

REPORT BY THE POLICY LEAD FOR ISLAND AFFAIRS

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update to the main focus of work in relation to islands over the period November 2015 – March 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that members note the contents of this paper.

3. DETAIL

3.1 Our Islands Our Future Up-date

- 3.1.1** Since the launch of the Our Islands Our Future Campaign in 2013, the issue of additional powers and protection for Scotland's islands has been widely discussed at both a Scottish and UK level. In June 2014, the Scottish Government published Empowering Scotland's Island Communities Prospectus which set out a series of proposals which could give greater power to island communities. The appointment of Derek Mackay as Minister for Transport and Islands in November 2014 and the re-convening of the Islands Ministerial Working Group in February 2015 have added further weight to this movement.

Argyll and Bute Council has, for a long time, recognised and communicated with the Scottish and UK Government in relation to the importance of our islands and their need for special consideration. On the 23 January 2014 the Council agreed to the setting up of a short life working group to investigate the issues affecting our islands and to develop a vision statement as well as key actions necessary to address the issues. Council received an update on the activities of this group on 25 June 2015.

On 29 September 2015, the Scottish Government published a Consultation on Provisions for a Future Islands Bill.

The Future Island Bill consultation sought the views of interested stakeholders on plans for more power and protection for Scotland's islands. The responses to the consultation document will help shape the development of a future Islands Bill. The consultation document set out a number of issues as follows:

- Island-Proofing – whether a legal duty should be placed on Ministers and relevant public bodies to 'island-proof' their functions and decisions. Island-proofing involves building an awareness of the needs and circumstances of the islands into decisions made by the public sector and taking these into account when exercising their functions.
- Empowering Island Communities – what additional powers and

functions could be passed to island councils to benefit or better protect the island communities they serve? Whether additional powers are required for councils responsible for islands including whether any of the powers set out in the Zetland County Council Act 1974 and Orkney County Council Act 1974 should be extended to cover other relevant councils.

- National Islands Plan – whether a legal duty should be placed on all future Scottish Governments to prepare a 'National Islands Plan', setting out on-going commitments across all policy areas of Government to support, promote and empower our island communities.
- Statutory protection for the Na h-Eileanan an Iar Scottish parliamentary constituency boundary; and
- Local Government Electoral Wards – whether the Local Government Boundary Commission in Scotland should have discretion to recommend wards with less than three councillors so that populated islands are not placed in an electoral ward that contains a significant proportion of mainland population.

The consultation period closed on 23 December 2015 and following a report to Full Council a formal response was submitted to the Scottish Government. (Link to Argyll and Bute response: https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/islands-team/islands-bill-consultation/consultation/view_respondent?uuld=467541328)

Through the Argyll Islands Task Force, the Council continue to work on the delivery of the key actions identified when the Task Force was first set up.

3.2 Other Island Up-dates

3.2.1 Rothesay Charrette

The council has been working with the Alliance for Action in the delivery of the Rothesay Charrette. Workshops were undertaken during February and the key actions are being agreed during March.

3.2.2 Rothesay HLF Bid

In January the council was advised that HLF had approved their stage one TH 2 bid for Rothesay. The development works will be undertaken over the next 12 months and a stage two bid submitted in 2017

3.2.3 Tiree Charrette

The Council is working with Tiree Community Development Trust in the delivery of the Tiree Charrette, workshops are being held during February/March 2016

3.2.4 Digital Connectivity

The first live next generation broadband connections were available on Mull in late 2015 when Craignure exchange area was connected to the new fibre network, Tobermory is expected to follow in the first half of 2016.

Community Broadband Scotland are supporting a community broadband project

covering the Kyles of Bute, which would include premises on Bute not benefiting from the superfast infrastructure.

3.2.5 Vodafone Rural

A number of locations on the Isle of Seil now have Vodafone Open Sure Signal which can provide a 3G Vodafone service. It is expected that the Isle of Luing will be the next location to benefit.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Argyll and Bute Council continues in its efforts to work with Government and campaign to have our Island's special issues recognised; this effort is now clearly returning results. I will continue to keep members updated on further outcomes.

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