

The Islands Revival Declaration

We affirm that there is credible evidence of ‘green shoots’ of population turnaround in the Scottish islands, which as yet does not show up in official statistics.

- This is illustrated by a number of examples of population growth in islands, such as those cited in the Islands Revival blog (www.islandsrevival.org).
- It is also indicated by a more positive discourse on population change in island communities.
- It is supported by the changing perceptions of younger, economically active people, especially out-migrant islanders, who increasingly consider their birthplace as a place to return to, and at an earlier stage in their lives. Connectivity (especially social media) is playing an important role in popularising this attitude.
- This is associated with an increasing appreciation, particularly by younger people (whether they have stayed, returned or settled), of the cultural wealth, environmental assets, well-being, and community-related benefits of island life.
- However, it is important to acknowledge that the demographic aspirations of island communities are not necessarily ‘growth’, but rather sustainability, renewal, or restored viability, without risk to social, cultural and environmental assets.

We believe there are multiple factors driving and facilitating positive population trends in some island areas.

- These include intangible assets, such as:
 - Local control of territorial assets (land and marine), accompanied by good governance, and strong community leadership.
 - Increasing awareness of and confidence in what communities can achieve through cooperation among residents and groups.
 - Increasing interest, among many young people, in exploring enterprising ways of living.
 - Concern about climate change and other sustainability issues.
 - The use of media in promoting role models and success stories.
- Positive trends are also supported by:
 - Investment in connectivity (digital and physical), technology and renewables.
 - Investment in social infrastructure (e.g. housing, education, health services, childcare and social care).
 - A focus on ‘good’ (e.g. pay, conditions, diverse opportunities, job security) and meaningful employment.
 - The presence of diverse micro and small enterprises.
 - Involvement of the younger generation in policy decisions/education as a driver of attitude change.
- The above seem to be, collectively, delivering a gradual but clear shift in the consensus about the balance between the advantages and disadvantages of living on islands versus those of living in or near a city.

We believe that creating sustainable populations can be facilitated by a policy framework that is:

- Founded on community ownership of the development process.
- Framed as a place-based approach which is holistic, integrated and coherent.
- Informed and shaped by local communities in ways that are meaningfully inclusive.
- Delivered in genuine partnership between sectors at all administrative levels, and civil society.
- Enabling of communities that may have limited capacity to engage meaningfully.

The declaration reflects the views and experiences of those who attended the Islands Revival Workshop at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, 29th and 30th August 2019.

