

NATIONAL ISLANDS PLAN UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 was granted Royal Assent on 6 July 2018 with the first set of provisions coming into force on 4 October 2018. The Act introduced a number of measures to underpin the Scottish Government's key objective of ensuring that there is a sustained focus across Government and the public sector to meet the needs of island communities now and in the future.
- 1.2 The Act itself introduced a number of duties that are placed on the Scottish Ministers and Local Authorities in order to deliver the measures and objectives. Part 2 places a duty on the Scottish Ministers to prepare a National Islands Plan as a key outcome from the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and provides a framework for action to meaningfully improve outcomes for Scotland's island communities.
- 1.3 The Act required Ministers to consult with local authorities, as well as representatives of island communities in preparation of the National Islands Plan (Part 2).
- 1.4 Members may recall that the council responded to the initial consultation on the proposed National Islands Plan in July 2019 and responded again in November 2019 to the Draft Plan during the 40 days that it was laid before Parliament for completion. Following the 40 day period and as per the requirements of the Act the Plan was published thereafter on 27 December and can be accessed via the following link.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/>
- 1.5 The next milestone in the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 will be the development and publication of the Implementation Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members consider the update as contained in the report.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Islands (Scotland) Bill 2018 received Royal Assent on 6 July 2018. The first Commencement Regulations for the Island Act were laid on 20 September 2018 and came into force on 4 October 2018.

3.2 As per the requirements of Part 2 of the Act namely the preparation of a National Islands Plan, by Scottish Ministers, Scotland's first National Islands Plan to improve the quality of life for island communities has recently been launched.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that Members consider the update as contained in the report.

5.0 DETAIL

5.1 According to the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the purpose of the Plan is "to set out the main objectives and strategy of the Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities that result from, or are contributed to by, the carrying out of functions of a public nature. The aim of the Plan is to shape government policy to deliver the above purpose. The plan sets out 13 objectives (see para 5.4 below), and more than 100 specific measures/actions to support achieving them, to address population decline, tackle climate change and improve transport, housing, the delivery of public services and digital connectivity.

5.2 It followed an extensive consultation which included 61 events and meetings on 40 islands across Scotland, 10 of which were in Argyll and Bute, and attended by almost 1,000 people of all ages and backgrounds. The online consultation received a further 400 responses.

5.3 The Plan has a duration of five years with a requirement for annual reports from Ministers to monitor progress and to consider where outcomes may or

may not have been delivered. Ministers will review the Plan before the end of the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which the plan was last published.

- 5.4 As required by the Act, the Plan provides a number of areas for improving outcomes for island communities, including:
- increasing population levels;
 - improving and promoting sustainable economic development;
 - improving and promoting environmental wellbeing;
 - improving and promoting health and wellbeing;
 - improving and promoting community empowerment;
 - improving transport services;
 - improving digital connectivity;
 - reducing fuel poverty;
 - ensuring effective management of the Scottish Crown Estate (that is, the property, rights and interests to which section 90B(5) of the Scotland Act 1998 applies); and
 - enhancing biosecurity (including protecting islands from the impact of invasive non-native species).

Reflecting feedback from the consultation that was carried out between April and July 2019, the final Plan also includes other issues that are important to our island communities. These cover housing, climate change, energy, education and our cultural heritage. Many of those above reflect the areas identified by the council as being critical to our island communities and also reflect the agreed priorities of the Argyll Islands Strategic Group (AISG) as agreed at their meeting in February 2019.

- 5.5 The next step will be to develop an Implementation Route Map detailing these actions and it is hoped to be able to provide a verbal update on the process and timeline that will be associated with this Route Map/Strategy.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The National Islands Plan and associated key priorities provides a framework from which the council can work closely with our island communities and Scottish Government and also work closely with key stakeholders. It is unclear at the moment as to the implications of the Plan on resources, both from a staff and financial perspective. The next stage is the development of the Implementation Strategy/Route Map to secure the delivery of the Plan and this

will hopefully clarify the key areas of focus for the council and also any resulting impact.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy –The Plan seeks to deliver positive policy and resource support for our 23 islands all of which fits with the objectives of the Outcome Improvement Plan, Economic Strategy and Local Development Plan which seek to deliver sustainable island communities.
- 7.2 Financial –staff resources. The implementation strategy that will now be developed will determine the impact on Local Authorities in regard to any additional duties or resources required
- 7.3 Legal – none.
- 7.4 HR – None
- 7.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – The Plan seeks to comply with these duties.
- 7.6 Equalities - The Plan will comply with all Equal Opportunities policies and obligations
- 7.7 Socio Economic Duty – The Plan seeks to remove socio-economic disadvantage for residents across our islands.
- 7.7 Islands - The National Islands Plan and associated key priorities provides a framework from which the council can work closely with our island communities and Scottish Government and work closely with key stakeholders.
- 7.6 Risk –It is important that the council engaged in the consultation process relating to the Plan and that we continue to engage with SG going forward in regard to the development of the implementation strategy to ensure that the best outcome is secured for our islands and that there is clear understanding of the resource implications for the council from the Plan and emerging implementation strategy.
Plan
- 7.7 Customer Service – none.

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