

**Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership**

**Area Community Planning Group- Bute and Cowal**

**Date: 9 February 2016**

**Agenda Item: 9. (a)**



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## **Outcome 1: The economy is diverse and thriving – Interim Report**

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### **Summary**

Formal update reports are provided by the Outcome leads to the CPP Management Committee. An interim update has been requested by the Bute and Cowal committee to provide them with information on some of the steps being taken to improve the local economy. This report does not contain partner updates and does not reflect the new 2016 SOA Delivery Plans currently under development.

### **1. Key milestones to date for Outcome 1**

- The Economic Forum chaired by Nick Ferguson representing the private sector has been active during 2015 and will shortly produce a report outlining its findings and recommendations for action by key stakeholders across Argyll.
- The study led by Argyll and Bute Council with a number of CPP partners has been published and details the effect of a variety of factors including skills shortages on growth.

There are a number of common themes running through all the recent reports compiled across the region and partners have already begun to address them.

### **2. Opportunities**

HIE is actively working with account managed clients across Bute and Cowal all of which are looking at making new investment into their businesses to grow them and to create new jobs.

There are a number of key projects underway across Bute and Cowal and it is important that their potentially transformational nature is recognised and that all partners work together to build on what they can bring to the area.

- Contractors are on site at Dunoon Burgh Hall and completion of the project is expected later in 2016. The work at the Rothesay Pavilion is also underway and both these projects will play an important part in providing the arts and culture activities which are essential if we are to attract people to live and work in the area.

- After extensive consultation a new Master plan for the Sandbank Business Park is almost complete. This will form the basis for new proposition material to attract inward investment to the site. HIE's new advance office hopes to welcome its first tenants in Spring 2016.
- HIE continues to work with the developers at Ardyne where there are ambitious plans to bring new businesses to the site
- Exciting things are happening on Bute. The Alliance for Action on Bute has grown very successfully, with many local people engaging in consultations over recent months. A core group of approximately 20 people are leading the way forward, with priorities and projects to be decided upon through the Charrettes project which will provide focus and clarity for all the community ideas that have been put forward so far. Mount Stuart Trust is working closely with HIE and is fully engaged with both the Alliance and the Pavilion developments. The Trust has a number of development projects in progress which will offer opportunities for the community to engage as part of "Building a Better Bute".

### **3. Challenges**

- The claimant count rate for Dunoon and Bute TTWA in Dec 2015 was 2.8%. This is the highest level in the HIE Area and is above the Scottish average for the same period (1.7%). The rate is also marginally higher compared to a year earlier when it was 2.7%. In absolute terms these numbers remain small and there may be some underlying issues around the skills match for some job roles. We have increasing evidence that challenges in attracting and retaining staff are constraining business growth in many areas across Argyll. Work is underway to address the specific training needs of some businesses particularly those in the hospitality sector.
- We need to find new ways to ensure our young people are aware of the opportunities local businesses can offer them.
- Transport and connectivity issues continue to affect Bute and Cowal with further landslides closing the A83 in December. The extent to which this deters inward investment is not something we can measure. A report on the economic impact of transport connectivity across key corridors in Argyll will be published in the coming weeks.

### **4. Summary**

This report provides only a flavour of the activity underway across the area. It is important that all partners remain positive about the opportunities Bute and Cowal can offer and that during 2016 we all work together to address the recommendation within the reports we now have available.

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