

# Closing the Opportunity Gap target H research Proposed Extra Rural Service Priority Areas (RSPAs) for Argyll and Bute

## Background

Closing the Opportunity Gap target H is focused on improving access to, and quality of, services in disadvantaged rural areas. The Scottish Executive is commissioning research in Rural Service Priority Areas (RSPAs) to identify key services in different areas and any issues with access to those services. The RSPAs are identified using a combination of overall and access deprivation from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Based on these criteria, the following datazone was selected for Argyll and Bute:

Datazone	Local Authority Name	Accessible or remote rural	SE or HIE	Ward within which datazone lies
S01000800	Argyll & Bute	Remote rural	HIE	East Loch Fyne, Holy Loch

While the statistical method for identifying disadvantaged rural areas in Argyll and Bute is sound, the base data, most notably the SIMD, does not adequately account for the true nature of access deprivation for island communities. As a result, island areas are underrepresented, even though these areas are acknowledged to suffer from a greater array of access problems. This problem is compounded by the fact that in many cases islands form a part of a larger datazone and the specific conditions of the island are lost as data is averaged.

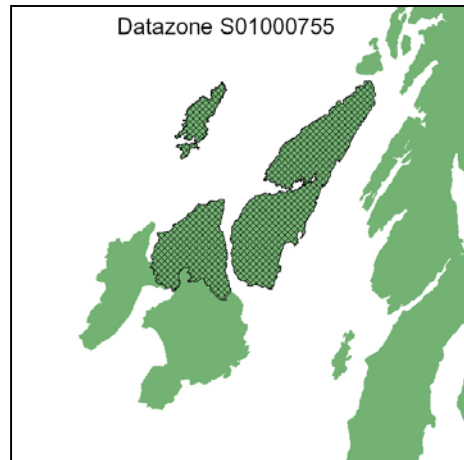
The Scottish Executive has recognized that these anomalies exist, especially in relation to island communities. To compensate, they have suggested that the project could be expanded to incorporate up to 5 extra areas. The large number of small inhabited islands in Argyll and Bute are a strong candidate to be included in the Executive's research programme. A review of data held by the Council has identified two additional areas for consideration by the Executive.

## Proposed Additional Areas

### ***Colonsay and Jura (Part of datazone S01000755)***

These two islands form part of a larger datazone in Argyll and Bute. The datazone is not recognized using the original statistical filters, primarily because the bulk of the datazone population is located on Islay near a relatively well-serviced urban area. However, further research commissioned by the Community Planning Partnership disaggregated this datazone.<sup>1</sup> This research highlighted the islands as areas of "pocket" deprivation, which do not feature in broader measures like the SIMD. Colonsay is highlighted as an island that suffers from high levels of deprivation, with 21% of the population estimated to be deprived and 100% living in an output area classified as deprived. Geographic and access indicators are the primary drivers behind this scoring.

Jura also suffers from high levels of deprivation with 15% of its population classified as deprived. Both islands require ferry trips to access many services, adding to the cost and time of the journey.



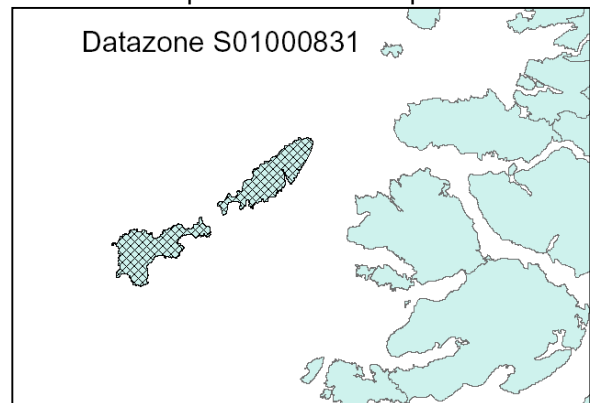
<sup>1</sup> Deprivation and Social Exclusion in Argyll and Bute, Report to the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice, 2003

Two recent “real-life” instances highlight the challenge faced by residents of these islands. Recently, the hotel on Colonsay closed, shutting down a valued community facility on the island and potentially affecting tourist trade. Reports of the closure and impact on the island received widespread media coverage. On Jura, recent attempts to attract a GP have proved unsuccessful and so access to basic medical care has been affected. The media coverage of the difficulties faced by the island generated a lot of interest and this specific problem may now be resolved, but the issue is indicative of problems faced by islands.

Whilst the Executive’s research is focusing on whole datazones, there is a strong case to be made for weighting survey work within this datazone to Colonsay and Jura. In this way, we can get a clearer picture of issues facing small islands and understand the service/access relationship with neighbouring islands more closely.

### **Tiree and Coll (datazone S01000831)**

The Islands of Tiree and Coll are the most westerly Islands in Argyll and Bute. There is a perception that these islands are less access deprived than others due to the presence of an airport on Tiree. However, the datazone is in the top 30% of deprived datazones in Argyll and Bute. In terms of access deprivation it is the 12<sup>th</sup> most deprived. Additionally, the area is also in the top 30% for income deprivation. This is a significant factor when considering residents’ ability to access transportation. It’s geographic location presents even higher travel costs due to the distance to be covered by ferry or by air. So while links may exist, affordability remains an issue.



The report by **The Centre for Research on Social Justice**<sup>2</sup> estimated that 10% of the population of Tiree and 14% of the datazone population is deprived.

### **Recommendation**

When examining deprivation on Islands, **The Centre for Research on Social Justice** drew the following conclusion “...*the concentration of deprivation combined with the problems of living on islands in terms of access to services warrants further attention*”. The Closing the Opportunity Gap Programme is an ideal tool to explore and address this finding.

**It is recommended that the two areas above be submitted for consideration as additional RSPAs in the Executive’s research programme.**

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<sup>2</sup> Deprivation and Social Exclusion in Argyll and Bute, Report to the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice, 2003