

Social Enterprise - Small and Local with Significant Impact in Argyll

The 2017 Social Enterprise Census for Scotland demonstrates the significance of Social Enterprise in the rural context with 34% of Scotland's social enterprises with only 18% of the nation's population. This is particularly relevant in Argyll and Bute, one of the top 3 local authority areas with the lowest population densities and highest density of social enterprise per capita, at 1.6% of the population and 4.4% of Scotland's Social Enterprisesⁱ

But many folks don't even know what a Social Enterprise is... It's a community business, or a business that trades services or goods for community benefit, rather than private profit, and in Argyll this includes a whole host of enterprises running vital services including; fuel filling stations, village shops, care services for older people, youth work and childcare services, community halls and environmental projects which enhance the tourism offering. These are run by a volunteer board and may employ staff, but any profits are reinvested for the community benefit. 80% of Social Enterprises in Argyll are also Charities.

Social Value Lab who undertook the national census have just published the Census the Social Enterprise in Argyll and Bute Report 2017ⁱⁱ, which confirms the importance of Social Enterprise for the area. The total income of the being £57million with an additional £30.3 million of Housing Association income for Argyll's economy. This is a significant contribution to the rural economy in terms of economic benefit, with the social benefit being more significant still, as many Social Enterprises indicated that there was not an alternative provider of their services and many delivering essential services which ensure rural communities can survive and thrive.

Most of these enterprises are small scale (with 70% of Social Enterprises having a turnover of less than £100k) and 48% delivering activities in a single neighbourhood or community. The Report was launched at a network Event in Inveraray on 30th November which was organised by Senscot, Unltd and local Charity Inspiralba. Representatives from Social Enterprises from Across Argyll met with partners from Scottish Government, Argyll and Bute Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and now hope the data will assist in raising the profile of the importance of the sector for our rural economy and communities across Argyll.

ⁱ Social Enterprise Census 2017 Report, Sept 2017 <http://www.socialvaluelab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Census-2017-Main-Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Social Enterprise in Argyll and Bute Report, November 2017, Social Value Lab link to be included.