

**REPORT BY POLICY LEAD FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
(ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, RENEWABLES AND  
STRATEGIC TOURISM)**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

This is my third report as Policy Lead for Sustainable Economic Growth (Economic Development, European Affairs, Renewables and Strategic Tourism) and covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Members note the Report.

**3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

**3.1 Machrihanish UK Spaceport / Meeting with Brendan O'Hara, MP**

Machrihanish Airbase Community Company (MACC), working with the Council and HIE, continue to move forward with their plans to create the UK's first spaceport at the former airbase site in Machrihanish. Their subsidiary company Discover Space UK (DSUK) has commissioned their consultants Capital Ambassadors to continue to develop a compelling case for Campbeltown to lead the way in the new, licensing process. The presentation at the members' seminar in June gave an opportunity for all members to hear from MACC/DSUK.

Just prior to the report to EDI Committee, I attended a meeting with MACC, Brendan O'Hara MP, HIE, the Council Leader and officers to discuss ways of continuing to progress this really ambitious plan. MACC provided an update on their progress recently – including another meeting with the UK Space Agency – and their plans to continue to raise their profile within the industry in the next few months. Mr O'Hara confirmed his ongoing support for this proposal and there was a discussion around how he could best provide support to MACC/DSUK. One suggestion was for Mr O'Hara to host a parliamentary reception at Westminster in the autumn, and the Council confirmed they would be happy to provide support for this.

**3.2 Secretary of State for Scotland**

As reported in the Council Leader's report earlier this year, along with senior officers we met with David Mundell, Secretary of State for Scotland, in the Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre in February. This meeting gave the chance for us to discuss a range of issues with Mr Mundell and seek the UK Government's support and assistance where possible.

I also met Mr Mundell and Lord Andrew Dunlop when Mr Mundell opened training rooms at The Tower in Helensburgh, following an earlier meeting with the Council Leader and officers. One of the matters raised in February was MACC's bid to become the first UK Spaceport, so it was very welcome to hear that the next time

the Secretary of State visits Argyll and Bute he intends to go to Campbeltown to see the work going on there.

### **3.3 Rural Resettlement Fund (RRF)**

The committee decision to proceed with the RRF has prompted a significant level of interest from a wide range of individuals and organisations with enquiries coming in from as far afield as South Africa. As my name appeared in the press release, a number of people have been in touch with me directly and it has been great to speak to people so enthusiastic about the opportunities Argyll and Bute presents. The launch of the fund is hoped to now take place earlier in October than originally planned.

Our Rural Resettlement Fund was informed by analysis previously carried out by the Improvement Service. This work identified how different countries had attempted to address depopulation within specific areas. Our fund is tailored to suit our needs, and uses levers that are within the Council's control – however other countries such as Norway have taken a very different approach such as differentiation of tax and social security contributions. I have now written to the Scottish Government to ask if there would be any merit in discussing the approaches taken by other countries which require the involvement of national government.

### **3.4 Culture, Heritage and Arts Assembly (CHArts)**

I attended a meeting in September of the CHArts Steering Group where a key focus of the meeting was on how to move forward with the creation of appropriate governance for the organisation (including becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation - SCIO). The Council is in the process of finalising a Place Partnership agreement with Creative Scotland which CHArts would then take on responsibility for delivering the outcomes required by that agreement. The funding from Creative Scotland would be used to support a number of outcomes including capacity building and mapping of current practitioners, sites and venues across Argyll and Bute.

Culture currently sits within Cllr Robin Currie's remit, however there is an overlap with the Creative Industries side of Economic Development and if the Leisure and Libraries Trust goes ahead then it may be that future support to CHArts is provided through the Economic Development team.

### **3.5 ACT AGM**

The Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust AGM took place in Helensburgh in June, and included updates on ACT projects as well as presentations from a number of partner/supporting organisations. Funding for ACT continues to be a key priority and a number of funding bids are being developed – including European funding to support the control/eradication of invasive non-native species. ACT has achieved significant success with their Branching Out Argyll programme, in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and NHS Highland. The programme offers woodland activities on referral for patients receiving treatment for mental health problems.

### **3.6 Argyll Enterprise Week - 31 October 2016 to 04 November 2016**

Argyll Enterprise Week will be hosted by Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway in partnership with Highlands and Islands. The aim is to bring together businesses, social enterprises, entrepreneurs, communities and anyone who has an interest in Enterprise. It should be an interesting week filled with workshops, speakers and networking opportunities designed to inspire, connect and inform – and I look forward to attending it. The themes of Innovation, Internationalisation and Digital connectivity will be explored amongst others as part of the event mix. Attendees will be given the opportunity to network with like-minded people, hear from inspiring industry leaders, take part in workshops (including a session on funding and investment) and access one-to-one time with experts. This is the first event of this kind and if it proves to be a success then consideration will be given to making it a regular event.

## **4 REGENERATION**

The Council is currently investing very significantly in the regeneration of our main town centres with a number of projects ongoing. The CHORD programme is picked up under the Major Projects remit, however much of this regeneration work is delivered through the Townscape Heritage (TH) and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) programmes.

In July I spoke at the celebration event for the Campbeltown TH and CARS work, which marked the work already complete although a new CARS scheme is now underway. This event took place in the Town Hall, which had also been used the night before for the CS Wind Civic Reception and it was great to see this building brought to life and suitable for use in such different ways. At this event it was very welcome to hear Historic Environment Scotland commend the Council for the work carried out right across the area, as this has been a significant, ongoing commitment.

Work on all of the TH/CARS programmes is now being reported to PnR on a regular basis and in future administration of Regeneration Capital Grant Funds will also be reported in this way. Hermitage Park also falls within the remit of the Projects & Renewables team and again will be picked up within this reporting.

## **5 RENEWABLES & ENERGY**

### **5.1 ABRA – Argyll & Bute Renewables Alliance**

The Argyll and Bute Renewables Alliance met on 17 February, the meeting was well attended with representatives from the following public and private sector organisations: Argyll & Bute Council; Sgurr Energy; Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE); Scottish Natural Heritage; SSE Renewables; Scottish Power Renewables; RES; Forestry Commission; Local Energy Scotland; Crown Estate; SSE Power Distribution.

Those present provided an overview of their work in Argyll. It was encouraging to see that despite announcements during summer 2015 regarding changing subsidies at both a commercial and community scale there are still a number of renewables investments taking place within Argyll. The meeting also discussed

the issue of community investment in commercial renewables. Most developers appear to be supportive of this approach however restrictions regarding the level of financial advice they are able to provide and the model to be used for community investment means that there is no clear route at this stage. ABRA will continue to encourage commercial developers to offer community shared ownership where possible as well as community benefits.

The next ABRA meeting is due to take place later in September and the agenda includes an update on the Islay Tidal Array project.

## **5.2 All Energy Conference**

ABRA again hosted a stand at All Energy, a major renewable energy exhibition and conference, which took place in Glasgow in May 2016. As well as offering an opportunity to promote Argyll we also shared the stand with a number of supply chain businesses based in Argyll but operating internationally in the field of renewables. Businesses included SAMS Research Services (SRSL), CS Wind UK, Seafari Marine Services, Offshore Connection, Clean Wind and GSS Marine Services. We received positive feedback from the businesses attending.

While attending All Energy I also met with representatives of CS Wind regarding their planned investment at Machrihanish; and with the Director of Project Development for Atlantis Resources regarding the Islay Tidal project, who visited Campbeltown in September to look at the Council's pier facilities.

## **5.3 CS Wind**

CS Wind, based in South Korea, have now taken over what was the Wind Towers Scotland manufacturing site at Machrihanish to create their European headquarters within Argyll and Bute. At the start of July there was a civic reception and ground breaking ceremony to mark the planned investment of over £20million, which will see the facility at Machrihanish upgraded to be the only UK facility capable of producing offshore wind towers for the UK and European markets.

The events were attended by a significant number of senior CS Wind executives from Korea and the UK Ambassador to South Korea. Other attendees included Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy and representatives from UK Trade & Investment and Scottish Development International. Major industry partners were also present, and agreements with key clients were signed during the events.

## **5.4 Allenergy**

As a council-appointed to the Allenergy Board I attended the meeting in March but unfortunately was unable to attend the June meeting due to other commitments. Allenergy continue to work on a wide range of projects such as the HEEPS-ABS programme and Algal Solutions for Local Energy Economy (ASLEE). Allenergy is currently considering issues of sustainability and the possibility of taking a more commercial approach in order to support the long-term future of the charity.

The AGM and next Board meeting will be held at the end of September.

## **5.5 Developers**

I had meetings with both Scottish Power Renewables and RES regarding their investments in Argyll and Bute. These meetings covered a range of topics, including the delivery of community benefit, the potential for community investment and developing the local supply chain to ensure maximum economic benefit locally.

## **5.6 Woodfuel Forum**

The Woodfuel Forum met in Kilmory at the end of March with a wide range of public and private sector attendees. The agenda included:

- Update from Forestry Commission Scotland on the Woodfuel Sector
- Biomass projects in Argyll, and report on the Forum's visit to Ardnamurchan Estate
- Industrial Biotechnology in Forestry

With changes to the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme expected it may be much more challenging in future to install biomass heating, as public funding support is expected to reduce.

## **5.7 Glengorm Wind Turbine**

Following the decision at the Council meeting in January the 60kw turbine was installed in Mull as part of the Council's Renewable Sourcing Strategy. The turbine was commissioned on 12<sup>th</sup> August which means that the deadline for Feed-In-Tariff (FIT) accreditation before the end of September should be met. As a Council-owned resource this will deliver energy and carbon savings for the Council. The Council's contractors hosted a visit from school pupils from Tobermory High School where they were shown the turbine and given a talk on renewable energy technology. Primary Schools across Mull and Iona are being offered the chance to win a £500 prize in a name the turbine competition which is also part of the community benefits associated with the contract.

## **6 WIDER BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT**

Following my visit to Campbeltown to meet a range of businesses last year, I have also tried to visit a number of other areas to meet a range of businesses – normally with the Executive Director of Development & Infrastructure.

### **6.1 Helensburgh & Lomond**

In the Helensburgh and Lomond area I met with the Commodore Clyde and other officers at Faslane; the Chief Executive of Luss Estates; the Chief Executive of Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park and the new owners of the Mackintosh Club Rooms – a site that has been added to the Mackintosh Trail for this October.

### **6.2 Islay & Jura**

While on Islay and Jura I met with the Chief Executive and Distillery Manager at Bruichladdich; the Community Fund Manager at Islay Energy Trust; two representatives of the Jura Development Trust; Baroness Nye, developer of the Machrie Hotel and golf club; the manager of the Columba Centre; the owner of the Islay Woolen Mill; Lord Margadale and the former and new Factors for Islay Estates. In addition, I saw a number of sites where development has started or is planned on Islay.

### **6.3 Island of Bute**

I met with a number of local businesses and organisations: members of the Board and most senior staff at the Mount Stuart Trust; Programme Co-ordinator of Vital Spark and the CE of Firstport; Manager at Fyne Futures; Alliance for Action Facilitator and representative from SURF; owner of George Hanson Building Contractors – who owns the Royal Hotel building. It was good to also include a visit to Rothesay Pavilion to see the work now underway.

### **6.4 Other**

In addition, the Executive Director and I met with the factor of Argyll Estates in May; and in April I attended a meeting at the Scottish Association for Marine Science with local members where we met with the new Director and had a tour of the facilities.

The outcomes of these visits varies significantly – in some cases there are no immediate actions to be taken while in others appropriate officers are asked to follow up with businesses to address matters raised. Often, it is a matter of putting one business or organisation in touch with another as they have complementary interests. What I also find very helpful from these visits is the background knowledge it gives me when speaking to organisations outside Argyll and Bute about the work going on in our area.

### **6.5 Business Gateway**

One of the key routes for any business in Argyll and Bute to get support is through our Business Gateway team who provide advice, support and run a number of workshops across the area. I attended a workshop in July to allow me to see the service offered to local organisations who attend. The Business Gateway service also sponsors the craft tent for the Best of the West Festival and offers the opportunity to local companies to win a free space within the tent. When I attended in September I spoke to a number of businesses there – including one attendee who had previously won a space from Business Gateway and had returned this year in her own right.

## **7 TOURISM**

### **7.1 Tourism Summit**

Argyll & the Isles Tourism Co-operative (AITC) held their fifth annual Tourism Summit in Helensburgh in March. There was attendance at the event by organisations from all across Argyll as well as a number of national organisations. The programme included:

- Update by Chair of the Economic Forum on the then recently published report
- Presentation by the Lane Agency on AITC's Digital Marketing Strategy
- Presentation by Abellio and Scotrail on their Inspiring Journeys pilot, as well as detail on their planned development of rail mapping
- Visit Scotland presenting on Inclusive Tourism, and how businesses can produce accessibility statements

There were a number of other group discussions, speeches and video clips highlighting work going on right across Argyll and Bute.

## **7.2 National Trust for Scotland**

I have met several times with the West Central General Manager regarding all of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) sites within the boundary of Argyll and Bute, and the Trust's plans for them.

Since the Hill House in Helensburgh was built it has suffered from persistent damp penetration and there are now substantial plans to address this. A project of research and development was implemented in June 2016 by the NTS to establish an appropriate long term maintenance/repair methodology and materials specification for the external fabric of the property. This also provides an opportunity to inform visitors in relation to the conservation works in an innovative and exciting way. Following the research and development project it will be necessary to implement the works proposed. As part of this work the NTS are looking into ways to improve and enhance the visitor facilities and offering at the Hill House.

## **7.3 Hinterland – Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design Launch Event**

The launch of Visit Scotland's Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design took place in Cardross at the former St Peter's Seminary site with the sold-out Hinterland event. Prior to the first evening event commencing, NVA hosted a reception in the Helensburgh Civic Centre which Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture & Tourism, attended and spoke at. As this *Year of...* draws to a close it is worth noting that two Argyll buildings have made it into the final top ten of the best Scottish buildings in the last 100 years - Rothesay Pavilion on Bute and St Conan's Kirk by Loch Awe. Voting is still ongoing:  
<http://www.foa2016.com/scotstyle>

2017's theme is Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology which will again be another great opportunity to showcase the many iconic attractions that Argyll and Bute has to offer such as Iona Abbey, Mount Stuart, Kilmartin museum and Glen, and the village of Luss to name a few.

## **7.4 Food and Drink Event – Love Loch Lomond**

In February, Love Loch Lomond ran a Discover the Taste food & drink event in Helensburgh for businesses from across the whole area they serve. The programme included case studies, workshops and presentations with attendees including Scottish Enterprise and Scotland Food & Drink. A number of local businesses also brought produce with them to raise awareness of their offering.

## **8 EUROPE**

### **8.1 European Funding**

Reports have come to EDI Committee on the funding available through EU streams, and an update report is on the Council agenda today considering the initial implications of the EU Referendum result. In terms of taking forward EU-funded projects the European team are trying to take a "business as usual" approach as much as possible – it is a priority to ensure that we don't lose any funding for any reason.

## 8.2 West of Scotland European Forum

The West of Scotland European Forum (WOSEF) meeting in February included the following agenda items:

- Scottish Structural Fund Programmes, 2014-2020
- Review of NUTS Regions In Scotland
- European Territorial Co-operation Programmes, 2014-2020
- EU Financial Instruments
- Industrial Communities Alliance – Update
- Forum Workplan

The meeting of WOSEF on September 19<sup>th</sup> had the following agenda items:

- EU Referendum – Implications for West of Scotland
- Regional Selective Assistance – Update
- Industrial Communities Alliance – Update
- Forum Accounts and Auditor's Report for 2015/16

Clearly the focus for the most recent meeting was on the implications of the EU referendum result, particularly the short-term issues around funding availability. It was agreed at the meeting to write to both the UK and Scottish governments regarding specific funding concerns. As part of the paper on this item the Institute for Government's briefing on options for the UK's future trade relationships with the EU was included which provided a single page, high-level overview of the options likely to be open to the UK – this is available on their website ([www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk](http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk)).

## 8.3 Twinning Visit – Amberg-Sulzbach

At the start of August I visited the region of Amberg-Sulzbach as part of an official delegation – the first in twenty years (the twinning arrangement has been in place for 49 years). The focus of the twinning trip was Economic Development and I was joined by officers from the Economic Development service and LEADER funding team as well as industry representatives from local businesses covering forestry, farming/food & drink, social enterprise and biotechnology.

Our hosts in Amberg-Sulzbach were incredibly welcoming and thoughtful and ensured that the trip included visits to a wide range of businesses and organisations. These visits included:

- A visit to an organic farm where we saw a range of diversification projects (energy and tourism); this visit also highlighted the benefits of working collaboratively in terms of European funding - a breed of cattle had just recently been saved from extinction for farming in that area in order to support the return of bats to the area with 1million Euros funding providing support including the building of a cattle barn
- A tour of a former farm building had been turned into a local venue for concerts and other cultural events, with catering facilities and a small schnapps distillery
- Visiting a number of heritage tourism venues – such as a former synagogue and former printworks – which had benefited from LEADER funding. One aim of the trip was to allow the LEADER officer on the visit to identify potential co-operation projects as 10% (£400k) of our overall



LEADER funding must be spent on transnational projects

- Presentation at the Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainability, which is in village of Ensdorf. Following the presentation we had a demonstration of the biomass district heating system for the village and visited the local church which is on the Way of St James pilgrimage trail, and is currently undergoing a multi-million euro refurbishment.

In addition there were meetings with both council officers and councillors – formally in the Council headquarters and informally in the town where we were accommodated.

## **9. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

### **Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plans Programme Board**

In March I attended the Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan Programme Board meeting in at SAMS, Dunstaffnage, Oban hosted by Argyll and Bute Council in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) – which included representatives from all Highlands and Islands local authorities. Other organisations that are members of the H&I SIP Programme Board are Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Council Development Industry, University of the Highlands and Islands and Bord na Gaighlig.

The agenda included

- Local Skills Action Plans - Update
- Regional Skills Assessment, Future LMI and Skills Research
- Talent Attraction – Highlands & Islands
- MA Expansion
- Partner updates
- School Leaver Destinations 2014/15 – H&I

It was noticeable in the report on school leaver destinations (prepared by SDS) that young people in Argyll and Bute moving onto FE/HE were significantly less likely to study at a UHI institution than young people from any other authority area within the Highlands & Islands region. This is an issue that has been raised now in a number of ways, including discussion at COHI and formed part of the discussion with the Scottish Funding Council (below).

### **9.1 Argyll & Bute Employability Partnership**

I attended a meeting of the Employability Partnership, which I had previously attended once in my role as Policy Lead for Education, at the start of September. The focus for this meeting was around the expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship programme with a significant number of representatives from Skills Development Scotland in attendance who ran a workshop-style session on this topic. Brief updates were provided by other attendees, including Argyll College, and there was a more substantial update/discussion on the Argyll and Bute Developing the Young Workforce group. There was obviously discussion around the current difficulty in delivering employability support across Argyll and Bute and the potentially negative impact that could have for some local residents. The Council Leader has written to the Scottish Government to raise our concerns regarding Argyll Training's future.

## 9.2 Scottish Funding Council

In September I met with the Scottish Funding Council, along with the acting Executive Director of Community Services, the Economic Growth Manager and the Principal of Argyll College. A number of concerns over funding for Argyll and Bute in general, and specific issues in relation to school support in the Helensburgh & Lomond area, were discussed as well as discussion around the development of new Outcome Agreements and UHI's status as a regional strategic body.

The meeting was very positive and a further meeting is arranged for later in the year – the opportunity to build this relationship is very welcome.

## 10. COSLA

Since my last meeting I have attended two meetings of the Development, Economy & Sustainability Executive Group. I have also been the Liberal Democrat appointee to the Communications workstream that is part of COSLA's strategic review.

### 10.1 Development, Economy & Sustainability Executive Group

All items taken in public session are available from the COSLA website, using this link: <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/events/previous>.

The meeting on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February** featured a very substantial agenda covering the following:-

#### *Private session items:-*

DES Executive Group Business Planning Paper, Inclusive Local Economies Discussion Paper, Unconventional Onshore Oil & Gas, 3<sup>rd</sup> Report on Proposals and Policies, The Crown Estate, National Tourism Development Framework & Themed Years, Broadband and Digital, Refresh of the Agenda for Cities, National Entitlement Card – Concessionary Travel Companions, Household Recycling Charter and Code of Practice.

#### *Public Session Items:-*

Historic Environment Scotland Corporate Plan, Land Use Strategy 2, Hydro Benefit Replacement Scheme and Common Tariff Obligation. Review of the Office and Functions of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner

#### *Items for Noting*

Zero Waste Update, Flood Risk and River Basin Management update, Economic Development, Regeneration and Tourism update, Climate Change Update, Planning Update, Roads and Transport Update, European Policy Update

The meeting on **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June** included the following items:-

#### *Private Session Items:-*

DES Executive Group Business Planning Paper, Inclusive Local Economies Discussion, Economic Outcomes Programme Update, Business Gateway Review, Unconventional Onshore Oil & Gas, Climate Change and RPP3, Broadband and Digital, National Entitlement Card – Concessionary Travel Companions ATCO paper, Planning Review, World Towns Summit, Land Reform proposals:

(Development Land Tax, Community Right to Buy), Future of EU Cohesion

*Public Session Items*

Draft Advice on Net Economic Benefit and Planning, Seatbelts on School Transport

*Items for Noting*

Zero Waste Update, Economic Development, Regeneration and Tourism update, Climate Change Update, Roads and Transport Update, European Policy Update

At the meeting in May the item on Inclusive Local Economies saw representatives from the Federation of Small Businesses, Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum and Scottish Council for Development and Industry attend to participate in the discussion. The discussion covered a wide range of topics including addressing deprivation, approaches to major infrastructure projects and how to best support town centre development. It was agreed that a further workshop session with those in attendance might be helpful.

The meeting on **Friday 16th September** considered the following:-

*Private session items:-*

Enterprise and Skills Review, EU Funds Post Referendum, Independent Review of Planning, Road Maintenance and Collaboration, Broadband and Digital Governance and Implementation of Household Recycling Charter.

*Public Session Items:-*

Scotland's Digital Participation Charter, Accessible Transport Strategy, Crown Estate Interim Arrangements Consultation, International Action on Climate Change (International Sustainability and Climate Agreements and Covenant of Mayors), National Tourism Development Framework

## **11. STRATEGIC IT**

### **Mobile Telephony**

The Council met with EE on 10 February to discuss their involvement in providing a new mobile based communications system for the emergency services. It is vital that a high level of connectivity is maintained for emergency service use following the closure of the current Airwave system. It was encouraging to hear that a number of new masts are planned across Argyll and also that many of these will be able to offer commercial coverage.

It is expected that the first sites may be delivered during 2016 however the majority are expected to be delivered during the first half of 2017. In total, 55 new macro sites are planned and 18 small sites. It is hoped that the majority of new sites will be connected into the fibre network and HIE are working alongside EE to try to deliver these connections however in some cases a satellite connection will be required, it is not expected that sites with a satellite connection will be able to offer a commercial service due to bandwidth constraints. It is understood that the network will provide coverage to inshore waters and also a ground to air service.

Officers and I will be meeting with the Home Office regarding the Emergency

Services Network in September.

## **12. OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **World Towns Leadership Summit, Edinburgh**

In June I attended the World Towns Leadership Summit, organised by Scotland's Towns Partnership. Speakers included the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Angela Constance MSP and Michael H Shuman – an economist, author and entrepreneur, who is a globally recognised expert on community economics. It was notable that sites in Argyll and Bute were mentioned positively in several of the speeches, such as the Cabinet Secretary's and the presentation by COSLA.

Despite the title of the event, some of the focus seemed to be on towns being equivalent to neighbourhoods within cities. As a result some of the presentations were not referencing towns on the scale that we understand them within Argyll and Bute. These ranged from encouraging people to spend more time outdoors in Copenhagen (1000 people a month move to Copenhagen), to transforming Times Square, New York, for visitors and locals. A particularly relevant speaker was Professor Cathy Parker, Manchester Metropolitan University, who spoke of how towns could reinvent their identity as a means of attracting new business. The university has also identified factors that can influence success in towns and this is available on the website: <http://www.placemanagement.org/research/>

There was also time set aside for networking, and the Marketing Officer and I spoke to a wide range of organisations. The tourism strengths of Argyll and Bute were a focus, as well as the work we have undertaken and are currently undertaking in terms of town centre regeneration.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

This report highlights mainly external meetings and events, with the aim of providing an overview of actions undertaken in the period covered by the report. However, this is not an exhaustive list of all activity.

## **Councillor Aileen Morton**

Policy Lead for Sustainable Economic Growth (Economic Development, European Affairs, Renewables and Strategic Tourism)

19<sup>th</sup> September 2016