

Feedback on the Rural Scotland in Focus 2014 Report

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The [Rural Scotland in Focus 2014 Report](#) monitors how rural Scotland is changing with a focus on population trends, the lives of young people, the levels of poverty and disadvantage and the use of the rural land resource. This is an important policy document that will help inform future Council policy responses to the issues we face in Argyll and Bute. The document also points to best practice which the Council will make full use of and calls for areas for further study to be looked at that this report has identified subject to Council approval.
- 1.2 It is proposed that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee ask for the following areas to be taken into account when research is being compiled for 2016 report.
- a. Examination of the distribution of new infrastructure funding in rural Scotland and what impact this investment is having on population growth or loss.
 - b. Examination of population loss in the west coast of Scotland, the specific reasons for this and the necessary measures required to reverse this negative trend.
 - c. Examination of the particular economic and social issues affecting island and remote peninsular communities.
- 1.3 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and approve the proposed areas for further examination by the Rural Policy Centre, subject to any changes they wish to make.

Feedback on the Rural Scotland in Focus 2014 Report

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report concerns the findings of the 2014 Rural Policy Centre's Rural Scotland in Focus Report that was published on the 2nd of June 2014. This is the third biennial report intended to provide a range of evidence and commentary on the key characteristics of rural Scotland, how these are changing, and the implications of these changes.
- 2.2 The Reports are produced by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers within SRUC's Land Economy, Environment and Society Research Group, with contributors from a range of other organisations across the UK on specific topics.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and approve the proposed areas for further examination by the Rural Policy Centre, subject to any changes they wish to make.

4.0 DETAILS

- 4.1 In the 2014 edition of the SRUC report a number of critical issues to rural Scotland are addressed including how the rural economy can continue to enhance its contribution to a vibrant Scottish economy, society and environment. The report provides an update, with new data, on: housing completions and need; population growth or reduction; migration patterns; employment trends; and the ongoing critical importance of broadband. Some of the main findings include:-
- Rural issues are often neglected at a Scottish-wide level.
 - Housing completions fell by 49% (private) and 68% (housing association) from 2008 to 2014. Rural housing stock needs to grow by 20% between 2010 and 2035.
 - Young people leave their communities to access education and employment opportunities; a lack of affordable housing; poor transport choice; lack of leisure opportunities; and negative image of a particular area.
 - Rural poverty and disadvantage is characterised by low incomes often seasonal; fuel poverty; difficulty in accessing services such as health care.
 - The availability of affordable transport is a key short-term issue, particularly cost, timing and frequency and this is causing problems with accessing employment, education and other services.

- The main long-term issue highlighted was access to affordable housing and good quality jobs to encourage young people to stay in or return to rural areas.
- Cultural and family ties in rural areas are prominent, and are one of the leading reasons for those staying in rural areas, even on a temporary basis.
- Recent developments had helped, such as increased provision for education and the roll out of broadband.

4.2 Another key aspect of the report is a focus on young peoples' migration and/or exclusion patterns; whether to stay or to leave the rural communities in which they grew up; and what more needs to be done to support them. The report goes on to examine rural poverty and disadvantage in the context of key national policies and strategies that have been implemented since 1999 and puts forward the integrated approach to spatial planning as a way to deal with the multiple and increasing demands for land use.

4.3 The Report concludes by bringing these themes together and explores the need for an overall rural Scotland vision and strategy to support the development of further resilience and economic growth. Information on the report can be found at http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120428/rural_scotland_in_focus

4.4 Key Findings for Argyll and Bute

4.5 Rural communities facing the biggest population loss between 2001 and 2011 are Dunbeg (-14%); Tarbert (-12%); Bowmore (-9%) port Bannatyne (-11%) and Rosneath (-9%). The biggest increase was Garelochhead (80%). The average medium age for people in settlements of 3,000 people or less reduced from 45.1 in 2001 to 41.4 in 2011.

4.6 Most out migrants from Argyll and Bute move to Glasgow with less important links to Edinburgh, the Highlands and West Dunbartonshire. In common with the three island authorities and Highland, Argyll and Bute has a deficit in young people leaving the area (18 year olds) at -14.9% with low in migration rates for other categories of young people.

4.7 In terms of economic activity there is a high level of self-employment in Argyll and Bute with Campbeltown Peninsular and Bute having a major reliance on agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors. There is also a high reliance on the construction and tourism sectors in Argyll which are vulnerable to economic downturns and a high number of people working more than 49 hours per week.

4.8 In terms of deprivation Argyll and Bute has high levels of both housing and access to public transport deprivation.

4.9 Future Priorities for Positive Action

- 4.10 The SRUC report identified a number of priorities for future action. The Council and our community planning partners through the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) together with other key documents such as the Economic Development Action Plan are responding to these priorities through a number of actions that are identified in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1

<p>SRUC Priority:- Improved infrastructure higher speed broadband, more affordable and energy efficient housing, affordable motor fuel and effective use of public transport, improving health care facilities</p>
<p>The Council is assisting with the coordination of the Scottish Government and HIE's investment in modern broadband technology throughout Argyll and Bute. The council's Strategic Housing fund has assisted the delivery of additional affordable homes constructed primarily by locally based Housing Associations.</p>
<p>SRUC Priority:- Better partnership working on land use;</p>
<p>The Council has taken forward a number of community development plans and instigated a significant number of masterplans to assist with the phased development of areas with growth potential i.e. Dunbeg, Inveraray, Bowmore and Cairndow. Regular meetings have also now been programmed with representatives of landed estates to help stimulate economic growth.</p>
<p>SRUC Priority:- Increased community participation including renewables and community benefits; more effective community partnerships between the community, community planning partnerships and local authorities, capacity and rural skills development;</p>
<p>The Council has published the Community Renewables Opportunity Plan to help local communities take forward renewable energy projects and this has been made available on our web site.</p>
<p>SRUC Priority:- Increased community enterprise with additional control over assets; promotion of development trusts and social enterprises;</p>
<p>The Council and HIE have assisted the development of a number of development trusts and social enterprises to take forward projects with significant community benefit. Current projects include the refurbishment and reuse of the former Campbeltown Town Hall, the restoration of Campbeltown cinema, the further development of MACC at Machrihanish.</p>
<p>SRUC Priority:- Business and skills aligning local business growth with local resources and assets; skills based training linked to the current and future needs of the rural economy; better public procurement for local businesses.</p>
<p>The Council is responding to the Highlands and islands Skills Investment Plan (SIP) by calling for an Argyll and Bute Skills Investment Plan that recognises the specific issues faced by our area. The Council is also looking at local skills initiative to match local young people to local jobs in an effort to retain people in the area.</p>

4.11 Proposed Future Areas of Study

4.12 The Rural Scotland in Focus report is published by the SRUC every two years and at the launch of the 2014 report areas for further study were called for. It is proposed that the Council ask for the following areas to be taken into account when research is being compiled for 2016 report.

- Examination of the distribution of new infrastructure funding in rural Scotland and what impact this investment is having on population growth or loss.
- Examination of population loss in the West Coast of Scotland, the specific reasons for this and the necessary measures required to reverse this negative trend.
- Examination of the particular economic and social issues affecting island and remote peninsular communities.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The Rural Scotland in Focus 2014 Report monitors how rural Scotland is changing with a focus on population trends, the lives of young people, the levels of poverty and disadvantage and the use of the rural land resource. This is an important policy document that will help inform future Council policy responses to the issues we face in Argyll and Bute. The document also points to best practice which the Council will make full use of and calls for areas for further study to be looked at that this report has identified subject to Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee approval.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy The findings of this report will help inform Council policy

6.2 Financial None directly arising from this report

6.3 Legal None directly arising from this report

6.4 HR None directly arising from this report

6.5 Equalities None directly arising from this report

6.6 Risk None directly arising from this report

6.7 Customer Services None directly arising from this report

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