

# A framework for action

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We set out a range of recommendations for the CPP to action collectively, reshaping the CPP and giving it a drive and intent to deliver on the CWB agenda and build wealth in local communities. We also set out a range of recommendations for CPP members, seeking collaboration between institutions to advance the 5 pillars of community wealth building with a specific focus on supporting the delivery of x2 programmes of collective action.<sup>1</sup>

These recommendations should underpin the development of the business cases and don't all need to be done at once, they should be seen as a series of interventions that will help Argyll and Bute transition to a wellbeing economy.

## CPP recommendations

### CWB intrinsic to economic strategy

This report comes at a critical time for Argyll and Bute, with the region facing a number of challenges. It also comes at an important time for strategy and policy in the region as both the Argyll and Bute Economic Strategy and the LOIP are currently being developed. There is, therefore, an opportunity to ensure that community wealth building is central to local economic development in Argyll and Bute and ensure that the step change that is required to tackle the key issues has policy and strategic backing. To ensure this community wealth building should be intrinsic to the economic strategy of Argyll and Bute, CWB cannot be considered as an add on within strategy and cannot be considered as a specific thematic area, rather CWB principles should be embedded in a refreshed approach to economic development with a recognition of a shift from previous models of economic development. CPP partners engaged in writing the strategy should review drafts of the economic strategy through this lens and through the recognition that existing approaches are insufficient to address the scale of the challenge facing people and places across Argyll and Bute.

### Decide on correct avenues to deliver CWB across Argyll and Bute

Throughout our consultation there was a recognition that community wealth building in Argyll and Bute should not fall solely on the shoulders of the Community Planning Partnership. However, the CPP partners can play a leading role in pursuing CWB and highlighting other partnerships and working groups that could also drive the agenda. This could include the Argyll and Bute Renewable Alliance and the Strategic Housing Forum among others

### Development of CWB time limited group(s)

In order to drive community wealth building we would propose setting up x2 time limited groups to take forward action focused work which builds on this report to deliver community wealth in Argyll and Bute. These time limited groups can take a more outward facing role, connect with the community energy on the ground and genuinely co-produce an alternative approach to local economic development. Both business cases will support the work of the economic strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> These are the 2 business cases which need further development following Steering Group input.

- **Business case 1: Building a more co-operative food & tourism economy** – this business case explores how a more supportive framework can be developed for co-operative development across food and tourism sectors which dominate the rural economy of Argyll and Bute. This is focused on bringing together existing sector representation, specialist business support and institutional power to ensure local and social ownership in these sectors.
- **Business case 2: Building community and shared ownership of the energy transition** – this business case explores how to move from the community being in receipt of Community Benefit payments from private renewable energy operators to owning and operating renewable energy infrastructure. Beyond windfarms, how can the community own and drive the transition to a low carbon future?

Capacity to lead and deliver these time limited groups will present the most significant challenge and this cannot fall solely on Argyll and Bute Council. Nominated leads should work with the Area Community Planning Group's (ACPG), wider stakeholders and local community groups to engage a broad set of actors who can collectively play a role in delivery and share the capacity requirements.

## CPP member recommendations

A series of broad recommendations under each of the pillars of CWB follow, with these each setting the ground for the effective delivery of the identified business cases and supporting the delivery of the time limited groups.

### Spending

**Establish a CPP procurement working group** - We would recommend bringing together dedicated lead procurement officers from the relevant CPP members to reflect on progress to date and share understanding of the challenges they face in delivering a more progressive approach to stimulate the development of the unique rural economic geography of Argyll & Bute, providing an opportunity to respond to the new Procurement Bill<sup>2</sup> which has just received Royal Assent and work towards the Sustainable Procurement Duty.<sup>3</sup> This group should also include representatives from the VCSE sector to highlight challenges they have in accessing contracts from CPP members, and ensure future procurement plans are created in conjunction with them.

**Build collective market intelligence** - CPP members should work together to build intelligence of the supply capacity of the local SME business base and the social economy.<sup>4</sup> A detailed understanding of the supplier base should then be fed into the early stages of the procurement lifecycle within each CPP member so that procurement and service design are both conducted with the local economy in mind. Part of this market intelligence gathering could include trying to understand the need for sustainable business opportunities in terms of a minimum of three year rolling contracts instead of one.

**Publish a collective procurement pipeline** - CPP members should commit to publishing their procurement pipelines in the same format in a collective space which can be communicated to the local market, with in built mechanisms for feedback which can then influence procurement and commissioning design moving forwards, making public sector procurement opportunities more

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<sup>2</sup> Small businesses to benefit from one of the largest shake ups to procurement regulations in UK history <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/small-businesses-to-benefit-from-one-of-the-largest-shake-ups-to-procurement-regulations-in-uk-history> - The new regime is expected to come into force October 2024 delivering lasting change for generations to come.

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2023) Sustainable Procurement Duty. [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Building on the Social Enterprise Census commissioned by TSI.

accessible for local SME's. This sharing and feedback mechanism could then grow and evolve over time into a portal for bringing together local suppliers into bidding consortiums.

**CPP meet the buyer events** - The CPP members should work together to collectively engage the local supplier base through collective meet the buyer events, demystify public sector procurement, hearing feedback on the barriers to engagement and inform procurement and commissioning design as part of a learning loop. These should be informed by the above recommendations, so focused on the types of opportunities that the local market can supply.

**Develop procurement training for suppliers** – Local SME's struggle to engage with the bureaucratic nature of public sector procurement, and while feedback mechanisms should be developed to address barriers and simplify processes (as above), suppliers also need support and training in how to bid for public sector contracts. We would recommend convening the existing business support organisations to pool existing resources and explore good practice from elsewhere such as the Federation of Small Businesses 'Get Ready to Bid' seminar series.

### Workforce

**Living Wage Place** - Argyll and Bute has a low wage economy with a declining population. Anchor institutions, as a major employers, should commit to paying the Living wage or working towards accreditation. Setting up a Living Wage Action Group and exploring the path to Living Wage Place.<sup>5</sup>

**Pathways into work** – Building on the work of the Employment Partnership, as major employers, CPP members can explore how the adoption of a values-based recruitment approach within their own organisations, can support local people, specifically local young people, into meaningful employment in organisations that offer career progression routes. CPP members can begin by mapping their job families and comparing, simplifying and standardising recruitment approaches so that applicants can be forwarded within a pool for alternative job opportunities.

**Argyll & Bute Employment Charter** – CPP members, local business representatives and local organisations such as BID4Oban<sup>6</sup>, Isle of Bute BID and Dunoon Presents can collectively develop an employment charter, adopting the Fair Work Framework and its 5 dimensions which can set the expectation for local businesses to be working towards a minimum set of employment standards across Argyll and Bute.

**Employment Charter support** – In acknowledgement that many SME's and social economy organisations want to improve their employment practices, working with existing business support organisations such a Business Gateway and business representatives, we would propose a pooling of knowledge and resources for local businesses that want to improve their employment practices and employ local people.

### Inclusive ownership

**Identify ownership opportunities in growth sectors** – The Argyll and Bute refreshed economic strategy, along with relevant renewable energy, food and tourism strategies all need to prioritise ownership as a key element of growing these sectors. All have been identified as potential growth sectors in which new local SME's and social economy organisations can be developed, however there is scope to scale up the focus on building local and community ownership within these sectors. Employee

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<sup>5</sup> Living Wage Places <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/living-wage-places#form>

<sup>6</sup> Oban Business Improvement District, <https://www.bid4oban.co.uk/>

and shared ownership models could be key in managing the challenges of succession planning in rural businesses, as investigated in business case one.

**Review of co-operative business support** - The business support landscape for the social economy needs to be clearly signposted for those developing new businesses, highlighting the benefits of starting a social enterprise, a community interest companies or a cooperative. By signposting these services it helps build on existing skills, capacity and resources available and how these match Argyll and Butes ambition to build community wealth. An ecosystem of support for new-start social economy enterprises is needed, with potential gaps in support for co-operative development and employee ownership. Organisations such as Co-operatives UK and the Employee Ownership Association can support with the potential to explore an Ownership Hub in Argyll and Bute.

**Peer support networks** – Argyll and Bute has a flourishing social economy and a wide range of well-established community owned organisations in the renewable energy, food and tourism sectors. The connections between these in-place experts, an ecosystem of support for new-start social economy enterprises and the support of institutional partners can provide an invaluable resource for growing community ownership in these identified sectors.

**Brokering supply chain opportunities** – connecting with the recommendation on spending and engagement across the business support landscape we would propose that existing business advisors, aware of a collective procurement pipeline and supporting local businesses could start to actively broker connections between local businesses/social economy organisations and public sector procurement but also with improved local market intelligence, start to broker supply chain opportunities between local businesses/social economy organisations. The learning from this could support the development of portal for bringing together local suppliers and shortening supply chains. The #ABplace2b<sup>7</sup> website collates local employment opportunities, and a similar concept could be applied to procurement and commissioning contracts.

## Finance

**Mapping the alternative financial infrastructure** – CPP partners should look to bring together an understanding of the range of alternative financial mechanisms that already exist and can be accessed by organisations in Argyll and Bute, organisations such as Community Finance Development Institutions and Credit Unions while starting to develop an understanding of the challenges faced in financing new activity in the SME and social economy.

**Mapping community benefits** – Developing a comprehensive understanding of the secured community benefits across Argyll and Bute, and the extent to which this secured income could be utilised to leverage finance for the community to take ownership.

**Develop a local finance initiative proposal** – Building on the above, develop an outline business case for a local community owned finance institution. Filling gaps in provision, pooling community benefits and attracting deposits and savings – a local financial mechanism could connect with government funding streams<sup>8</sup> to fund community wealth building initiatives across Argyll and Bute.

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<sup>7</sup> Argyll and Bute – A place to be <https://abplace2b.scot/>

<sup>8</sup> Third Sector Growth Fund, <https://www.gov.scot/news/third-sector-growth-fund/>

## Land & property

**Affordable Workspace Strategy** – To grow local and community ownership in the renewables, food and tourism sectors there will be a requirement to develop an understanding of the current and future demand for land and property. An Affordable Workspace Strategy would examine the available business premises across Argyll and Bute for businesses in various sectors and at various stages of development and make recommendations on the anticipated future demand. Argyll and Bute has some good examples of community ownership with the MACC Business Park for example, but this capacity would need to be replicated across the borough.

**Vacant & derelict land** – The vacant and derelict land register has 32 sites in Argyll and Bute, informed by the above Affordable Workspace Strategy, these should be examined for conversion into affordable workspaces. In consultation, local residents expressed dismay at vacant property given the housing emergency and a lack of affordable workspaces. An Affordable Workspace Strategy and review of vacant and derelict land and property ahead of implementation (2024/2025) of the recent changes to the Empty Property Relief (EPR)<sup>9</sup> could support bringing back properties into use for the benefit of the community.

**Rationalisation of the public estate** – CPP partners can bring together their emerging understanding of their workspace requirements, with opportunities for the co-location of office-based staff and service delivery which could free up parts of the public estate for use by local and social enterprise. Argyll & Bute Councils recent 'Our Modern Workspace' programme is an example of future space requirement thinking that could result in land and property being made available in support of an Affordable Workspace Strategy. Some of this work is already underway in Rothesay, Dunoon and Lochgilphead and should continue to be built on.

**Convene a Local Landowners Forum** - Engage with largest landowners to ensure that future land uses can help address the poly-crisis<sup>10</sup> we face as a society, from the housing emergency to the climate emergency, the way we utilise will shape the collective future of residents of Argyll and Bute. From private estates (e.g., Duke of Argyll) to public bodies (e.g., Forest and Land Scotland, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Crown Estate), all need to ensure land is used in a socially productive way wherever possible. As a pioneering approach, partners working together should develop a set of guidance for landowners in building community

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<sup>9</sup> Empty business premises could boost local economy, <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/news/2023/oct/empty-business-premises-could-boost-local-economy>

<sup>10</sup> Navigating polycrisis: long-run socio-cultural factors shape response to changing climate <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2022.0402>