

Scottish Government Island Liaison Directors – A Pilot in Argyll and Bute

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The current national discussion on Scottish islands has resulted in a focus not seen before and presents an opportunity for a natural next step for the Scottish civil service to extend their network of liaison directors to our islands with an outcome that national plans and strategies are better informed by our islands.
- 1.2 This report puts forward a proposal for an eighteen month pilot in Argyll and Bute and the civil service should give consideration to using existing and well established local government structures to take this forward. If successful, further consideration could be given to the model being rolled out across all island authorities.
- 1.3 Members are asked to agree to the following recommendations;
 - 1.3.1 To agree with the principles of this paper for a pilot for Scottish Government Island Liaison Directors in Argyll and Bute.
 - 1.3.2 To delegate to the Chief Executive permission to approach the Scottish Government's Permanent Secretary to take forward this pilot including the establishment of a steering group.
 - 1.3.3 Agree for the pilot to run for eighteen months followed by an evaluation.
- 1.4 It is assumed that costs will be met from existing resources.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The current national discussion on Scottish islands has resulted in a focus not seen before and presents an opportunity for a natural next step for the Scottish civil service to extend their network of liaison directors to our islands with an outcome that national plans and strategies are better informed by our islands.
- 2.2 This report puts forward a proposal for an eighteen month pilot in Argyll and Bute and the civil service should give consideration to using existing and well established local government structures to take this forward. If successful, further consideration could be given to the model being rolled out across all island authorities.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to agree with the principles of this paper for a pilot for Scottish Government Island Liaison Directors in Argyll and Bute.
- 3.2 Members agree to delegate to the Chief Executive permission to approach the Scottish Government's Permanent Secretary to take forward this pilot including the establishment of a steering group.
- 3.3 Members agree for the pilot to run for eighteen months followed by an evaluation.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Since 2014 there has been a new national conversation regarding Scottish islands and key activities are listed follows.
- 4.2 Our Islands our Future – following the Independence Referendum in 2014, the 3 island authorities launched a campaign for improved

autonomy and issued a joint statement seeking delegated powers in relation to the following;

- 1) Control of the sea bed around the islands, allowing revenues currently paid to the Crown Estate to be channeled into local needs.
- 2) New grid connections to the Scottish mainland to allow world class wave, tidal and wind energy resources to generate maximum benefits for the islands.
- 3) New fiscal arrangements to allow the islands to benefit more directly from the harvesting of local resources, including renewable energy and fisheries.
- 4) Clear recognition of the status of the three island groups in the new Scottish Constitutional Settlement and within the European Governance Framework.

4.3 In August 2016, a new Islands Strategic Group was established to build on the work of the previous Islands Areas Ministerial Working Group and the Empowering Scotland's Island Communities prospectus. The remit of the group is to consider strategic issues affecting the inhabited island communities of Scotland and to ensure greater involvement of the relevant Councils in helping identify and design solutions to the unique needs and challenges these communities face.

4.4 The Islands (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 9 June 2017 and introduces a number of measures to underpin the Government's objective of ensuring that there is a sustained focus across Government and the public sector to meet the needs of island communities both now and in the future. Following the submission of oral and written evidence the Bill is intended to move to stage 2 in April 2018 and stage 3 in May 2018. Key provisions include the following.

- 1) The development of a National Islands Plan, which would set out the main objectives and strategy of the Scottish Government in relation to improving outcomes for island communities. Rather than set out a proposed plan, the Bill provides that, following further consultation, the first National Island Plan would be laid before the Scottish Parliament within 12 months from the date on which the Act comes into force.
- 2) The introduction of duties, placed upon Scottish Ministers and other relevant public bodies, to have regard to island communities in exercising their functions. Under the Bill public

authorities, when introducing a new or revised policy, strategy or service, would have to prepare an island communities impact assessment when the impact on island communities is likely to be different from the effect on other communities.

- 3) The protection of the Scottish parliamentary constituency boundary of Na h-Eileanan an Siar from variation.
 - 4) The allowance of exceptions, for inhabited islands, to the standard three or four member ward rule for local government electoral wards.
 - 5) The introduction of a regulation-making power for the Scottish Government to create a licensing scheme, following a request from a local authority, in relation to works in or under the sea in the coastal waters surrounding islands for up to 12 nautical miles.
- 4.5 The Islands Transport Forum facilitated by Transport Scotland and chaired by the Minister for Transport and Islands to consider strategic transport issues affecting the islands and to ensure a greater involvement of the Islands Councils and those other local authorities with inhabited islands in the design, commissioning and where appropriate properly funded delivery of Transport Services to, from and within the Islands.
- 4.6 Locally for Argyll and Bute, the Council reformed the Argyll Islands Strategic Group to take forward island related initiatives and to work together with other island councils. Argyll and Bute's 'Island Connections' conference was held October 2016.
- 4.7 Never before has there been such a national focus on our islands and there is a new suggestion of the Scottish Government appointing Liaison Directors for our islands.
- 4.8 Argyll and Bute has more inhabited islands than any other Scottish Local Authority. According to the 2001 Census, 23 islands within Argyll and Bute were inhabited. This compares to 14 islands in Eilean Siar, 19 inhabited Orkney Islands, and 16 inhabited Shetland Islands. Highland has 15 inhabited islands. Approximately 17.4% of Argyll and Bute's population live on islands (Census 2001).
- 4.9 Currently there are Liaison Directors (LDs) appointed for each of the Local Authorities. LDs are senior civil servants within the Scottish

Government who act not only as a liaison between the respective organisations but also tend to take an active part in the area's Community Planning Partnership.

- 4.10 In light of the national conversation regarding our islands, there is a suggestion that the LDs will support the Scottish Government in developing relationship with island communities and more importantly to improve their understanding of the uniqueness of these islands.

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- 4.12 As mentioned above, Argyll and Bute has more inhabited islands than any other Scottish Local Authority and this brief sets out a suggested approach to support the Scottish Government in this respect with a pilot and suggests that 3 LDs are appointed with one for each of the following island groups;

1. Bute (Bute and Cowal)
2. Lorn Isles (Oban, Lorn and the Isles)
3. Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands)

- 4.13 The grouping is fully aligned with the Council's current sub regional administrative arrangements including Community Planning Groups (CPGs).

4.14 Approach

- 4.15 If this approach is taken forward, further consideration will be given to how these LDs engage with the islands and it is assumed that existing governance structures will be used. The role of LDs will require clarification and ensure that as public sector agents, their activity provides added value and/or is complementary to existing activity.

- 4.16 It is assumed that the approach will be fully aligned with the localism agenda including community led action planning. Many of our communities either have an up to date community action plan or are in the process of updating plans. Where no up to date plan is available, all encouragement will continue be given to communities to use the Council's [Community Led Action Planning Toolkit](#) (or other tool kit) to create a relevant plan.

- 4.17 Whilst the stated desire of communities will influence strategic investments, community-led action planning involves the community

leading the actions that are detailed in the plan. In the model of East Ayrshire's 'Vibrant Communities', it is assumed at the outset that there are no 'bags of cash' readily available for new initiatives.

- 4.18 Where agreed priorities are out with the control of community groups, these matters can be escalated via the Community Planning Groups who can in turn subsequently escalate to the Community Planning Partnership.
- 4.19 Where there are matters out with local government control (i.e. digital connectivity, and elements of infrastructure and transportation), there is an opportunity for Island Liaison Directors to capture these matters for the benefit of the dedicated Argyll and Bute LD to inform and influence future national plans and strategies.
- 4.20 It is further proposed that a steering group is established to take forward an eighteen month pilot thereafter subject to an evaluation and consideration to a revised model rolled out across all island authorities.
- 4.21 It is recommended that to develop this further that the next steps are as follows;
 - 1) Agree brief with Scottish Civil Service and establish informal steering group.
 - 2) Agree number of Island Liaison Directors and area coverage within Argyll and Bute
 - 3) The steering group to scope the purpose, role and governance/ reporting arrangements of Island Liaison Directors. Consideration will include relationship with Community Planning Groups and local authority community development officers.
 - 4) The pilot will run for eighteen months followed by an evaluation and consideration to rolling out a revised model to other island authorities.
- 4.22 **Risks**
- 4.23 This initiative can only be viewed as a progressive step and one key risk is managing island community expectations. It is critically important that the expected outcomes are agreed and clearly articulated. Failure to do so may have a disproportionate adverse

negative impact on relations between island communities and central and local government and this can be easily avoided via clear messages and suitable communication plans.

4.24 It is assumed that costs will be met from existing resources.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The national discussion on Scottish islands has resulted in a focus not seen before and presents an opportunity for a natural next step for the Scottish civil service to extend their network of liaison directors to our islands with an outcome that national plans and strategies are better informed by our islands.

5.2 This report puts forward a proposal for an eighteen month pilot in Argyll and Bute and the civil service should give consideration to using existing and well established local government structures to take this forward. If successful, further consideration could be given to the model being rolled out across all island authorities.

5.3 It is assumed that costs will be met from existing resources and that risks can be mitigated.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy; this paper sets out a minor policy proposal for the consideration of the Scottish Civil Service.
- 6.2 Financial; costs to be met from existing resources and predominantly will be officer time.
- 6.3 Legal; none
- 6.4 HR; none
- 6.5 Equalities; none
- 6.6 Risk; reputation of public sector at risk if expectations are not managed.
- 6.7 Customer Service; none.

Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council; Cleland Sneddon

Policy Lead for Islands Councillor Robin Currie

Date of Report 05 December 2017

For further information contact: Stuart Green

Appendix 1 Argyll and Bute Islands; List and Population

Appendix 2 Island Cluster and Combined Populations

Appendix 1 – Argyll and Bute Islands; List and Population

No	Island	Population – Census 2011
1	Bute	6,498
2	Coll	195
3	Colonsay	132 including Oronsay
4	Danna	N/a
5	Easdale	59
6	Eiean da Mheinn	N/a
7	Erraid	N/a
8	Gigha	163
9	Gometra	N/a
10	Inchtavannach	N/a
11	Innischonnan	N/a
12	Iona	177
13	Islay	3,228
14	Jura	196
15	Kerrera	N/a
16	Lismore	192
17	Luing	198 including Shuna
18	Mull	2,8719 inclduing Erraid, Ulva and Gometra
19	Oronsay	N/a
20	Seil	551
21	Shuna	N/a
22	Tiree	653
23	Ulva	N/a

Appendix 2 – Island Cluster and Combined Populations

Cluster 1; Bute and Cowal – 6,948

1. Bute

Cluster 2; Oban, Lorn and the Isles – 4,844

2. Coll
3. Easdale
4. Kerrera
5. Lismore
6. Luìng
7. Shuna
8. Mull, Erraid, Ulva and Gometra
9. Iona
10. Seil
11. Tiree
12. Ulva.

Cluster 3; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands – 3,719

13. Islay
14. Colonsay
15. Gigha
16. Jura
17. Oronsay