
Area CPG Focus – Bute and Cowal

The Bute and Cowal CPG discussed a number of issues relating to infrastructure and economic development at its meeting in April, and these are outlined below for the benefit of the Management Committee's consideration.

There are concerns about the process for infrastructure planning within communities, starting with house building.

There are several developments being planned / built in the Bute and Cowal area. The raison d'être would seem to be reversing the population decline within the area. There is a view that adding to a population in isolation could present more problems than it solves and that discussions should precede any planning application.

There are many agencies who should be involved ie GP services, Health & Social Care, police, schools and hospitals. If new units mean an increase in population, would the strain on the above services be too much. If there is no new employment why would people want to move to the area. The community is not asked their views on whether they feel expansion is necessary or good for the area.

A second, but linked, question is in regards to the number of second homes in the area (which it is understood is also a problem in other parts of Argyll and Bute). The Management Committee is asked to consider what steps can be taken as a partnership to look to reduce the number of homes which are occupied only occasional or infrequently, resulting in no economic or social input into local communities by increasing number of properties.

The final point in regards the need for housing provision to be sufficient in quantity, quality and location relates to points made by multiple partners at the Bute and Cowal CPG about the difficulties organisations have in attracting staff to come to work in the area, and particularly to persuade staff to relocate into the area. If the aim of the CPP is to develop our economy by growing our population it is essential that partners are able to attract key quality staff to the area, and wherever possible for those incoming workers to be able to live in and contribute to our local communities. A number of partners in Bute and Cowal have highlighted the difficulties they face in attracting staff to jobs, and to the area, and the reasons often given are lack of availability of affordable quality accommodation, particularly for

young families. The points raised in this report, about the need for careful and considerate planning, and the high numbers of second homes, both relate directly to those recruitment difficulties which are increasingly being experienced by partners.

Key Points for Consideration

- Private landlords advertise their accommodation on various agencies and social media sites but their tenants then want to move to association housing. There is no interaction with services as the point of entry is the private sector. However, the impact can be felt by public services.
- Unemployment in Dunoon and Rothesay is higher than national average, should attracting new jobs not work hand in hand with new developments?
- Can the health service cope with an increased demand? There is evidence in Dunoon that it cannot.
- The high numbers of second homes in the area reduces the availability of housing options to incoming key workers.

Key Points for Discussion

- Could Community Planning be the catalyst for discussion on the building of new developments involving all impacted agencies?
- Can the CPP Management Committee develop strategies to deal with increasing numbers of second and holiday homes across the area?
- Due to the importance, could this topic be tackled through a subcommittee which reports at every meeting on progress, gains/risks, action planning with milestones and feedback against the plan.?

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