

## **PROGRESS UPDATE ON THIRD THEME GROUP**

### **SUSTAINING AND DEVELOPING OUR COMMUNITY'S CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The two Theme Group meetings during the last quarter have been well attended with between fifteen to twenty members present and all the priority actions have been reviewed.

At the 24th August meeting, an Auditor from Audit Scotland was present to observe the business as part of the best value audit of Argyll and Bute Council. The meeting was conducted in a very positive manner and showed the open spirit of co-operation and good networking which is a key feature of the CPP. As part of the review of Priority 1 to provide adequate and affordable housing, Malcolm MacFadyen gave an update on the Local Housing Strategy and the development of the Housing Stock Transfer Initiative in Argyll and Bute. This was followed by a presentation by Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager with the Council, on the progress in taking forward the consultative responses to the Draft Local Plan for the area. In view of the comments on the development of affordable housing at the bi-annual conference, the presentation put in context the development of the key actions within the priority and it is clear that the action points are being developed effectively in line with the timescales in the Theme Group Action Plan.

After a discussion it was agreed that the following three priorities and their action points were progressing effectively –

- Priority 2. addressing accessibility and transportation needs;
- Priority 3. enhancing community participation through capacity building and regeneration initiatives;
- Priority 6. enhancing the cultural heritage.

The actions in relation to improvement of the waste infrastructure were noted as progressing on target and it was agreed that the other action points under Priorities 4 and 5 would be discussed in more detail at the following meeting.

At the meeting on the 27th October, SNH gave a presentation on the way forward in relation to the key action points for Priority 4, regarding the protection and enhancement of the rich environmental assets and diverse habitats in the area. Andrew Campbell highlighted the key development aspects of SNH work in the area and this provided a very helpful review of the key activities. With regard to Priority 5, Audrey Martin from the Council gave a presentation on renewable energy in Argyll and Bute. It was very informative and focused on the areas of Natural Energy Resources; Existing Renewable Energy Development; Biomass and the Timber Industry; Community Benefits; Need for Change and Education. This put into context the development of the key actions within the Theme Group Plan and gave the necessary re-focus to the group on the activities under this priority.

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