils, ISLAY	ACHA	4	Year 4 (27/28)
Tarbert Phase 2	ACHA	15	Year 4 (27/28)
Tiree	ACHA	10	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunoon Phase 2	ACHA	35	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunoon Phase 3	ACHA	30	Year 5 (28/29)
Dunoon Phase 4	ACHA	20	Year 5 (28/29)
Jeanie Deans, Helensburgh	DUNBRITTON HA	12	Year 1 (24/25)
18th Tee, Helensburgh Golf Club	DUNBRITTON HA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Cardross	DUNBRITTON HA	35	Year 3 (26/27)
Helensburgh Golf Club	DUNBRITTON HA	62	Year 5 (28/29)
Succoth Phase 2, Arrochar	DUNBRITTON HA	12	Year 5 (28/29)
Riverside Drive, Lochgilphead (Baddens)	FYNE HOMES	6	Year 1 (24/25)
Ballochgoy	FYNE HOMES	8	Year 1 (24/25)
Rothesay - acquisition	FYNE HOMES	8	Year 1 (24/25)
Inveraray Phase 1	FYNE HOMES	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Rothesay Academy	FYNE HOMES	50	Year 4 (27/28)
Lochgilphead Phase 6	FYNE HOMES	80	Year 4 (27/28)
Inveraray Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	10	Year 4 (27/28)
Rothesay Academy Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	30	Year 5 (28/29)
Tighnabruaich Phase 2	FYNE HOMES	10	Year 5 (28/29)
Rosneath	LINK GROUP	49	Year 2 (25/26)
Hospital Field, Oban	LINK GROUP	50	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunbeg Phase 4	LINK GROUP	129	Year 3 (26/27)
Glencruitten	LINK GROUP	100	Year 3 (26/27)
Dunbeg Phase 5	LINK GROUP	97	Year 4 (27/28)
Dunbeg Phase 6	LINK GROUP	123	Year 5 (28/29)
Colonsay	WHHA	5	Year 1 (24/25)
Port Charlotte Phase 1	WHHA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Imeraval Phase 5	WHHA	20	Year 2 (25/26)
Tobermory Shillinghill Phase 3	WHHA	10	Year 2 (25/26)
Dalmally	WHHA	16	Year 2 (25/26)
Salen	WHHA	8	Year 4 (27/28)

Lochawe Phase 1	WHA	16	Year 4 (27/28)
Baliscate, Tobermory	WHA	12	Year 5 (28/29)
Port Appin Phase 2/3	WHA	24	Year 5 (28/29)
Bunessan Phase 2	WHA	4	Year 5 (28/29)
Port Charlotte Phase 2	WHA	17	Year 5 (28/29)
Craignure	WHA	24	Year 5 (28/29)
<b>Argyll and Bute Total</b>		<b>1395</b>	<b>2024-2029</b>

<sup>1</sup> NB. Timescales are indicative and subject to change; and will be monitored regularly. Some projects could also revise their final number of units.

RSLs have also identified future opportunities, which they will continue to develop. These projects could be included in the later years of the SHIP. For example, ACHA is exploring options for sites in Helensburgh, Dunoon, Kilcreggan, Tiree and on Mull such as Dervaig, and Ulva, as well as further development sites on Islay. WHA are considering sites in Oban town centre, and options for Kilchrenan, as well as Lochawe Phase 2 which will be in future SHIP. Dunbritton are keen to deliver more units in the Helensburgh area and exploring site opportunities. LINK Group continue to work closely with WHA and are scoping options for development sites in Oban. In addition, the Council are working with Trust Housing Association to deliver improvements to their existing stock in Strachur which will meet identified need and demand in the area.

Finally, a number of community-led projects or private developments with associated affordable requirements, may be delivered out with the core SHIP programme and should deliver major synergies with the SHIP. Several community projects are progressing, and while small in scale these community-based projects deliver substantial impacts at the local level, and help to ensure the viability and sustainability of fragile communities. The following table summarises the work being undertaken by our Community Housing Network partners on rural and island projects out with the core SHIP programme.

TABLE 16: PROPOSED/POTENTIAL COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING PROJECTS

ARGYLL AND BUTE - COMMUNITY LED HOUSING PROJECTS			
COMMUNITY GROUP	PROJECT AREA	NOTES ON PROJECT STAGE	TOTAL UNITS (if relevant)
<b>Colonsay community Development</b>	Scalasaig, Isle of Colonsay	Houses complete bar commissioning, external works stalled	<b>9 units + 3 self build plots</b>
<b>Luing Community</b>	Isle of Luing	Finalising Housing Needs Assessment. Detailed housing proposals prepared and to be submitted in Local Place Plan	<b>12</b>
<b>Mull and Iona Community Trust</b>	Worker Accommodation	Report commissioned to determine scale of housing issue	<b>n/a</b>
	Worker Accommodation Tobermory	Supporting A & B Council in the provision of worker accommodation in Tobermory	<b>12</b>
	Glengorm affordable housing	MICT supporting the Glengorm estate with their allocations policy for their affordable housing	<b>5</b>
<b>South West Mull and Iona Development</b>	Ardmeanach View Bunessan	Working with WHHA demonstrating Feasibility	<b>6</b>
	Bunessan Village	Exploring feasibility of site, funding for site purchase	<b>5 or 6</b>
<b>Tiree Community Development</b>	Tiree	SLF Stage 1 approved, awaiting RIHF	<b>12</b>
<b>Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust</b>	Ardminish	Expected completion: July 2024	<b>5</b>
<b>North West Mull</b>	Isle of Ulva	Post Construction Management	
<b>Tayvallich Initiative</b>	Gifted Property, Tayvallich	About to advertise and allocate this 2 bed property	<b>1</b>
	Farmhouse, Tayvallich	About to take ownership of this 4 bed property which is currently tenanted	<b>1</b>
	Archie's Land, Tayvallich	Housing needs assessment completed. In discussions with housing agencies regarding different models. Further feasibility works required and to engage with planning	<b>10</b>

## 15. MONITORING, REVIEW AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The SHIP will continue to be appraised on an annual basis by the Scottish Government and affordable housing outcomes are monitored regularly by the Council's Housing Management Team; local authority Members via the corporate Pyramid performance management system; the overarching Community Planning Partnership via the ABOIP

framework; and partners on the Strategic Housing Forum; as well as the boards and committees of the individual SHIP partners. In addition, as appropriate, wider stakeholder involvement will be sought via consultation with local communities, private developers and relevant particular interest groups. All pertinent feedback will help to inform the ongoing development and regular revisions of the SHIP.

The council has also been exploring potential mechanisms for establishing a wider evaluation framework to capture the broader social return on investment and economic impacts of the SHIP programme, as well as the basic cost effectiveness and value for money of specific projects. Working with RSL partners, the council is keen to implement a formal evaluation procedure which will capture evidence on the wide range of strategic benefits that the SHIP actually delivers, beyond monitoring the basic number of completions.

In 2021/22, the council undertook a number of impact assessments during the LHS process. The SHIP is an investment plan which sits underneath the LHS and sets out how the LHS objectives can be delivered. Therefore, these impact assessments also inform the SHIP. The impact assessments can be found on the council's website.

- Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment [lhs\\_eqseia\\_sept\\_2021.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment**  
[childrens\\_rights\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_impact\\_accessment\\_stage\\_abc\\_lhs\\_jan\\_2022.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Health Impact Assessment** [APPENDIX 4: Template for scoping workshop reports \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
- Islands and Communities Impact Assessment  
[lhs\\_island\\_communities\\_impact\\_assessment.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

In future, the council will monitor and assess the impact of the SHIP and the LHS in terms of the aforementioned impact assessments and in line with the principles of the Fairer Scotland Duty. Any relevant findings from such assessments will be reflected in the SHIP and future updates of the LHS and other associated plans, policies and strategies.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

As the "Responsible Authority" under the terms of the Environmental (Scotland) Act 2005, the council has previously determined that the LHS (and by association it's ancillary component, the SHIP) does not require a full SEA. [sea\\_pre\\_screening\\_report\\_october\\_2021.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

The primary document in relation to land use planning is the Local Development Plan which is subject to a full SEA and which will ultimately cover all housing projects set out in the SHIP.

## CONCLUSION

The Argyll and Bute Strategic Housing Investment Plan for 2024/25 to 2028/29 sets out an ambitious but realistic programme for the delivery of **1,395** new affordable homes; of which the majority would be built to lifetime standards, allowing for future adaptation to meet changing needs over time; and around 10% will be purpose-designed for specialist needs, with half of those i.e., 5% of the total being fully wheelchair accessible. The programme reflects a strong commitment to Argyll and Bute's economic growth agenda and will directly support the sustainability of fragile rural and island communities.

The earlier years of the SHIP align with the LHS housing supply targets, published in 2022, of 215 new affordable homes per year; the later years are slightly below the target. Several additional potential projects have also been suggested and are at an early stage of development. These projects are likely to be considerations in later years, although if needs are identified during the annual review of the programme, then these projects could be brought forward. In addition, the Council and partners continue to seek new opportunities which could raise the number of units in the later years of the SHIP to align with the 5 year LHS target of 1075 affordable units.

The LHS targets take account of the council's ambitious strategic objectives as well as the potential increased demand for social housing arising from the current economic crisis and other worldwide events; the anticipated impacts of the Rural Growth Deal and other local and national resources and strategic imperatives for repopulation, recovery and growth; and therefore the scale of the proposed programme is likely to be more in line with actual requirements as well as our aspirational goals for Argyll and Bute.

This SHIP clearly and directly aligns with the LHS and Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP) outcomes; sets out a core programme which is feasible to deliver; highlights the contribution of the council, developers and other partners; evidences the support and facilitation role of the local authority; outlines the extensive stakeholder engagement underpinning the planning and delivery of the programme; and explicitly reflects the central importance of equality issues for all partners.

## Appendix 1 - Individual Open Market Purchases Statement January 2022

Scottish Government affordable housing supply guidance states:-

*“It is expected that the majority of homes delivered through the Programme will be new build units that are delivered either directly by grant applicants or through ‘off the shelf’ purchases from developers. **However, where it can be demonstrated that the use of grant to acquire ‘second hand’ stock that is for sale on the open market is the most appropriate method of meeting housing need in a particular area, subsidy may be available to fund this, subject to agreement between the Council and the Scottish Government.** Funding may also be made available to remodel/ rehabilitate existing properties where this is considered a strategic priority”.*

Argyll and Bute Council will consider a limited number of individual, second hand open market purchases if the following criteria are met:

- There is a need for the size and type of housing in the town/settlement, (this will be determined by the current housing need and demand assessment)
- Land availability and infrastructure issues are a barrier to delivering the affordable housing target in the area through new build development
- The purchase will not result in homelessness
- The purchase price must reflect the condition of the property.

Second hand open market purchases will be prioritised as follows:

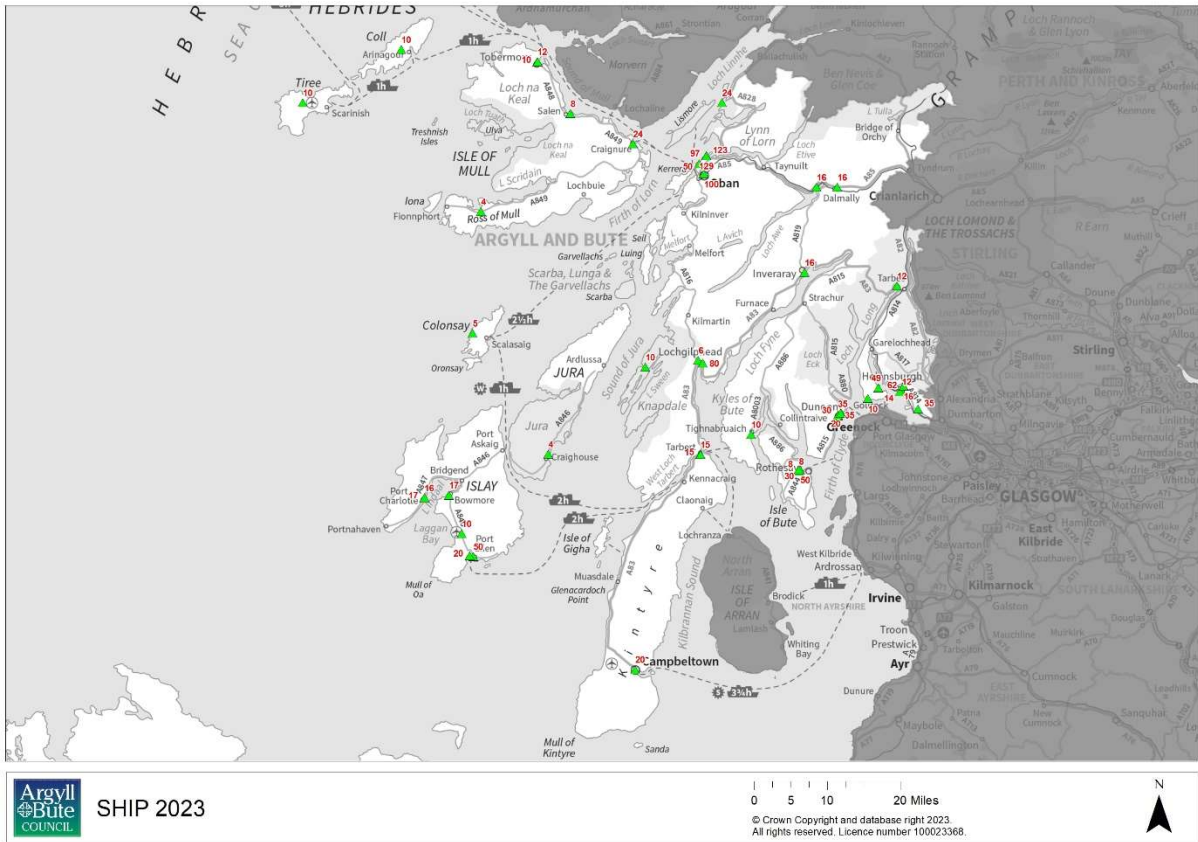
1. Where the purchase will assist the RSL to meet general housing need as identified in the HNDA and agreed with Argyll and Bute Council.
2. Where the purchase will assist the RSL to meet particular housing need as agreed with Argyll and Bute Council.
3. Where the purchase will bring an empty property back into occupation
4. Priority will be given to acquiring properties that are in good/reasonable condition.

Each property will require a valuation and condition survey completed by the District Valuer or other RICS Chartered Surveyor. Vendors must pay their own costs.

Applicants should note the following:-

- Grant requested must be the minimum level of grant required to deliver the project.
- Grant requested should exclude costs for any works normally funded by the Association’s capital maintenance/cyclical programme.
- Streamlined submissions for acquisition only, the maximum Scottish Government grant will be up to £50,000 or 50% of the acquisition value, whichever is the lower.
- Streamlined submissions for acquisition and works, grant will be up to £75,000 maximum for each property. This will encompass the purchase price and any works required to the property.
- Where grant required for acquisition and works cost is higher than £75,000 a full value for money appraisal will be required and acquisitions should not be completed before confirmation of Scottish Government and Council agreement on the level of costs.

### APPENDIX 2 - SHIP DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS ARGYLL & BUTE: Projects in the Core Programme 2024-2029



**THIS DOCUMENT IS  
AVAILABLE ON THE COUNCIL WEBSITE AT:**

[Local Housing Strategy and Housing Need and Demand Assessment](#)

This document can also be made available in other formats on request.

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