
Summary of work of Argyll Islands Taskforce

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 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. This was against a background of falling populations on many of our islands and awareness of the Our Islands Our Future campaign. At its meeting on 20 March 2017, the Argyll Islands Taskforce noted the work undertaken and recommended a continued focus on the work commenced by the Argyll Islands Taskforce by the new Council in May 2017.
- 1.2 Following the establishment of the Taskforce in January 2014, a list of 12 actions to be undertaken by the Taskforce was agreed by Council. Details of these and the progress made are included in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The Taskforce met with The Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council and a number of priorities were identified and agreed. These priorities, and the action undertaken within Argyll in relation to these, are detailed within Appendix 2.
- 1.4 The Council has also agreed a vision for the islands and hosted the Island Connections event.
- 1.5 The existence of the Argyll Islands Taskforce has coincided with Scottish Government work focused on islands. Argyll and Bute Council is now a member of the Scottish Government's Islands Strategic Group (a successor to the Island Area Ministerial Working Group) and is able to engage directly with the Scottish Government while it prepares the forthcoming Islands Bill. There is an ongoing work stream associated with the Islands Strategic Group and it is anticipated that this will continue with a focus on the Islands Bill and other key issues which link closely to the priorities identified by the Argyll Islands Taskforce.

Recommendations

- 1.6 It is recommended that Council
1. Notes the work undertaken by the Argyll Islands Taskforce and the progress made in relation to island issues since 2014; and

2. Considers the request from the Argyll Islands Taskforce for a continued focus by the Council on the work commenced by the Argyll Islands Taskforce.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 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. This was against a background of falling populations on many of our islands and awareness that Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles Councils were promoting their Our Islands Our Future campaign.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 20 March 2017, the Argyll Islands Taskforce noted the work undertaken, which is summarised in this report, and agreed that a report be submitted to Council on 20 April 2017 outlining the work undertaken by the Argyll Islands Taskforce and the progress made in relation to island issues since 2014. They also recommended a continued focus on the work commenced by the Argyll Islands Taskforce by the new Council in May 2017.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Council
1. Notes the work undertaken by the Argyll Islands Taskforce and the progress made in relation to island issues since 2014; and
 2. Considers the request from the Argyll Islands Taskforce for a continued focus by the Council on the work commenced by the Argyll Islands Taskforce.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Following the establishment of the Taskforce in January 2014, a list of 12 actions to be undertaken by the Taskforce was agreed at the Council meeting of 27 June 2014. Details of these and the progress made are included in Appendix 1. Additional items have been added when issues have been raised these are also included on the action list at Appendix 1.

- 4.2 In March and May 2015, the Taskforce has met with The Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council respectively and agreed to work in partnership with both Councils to seek to address those issues which affect island and very isolated rural communities across the three local authority areas. As a group the three authorities have a total of 40 inhabited islands clustered around the west coast of Scotland as well as a number of very isolated rural communities which often experience some of the same difficulties and issues as island communities.
- 4.3 As a result of the discussions with North Ayrshire Council and The Highland Council a number of priorities were identified and agreed. These priorities, and the action undertaken within Argyll in relation to these, are detailed within Appendix 2.
- 4.4 In June 2015, Council approved the Argyll Islands Taskforce vision for the islands:
It is recognised that our islands play a vital role in delivering economic growth across our area. We want to see our islands prosper and grow, providing education and employment for our young people, supporting and growing our businesses and communities and benefiting from the communication and transportation infrastructure and services necessary for them to be sustainable and prosper.
- 4.5 The Argyll Islands Taskforce also expressed the desire to have an event focused on island communities. Island Connections took place on 20 October 2016 and was attended by approximately 70 delegates and speakers. A separate report on the event was presented to the Argyll Islands Taskforce meeting on 20 March 2017 and can be found at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=554&MId=7409&Ver=4>.
- 4.6 The existence of the Argyll Islands Taskforce has coincided with Scottish Government work focused on islands including the publication of the Scottish Governments Empowering Scotland's Island Communities (the Islands Prospectus) in June 2014 and Consultation on Provisions for a Future Islands Bill in September 2015. The consultation document included amongst other issues proposals for island proofing and a National Islands Plan. If, as would seem to be indicated, island proofing becomes a requirement within Scottish legislation then this will ensure a continued focus on island issues in relation to the decision making process of relevant parts of the public sector. An Argyll and Bute Council response to the consultation document was submitted to the Scottish Government following approval by Council on 26 November 2015.
- 4.7 The Argyll Islands Taskforce, in partnership with North Ayrshire and The Highland Councils, has sought a closer working relationship with both the Scottish and UK Governments so that representatives of the west of Scotland

islands are able to contribute to the discussions at this strategic level. Argyll and Bute Council is now a member of the Scottish Government's Islands Strategic Group (a successor to the Island Area Ministerial Working Group) and is able to engage directly with the Scottish Government while it prepares the forthcoming Islands Bill.

- 4.8 The Leader and Chief Executive sit on this group, with the Provost acting as depute, and are able to put forward an Argyll and Bute perspective to discussions. The last meeting of the Islands Strategic Group, attended by the Provost and Chief Executive, took place in December 2016 in Rothesay and the next meeting is planned for the end of March 2017. There is an ongoing work stream associated with the Islands Strategic Group and it is anticipated that this will continue with a focus on the Islands Bill and other key issues which link closely to the priorities identified by the Argyll Islands Taskforce.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Council are asked to consider how best to continue the focus on island issues across Argyll and Bute and whether any additional arrangements are required in addition to the ongoing commitment to the Islands Strategic Group.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – lobbying for positive policy and resource support for our islands fits with the objectives of the Single Outcome Agreement, Economic Development Action Plan and Local Development Plan which seek to deliver sustainable island communities.
- 6.2 Financial – Island Connections was delivered within a budget of £1,700 in addition to staff resources.
- 6.3 Legal – none.
- 6.4 HR – staff resource from the Economic Development and Strategic Transportation Service as well other Council services and Community Planning Partners have supported the Taskforce. Depending on the decision of the Council, further staff resources may need to be identified.
- 6.5 Equalities – none.
- 6.6 Risk – To do nothing could have left our island communities at a disadvantage as they would sit outwith the Our Islands Our Future initiative and potentially any benefit that comes from this campaign. The work of the Argyll Islands Taskforce has helped to shape a response to the consultation on the Future Islands Bill and secure a place on the Islands Strategic Group, it is anticipated that work

with this group will continue and will provide an opportunity to ensure that Argyll and Bute's islands are considered at this strategic level.

6.7 Customer Service – none.

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services Pippa Milne
Policy Lead - Councillor Scoullar

28/03/17

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Argyll Islands Taskforce Action Sheet

Appendix 2 - Priorities and Actions

APPENDIX 1: Argyll Islands Task Force Action Sheet

Ref	Action	Lead Person	Time Frame	Additional Information
1	Undertake further analysis of the population census data to determine the demographics relating to each island and what impact that this is having on the islands in regard to their sustainability	Chris Carr	30/09/14	Population statistics report submitted 23/03/15 - https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s97566/Islands%20Task%20Force_Argyll%20and%20Bute_islands%20information_23032015.pdf . COMPLETE
2	Gather further information relating to those islands that were not directly part of the SOA consultation to help to fully understand all the issues affecting the future of the Argyll islands. Once these issues have been fully identified they will be used as a basis for discussions with the Scottish and UK governments.	Fergus Murray	Ongoing	Matrix of issues prepared and to be kept up to date, all members of taskforce to advise as issues change or new issues arise. ONGOING
3	Review the Rural Scotland in Focus 2014 report and feed in any relevant information to the island analysis.	Fergus Murray	Anticipated within 6 weeks	Report to 13/11/2014 - Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee - https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s93501/EDI%2013%20Nov%20Rural%20Scotland%20in%20Focus%202014%20report.pdf COMPLETE
4	Develop a position/vision statement for Argyll Islands which reflects the important role that our islands play in our economic future and in the delivery of the SOA objectives of economic success and population growth. The position/vision statement will be informed by the current analysis work and will be used to drive forward key actions and to lobby for the Argyll islands.	Audrey Martin	By next taskforce meeting	Vision agreed by Argyll Islands Taskforce. Approved by Council in 25 June 2015. COMPLETE
5	Give further consideration to the "island proofing" of the SOA and examine all new policies and legislation (EU, UK and Scottish Government) coming forward that have a relevance to and could have an impact on the Argyll islands. Consider the development of a template to inform the "island proofing" and	Audrey Martin	Awaiting Bill	Island proofing is included in the consultation on a future Islands Bill and is expected to be included within the forthcoming Bill. The analysis of responses was published prior to the election and is available from https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/islands-team/islands-bill-consultation .

Ref	Action	Lead Person	Time Frame	Additional Information
	use this in the development of all new council policy.			<p>The Bill is expected to be published during this parliamentary session and it is therefore proposed to review the Scottish Government Island Proofing mechanisms before developing any specific proposals for Argyll and Bute.</p> <p>AWAITING PUBLICATION OF THE ISLANDS BILL</p>
6	Write to the Leader of the Three Islands Council, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland and invite them to a future meeting of the Group.	Fergus Murray	Following completion of item 8	Letters sent to three island councils together with letters to the MSP and MP
7	Maintain a watching brief in regard to the Three Islands Partnership. The Our Islands: Our Future campaign has the potential to change the powers and responsibilities for those islands within the Shetland, Orkneys and Western Isles.	Audrey Martin	Ongoing	<p>Report tabled on Empowering Scotland's Island Communities – a Scottish Government response to the Our Islands Our Future campaign and ministerial working groups at meeting in August 2014.</p> <p>The Taskforce sought to engage with the Scottish and UK government in these discussions.</p> <p>Council approved response to the Consultation on Provisions for a Future Islands Bill in November 2015.</p> <p>Argyll and Bute Council invited to join Islands Strategic Group in August 2016. Meetings from September 2016.</p> <p>ONGOING</p>
8	Meet with Highland Council and North Ayrshire to ascertain if there is an appetite to work collaboratively on areas of common interest.	Fergus Murray	Not later than 07/10/14, preferably before	<p>Meetings with North Ayrshire and The Highland Councils have taken place and priority issues agreed.</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>
9	Work with Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) and other partners involved with our islands to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for the Argyll islands from projects such as the Smilegov project The objective of the Smilegov project is to	Audrey Martin	Ongoing	<p>ABC supported Smilegov which has a focus on renewables.</p> <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>SIF made a presentation at November 2015 Taskforce.</p> <p>At the request of the SIF, Councillor Scoullar has written to</p>

Ref	Action	Lead Person	Time Frame	Additional Information
	effectively strengthen capacity to support development and implementation of high quality island sustainable action plans and bankable energy projects. www.sustainableislands.eu			support their request for funding from the Scottish Government. ONGOING
10	Maintain a watching brief in regard to new legislation and policy and future EU funding that may have an impact on Argyll islands and make representation on any issues.	Fergus Murray	Ongoing	EDST continue to consider the island perspective. ONGOING
11	Write to and meet with relevant Scottish and UK Minister(s) to lobby for the Argyll Islands. It is imperative that the specific issues affecting our islands and their resulting needs and actions are raised with the Scottish and UK Government and the necessary support and commitment secured.	Councillor Scoular	Ongoing	Letter sent to then Island Minister Derek MacKay updating him on the Argyll Islands Taskforce and inviting him to a meeting. Meeting with Leader and Chief Exec undertaken. Council representatives met with the UK Scottish Minister. Chief Executive and Leader invited to join Strategic Islands Taskforce in August 2016. ONGOING
12	Work with and support Argyll island communities in the development of their community development plans and in their delivery	Audrey Martin with the support of CPP and HIE	Ongoing	Argyll and Bute Council staff continue to work with the Tiree community on charrette and growth plan. SURF has carried out assessment work on Bute. Charrette focused on Rothesay complete. The Community Development Team continues to assist communities, Community Action Planning Training delivered in July 2015. <hr/> ONGOING
13	Issue arisen regarding out of hours doctor cover on Mull	Councillor Devon, Councillor Scoullar and Fergus Murray	Ongoing	This is an issue raised in August 2014. Letter sent to NHS Highland, August 2014. COMPLETE

Ref	Action	Lead Person	Time Frame	Additional Information
14	NHS and Argyll and Bute Council to work together to investigate opportunity for job portal	Fergus Murray		This is an issue raised in May 2016. Looking to understand work being progressed by CPP on recruitment. ONGOING

Appendix 2 - PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED

At its meeting on 25 June 2015, Council noted the following priorities (1-10) which were agreed with North Ayrshire Council and The Highland Council. The Argyll Islands Taskforce also raised concerns regarding ambulance service provision and this has been added as an 11th priority. The table below sets out initial actions required to progress these priorities and the decisions of the Argyll Islands Taskforce where priorities have been considered.

To progress the work streams shown below will require support from across the Council, we have not yet determined the available resource within teams to support this activity and should the Taskforce support this approach we will need to obtain agreement from the relevant services and Policy Leads.

The blue highlighted rows indicate the priorities and the white rows are the tasks identified to help to progress the issue. The tasks set out below may evolve as more specific actions associated with moving forward each issue are identified. Details in italics indicate Argyll Islands Taskforce decisions following the reports to the meeting.

Ref	Priority	SOA Outcome	Taskforce Meeting
1	To ensure that the future disbursement of powers and income, including income from The Crown Estate, to our island communities is equal to the three island communities.	1	TBC
1a	Maintain a watching brief on the interim and long term arrangements in relation to the Crown Estate in Scotland		
Action	<i>Argyll and Bute Council response to interim arrangements for Crown Estate submitted August 2016; Argyll Islands Taskforce members offered the opportunity to inform response. Argyll and Bute Council response to long-term arrangements for Crown Estate being prepared as this update is being prepared; Argyll Islands Taskforce members offered the opportunity to inform response.</i>		
2	To obtain Scottish Government capital investment in key island infrastructure such as ports, ferry terminals and vessels in order to facilitate the needs of RET and secure the future economic prosperity of our island and isolated rural communities.	2	Aug 2016
2a	Identify island infrastructure currently available		
2b	Highlight any current or likely future issues		
2c	Invite SG ferries unit to speak to Taskforce		
2d	Determine strategy for seeking capital investment where required		
Action	<i>Scottish Government Ferries Unit gave update to Island Connections in October 2016 where issues were raised; this followed a presentation to the Taskforce in November 2015. The Head of Roads and Amenity Services gave a verbal update to members of the Taskforce in August 2016. Minutes: The Head of Roads and Amenity Services had been invited to attend and give a verbal update on Island Infrastructure. The group were given a broad overview on the responsibilities of Roads and Amenity Services on islands in respect of roads, piers, harbours, cemeteries, toilets and landfill sites. The Group were also informed about an officers group consisting of the Council, Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac which had initially been set up to deal with the effects of RET and which</i>		

	<p><i>now looked at strategic issues. Discussion took place around the possibility of inviting Transport Scotland to attend a meeting of the Task Force to have a discussion on ferries and to respond to members questions.</i></p> <p>Decision <i>The Group –</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Noted the verbal update given by the Head of Roads and Amenity Services on Islands Infrastructure.</i> 2. <i>Agreed to invite Transport Scotland Ferries Unit to attend a future meeting of the Group.</i> 		
3	To secure the integration of essential transport networks including ferries, buses, air and rail connections to minimise journey times to and from our island and isolated rural communities.	2	Aug 2016
3a	Identify public transport routes and how they integrate		
3b	Highlight any current or likely future issues		
2c	Invite public transport providers, SPT and HI Trans (as appropriate) to speak to Taskforce		
2d	Determine strategy for lobbying for changes where required		
Action	<i>Transport was an issue considered through the Island Connections event in October 2016.</i>		
4	To lobby for parity for our island and isolated rural communities with regard to mail order delivery surcharges.	2	Nov 2016
4a	Invite The Highland Council Trading Standards Officers to discuss their postage charge work		
4b	Consider similar action within Argyll and Bute		
4c	Determine strategy for additional lobbying if required		
5	To lobby for maximum investment in our digital connectivity for our island and isolated rural communities, including superfast broadband, modern mobile phone signal and exploring the possibility of opening up public digital networks to the wider community.	2	Nov 2016
5a	Invite HIE and CBS to taskforce meeting		
5b	Identify opportunities to open up public digital networks		
5c	Determine strategy for lobbying for additional investment		
Action	<i>Highlands and Islands Enterprise gave an update to Island Connections in October 2016 covering the rollout of superfast broadband and mobile upgrades, issues were raised.</i>		
6	To lobby for the removal of water and waste water constraints from our island and isolated rural communities to facilitate economic growth.	2	May 2017
6a	Invite Scottish Water to taskforce meeting		
6b	Determine strategy for lobbying for additional investment		
7	To lobby for innovative approaches to recruit and retain adequate GP coverage for our island and isolated rural communities.	5	May 2016
7a	Invite NHS Highland to taskforce meeting		
7b	Determine strategy for lobbying for alternative approaches		
Action	<i>A report from the Health & Social Care Partnership was provided to the Taskforce in May 2016.</i> Minutes: <i>The Short Life Working Group considered a report updating them on actions</i>		

	<p><i>undertaken to put in place a sustainable, high quality and affordable health and care service for the most remote rural and island communities in Scotland.</i></p> <p>Decision <i>The Short Life Working Group -</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Noted the actions being undertaken as detailed within the submitted report.</i> 2. <i>Thanked Stephen Whiston for his most informative report.</i> 		
8	To seek innovative and cost effective affordable housing for our island and isolated rural communities.	2	Feb 2017
8a	Identify island housing needs		
8b	Invite housing associations to taskforce meeting		
8c	Determine strategy for lobbying for affordable housing to meet identified need		
Action	<i>Argyll and Bute Housing Policy Lead gave an update to Island Connections in October 2016 and reported on plans to build 122 affordable island homes by 2021.</i>		
9	To address fuel poverty for our island and isolated communities.	4	Feb 2017
9a	Invite Housing Services/ALI Energy to taskforce to talk about HEEPS:ABS		
9b	Determine strategy for lobbying for additional support if required		
10	To work with the three island authorities to identify common economic challenges across our islands and opportunities for joint working to address these.	1	May 2017
10a	Confirm whether COHI or other organisation have undertaken similar study		
10b	Invite Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles to meeting of taskforce to discuss economic challenges		
10c	Determine strategy for joint working/lobbying		
Action	<i>Argyll and Bute Council is participating in the Islands Strategic Group alongside the other island councils, the group is focusing on the forthcoming Islands Bill.</i>		
11	To lobby for adequate ambulance Service and Patient Transport arrangements for our island and isolated rural communities.	1	Aug 2016
11a	Invite Scottish Ambulance Service to taskforce meeting		
11b	Determine strategy for lobbying for additional services if required		
Action	<p><i>The Scottish Ambulance Service attended the Argyll Islands Taskforce in August 2016.</i></p> <p>Minutes: <i>The Scottish Ambulance Service had been invited to attend the meeting as one of the priorities of the Group were to better understand the service provision of the NHS, Ambulance Services and Patient Transport Services on the islands. The Ambulance Service were invited to outline their provision on the islands and to raise any issues they had in connection with service provision.</i></p> <p><i>The Ambulance Service gave the Group an overview of how their service worked generally and how calls were handled and categorised. They advised that hospital transfers had more than doubled in the previous five years which had put a strain on service provision to rural areas. They summarised the different methods of transporting island patients to hospital which included the use of ambulances, island vehicles and helicopters; and the use of MOD and Coastguard facilities. They advised that the ambulance service was divided into 2 services, emergency response and patient transport. They outlined challenges with inappropriate use of the patient transport service and actions being taken to develop community first responders to ensure the Ambulance service could meet their primary role as an emergency response.</i></p> <p><i>The Group were advised about a Hub within the Royal Alexandria Hospital in Paisley</i></p>		

which was staffed by Scottish Ambulance Service Staff and funded by the NHS. The Hub was used to assist in the transport of patients discharged from hospital to free up beds and to assist in meeting turnaround times within the A&E Department. There was discussion around the benefit of a service like this in Mid Argyll and how it would require input from all partner agencies.

Councillor Horn left the meeting during consideration of this item and did not return.

Decision

The Group –

- 1. Noted the Service provision by the Ambulance Service to island communities and the issues faced by the Service.*
- 2. Agreed that a letter should be written to the Health Minister supporting the development of proposals for the establishment of a transportation Hub in Mid Argyll, similar to that of the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley; to assist in improving patient transport arrangements for island and remote communities in Argyll and Bute.*
- 3. Agreed that the letter be copied to the Community Planning Partnership for comment.*
- 4. Thanked the Ambulance Service for their attendance at the meeting.*