

Towards an Argyll and Bute Climate Action Hub – a proposal (updated August 2023)

1. Introduction

Argyll and Bute has a long history of community action taking forward environmental and social change but as with much of our local voluntary, third and social enterprise sector organisations tend to be focused in particular localities and/or sometimes lack the scale and/or profile for pan-Argyll and Bute action. This is evidenced by a large number of small organisations (circa 900) serving a population of 86,000 across a large area.

This updated outline proposal for community discussion seeks to change that picture by drawing together a range of community actors to coordinate, map and network build for the purposes of increasing community awareness about climate action. This will take the form of fostering deep engagement with communities, promoting learning and development, supporting the design and delivery of mitigation and adaptation projects and identifying barriers to climate action. A number of meetings have been held across Argyll and Bute to generate interest in a Climate Action Hub proposal over the past eighteen months. This community led Hub proposal complements parallels steps being taken by anchor Community Planning Partners taking forward plans to recruit a Climate Change Planning Manager who will prepare a Climate Change Action Plan. Initial funding from the Scottish Government, subject to a full application, is available up to £100,000 per annum for three years.

2. What form could our proposed Climate Action Hub take?

The Scottish Government guidance talks about the importance of either using an already established group or setting up a new group. The latter has been ruled out as it would take too long for instance to set up a new bank account or constitute a new group. So, our proposal seeks to leapfrog this stage by utilising existing community organisations, assets and expertise by establishing a **consortium model** underpinned by democratic legitimacy.

Partnering with another locality might have the impact of distancing climate action from Argyll's communities so we need a structure that reflects our dispersed population centres yet also preserves accountability.

We would seek to use the infrastructure of existing umbrella organisations to provide the administrative functions of the consortia – i.e. banking, payroll, HR, secretariat, office space, ICT, grant distribution systems. Some of this would be provided free but where a direct cost would be incurred this would be called off from the Hub project funding stream. The intention is to share, for free if possible, admin/back-office resources so that maximum value can be ploughed into network and hub activity.

The Argyll and Bute TSI could provide some of the back-office functionality with ACT, subject to further discussion, bidding to local consortia to deliver an SLA that would include line management of hub staff and their project plans.

3. How would the consortium model function in terms of governance?

It is proposed that each of the four administrative areas of Argyll and Bute (Oban, Lorn and the Isles, Mid-Argyll and Kintyre, Cowal and Bute, Helensburgh and Lomond) elect two representatives in an election to be hosted by Argyll and Bute TSI with the support of SSCAN. This group might then elect a convenor on an annual basis and they will lead the consortia in the commission and contract review of an SLA that will deliver the main activities of the Climate Action Hub. Secretariat services would be provided by the Argyll and Bute TSI as would banking services – subject to discussions with the TSI board. The TSI has also built a grant distribution platform which could also be provided to the consortia when looking to provide seed capital funding for community projects.

Expert advisers to the Hub consortia would take the form of the soon to be appointed Climate Change Project Manager who will be funded by Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partners. This would ensure no overlap of activity and integration of actions with the proposed CPP Argyll and Bute Climate Action Plan. Other advisers to the consortia may include other parties to be identified including postholders working on the Climate Action Towns initiatives.

4. Indicative project timeline and next steps

All of the following have been subject to discussion.

Task	When	Who
Finalise overall approach through sector discussion	May 2023 – early June 2023	CAN participants to date, wider stakeholders
Prepare more detailed proposal for discussion with Scottish Government	June - August 2023	SSCAN, TSI, ACT
Elect regional hub consortia representatives who then select a convenor	Late 2023/early 2024	TSI to run elections for community organisations of all types to vote
Meet as hub consortia to develop and deliver key hub objectives, finalise application and identify next steps	August-September 2023	Consortia facilitated by SSCAN, TSI and ACT will circulate draft application locally for comment prior to submission.
Scottish Government panel approves hub consortia bid	October 2023	
Preparation of virtual back office functions to support the hub in terms of governance and operations	October 2023	SSCAN, ACT, TSI and others
SLA out to tender	Oct -Nov 2023	Consortia