
Review of key priorities of Argyll Islands Strategic Group

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 and to develop a vision statement as well as key actions necessary to address the issues. Following on from the working group it was agreed to set up the Argyll Islands Strategic Group (AISG). This report details the key issues/priorities for the Group.
- 1.2 Since the establishment of the Taskforce and then the AISG activities have focused on a number of priorities which were identified and agreed in conjunction with North Ayrshire and The Highland Councils, see Appendix 1.
- 1.3 In June 2015, Council approved the following 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.

- 1.4 Argyll and Bute Council is a member of the Scottish Government's Strategic Islands Group (a successor to the Island Area Ministerial Working Group) and as a consequence we have been able to engage directly with the Scottish Government during the preparation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Argyll Island Strategic Group re consider the priorities and identify any changes to be made to these going forward.

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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 of the need to promote and lobby at a strategic level for the issues affecting our islands. The council then subsequently agreed to set up the Argyll Islands Strategic Group (AISG) to further progress the work undertaken.
- 2.2 This report provides an update on the key actions identified as being critical to our island.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Argyll Island Strategic Group re consider the priorities and identify any changes to be made to these going forward.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 In June 2015, in recognition of the importance of our islands, the Council approved the following vision for our 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.”

- 4.2 The existence of the Argyll Islands Taskforce, which was then replaced by the Argyll Islands Strategic Group (AISG), coincided with Scottish Government work focusing 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. An Argyll and Bute Council response to this document was submitted to the Scottish Government following approval by Council on 26 November 2015. In addition the Council was also invited to sit on the Scottish Government's Strategic Islands Group (a successor to the Island Area Ministerial Working Group) and as a consequence was able to engage directly with the Scottish Government whilst it prepared the Islands Bill which resulted in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and will allow input to continue as the different elements of the Act are taken forward.
- 4.3 In addition to the above the Council also sought to work in partnership with North Ayrshire and Highland Councils to ensure that representatives of the west of Scotland islands were able to contribute to the discussions at a strategic level. As a result of the discussions with North Ayrshire Council and The Highland Council a number of priorities were identified and agreed as being the key areas of focus for the work of the Taskforce and then the AISG. These priorities are detailed within Appendix 1. It seems appropriate to now review these priorities and determine if they still remain relevant and valid. They should also be reviewed in the context of issues that will be considered as part of the National Islands Plan.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The AISG, previously the Argyll Islands Taskforce, has provided a focus on island communities within Argyll and Bute and through the work of the Group key issues and priorities have been highlighted which affect our island communities and their opportunities for growth and development.

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 Strategy and Local Development Plan which seek to deliver sustainable island communities.
- 6.2 Financial –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.
- 6.5 Equalities/Fairer Scotland Duty – none.
- 6.6 Risk – To do nothing could have left our island communities at a disadvantage as they would sit out with the Our Islands Our Future initiative and potentially any benefit that comes from this campaign.
- 6.7 Customer Service – none.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Priorities and Actions

Appendix 1 - 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 table below sets out initial actions required to progress these priorities

To continue to progress the work streams shown below will continue to require support from across the Council, and will require the necessary available resources to support this activity and should the AISG support this approach we will need to obtain agreement from the relevant services and Policy Leads.

The blue highlighted rows indicate the current priorities and the white rows are the tasks identified to help to progress the issue. The tasks set out below will evolve and change as more specific actions associated with moving forward each issue are identified.

Ref	Priority	SOA Outcome	AISG 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		
<i>Action</i>	<i>Argyll and Bute Council response to relevant consultations</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	
2a	Identify island infrastructure currently available		
2b	Highlight any current or likely future issues		
2c	Work with SG ferries unit		
2d	Determine strategy for seeking capital investment where required		
<i>Action</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	
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		
<i>Action</i>			
4	To lobby for parity for our island and isolated rural communities with regard to mail order delivery surcharges.		
4a	Consider action required within Argyll and Bute		
4b	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	2	

	mobile phone signal and exploring the possibility of opening up public digital networks to the wider community.		
5a	Lobby SG and providers		
<i>Action</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	
6a	Liaise with Scottish Water		
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	
7a	Work with NHS Highland		
7b	Determine strategy for lobbying for alternative approaches		
<i>Action</i>			
8	To seek innovative and cost effective affordable housing for our island and isolated rural communities.	2	
8a	Identify island housing needs		
8b	Work with housing associations		
8c	Determine strategy for lobbying for affordable housing to meet identified need		
<i>Action</i>			
9	To address fuel poverty for our island and isolated communities.	4	
9a	Identify issues		
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	
10a	Determine strategy for joint working/lobbying		
<i>Action</i>			