

Arran Recovery Group Notes from October 16th

Summary/Recap

Restrictions imposed on the ferry after general restrictions were lifted put the Islands at a major disadvantage, threatening community and business. This was recognised and corrected to a certain extent. It may have felt like the problem was resolved. The June and now October Business Survey points out it is not resolved. This is reinforced by the Fraser of Allander report. Early inputs from the October Business Survey indicates 50% businesses at risk and more than 50% planning to release staff. The current restrictions, indirectly close accommodation providers by significantly reducing the reasons that visitors might visit. Accommodation providers are forced to close through a reduction in visitors and the removal of ancillary income from restaurants and bars.

In addition, this is having a dyer impact on the Islands supply chain which is incurring the same costs to support a reducing volume. Both findings reinforce Fraser of Allanders request for a specific economic focus on the Island Economies.

What needs done:

- 1) Ensure Arran community and business is taking full advantage of Government support packages that already exist. Review your ARG/CWB plan.
- 2) Ensure Government fully understands the direct and indirect impact of restrictions on communities, infrastructure and economy.
- 3) Identify gaps or inadequacies in impact versus support required.

How:

- 1) Use data: Fraser of Allander, June and October Surveys.
- 2) Develop and deliver a communication plan before October 26th.

Meeting notes:

Welcome and Introduction:

Tom Tracey welcomed the group and tendered apologies from LG, MG, RB, TB.

Health and Social Care Partnership: RB on holiday this week, will received further updates shortly on her return. VY mentioned there was discrepancies on SG website regarding covid cases on Arran being combined with North Ayrshire and it needed to be addressed. RB to check.

Business Survey/Support: AD informed the group that so far 70+ responses had been received within 36 hours. The survey was open for another week. Further points were made around folks currently on the island with no heritage roots were likely to leave if businesses were to close resulting of a community wealth loss. 70% of businesses reported have lost customers. Only 20% of businesses have a Covid Plan due to the impact of the supply chain. This is down on the last survey. Early comments suggest that this is caused by

Poor messaging (who's in, who's out) and poor understanding of transport (ferry) by government. "No point in a plan built on sand". More than half the businesses are now at risk. More than half are looking at employee numbers reducing before Christmas. More than half are aware of the funding available. These are top line initial findings, the full results will be ready within 2 weeks.

JMcG outlined the details of the Coronavirus Restrictions Support Fund which will be available on Tuesday next week on the NAC website. There are two parts to this fund – Business Closure Fund (restaurants, pubs etc) and Business Hardship Fund (businesses impacted/adapted). Both are directly related to the Rateable Value with amounts available to businesses varying between £1000 and £3000. This is a short-term fund up until the 26th of October 2020, but could be a rolling fund if restrictions last longer. Businesses need to demonstrate a loss of 25% or more. It is hoped that the turnaround for funding will be 2-10 days for a fully compliant application. NAC appreciates timing is key here.

Comments were made regarding the non-recognition of the supply chain supporting the businesses. Currently the supply chain is in jeopardy as businesses close due to restrictions and are operating but not profitable. This cannot continue. Further discussion centred on the new furlough regulations which were entirely inadequate and unviable with hotels unable to operate due to the previous effects of Covid restrictions. Knock on effects demonstrated by cancellations and restricted transport (ferry).

Community Survey: JK confirmed the community survey was nearly ready to go. Input had been received from VY and SG. JK suggested a collaborative Matrix approach to identify funding streams/beneficiaries etc to ensure Arran businesses benefitted and no opportunities were missed. It was also suggested that HIE needed to be more engaged with the ARG. JK to liaise with JMcG re a matrix and table of funds. General commentary was government organisations appear to think "everything is ok now" ... but in fact it is worse than in March when the lockdown was introduced as the true effects are now being felt.

AS mentioned the various digital funding routes now available and will provide a list for everyone. He mentioned skills and data applications along with Demand Transport.

LJ felt a lobbying plan should be drawn up to ensure everyone was aware of what the current position on Arran was to engage as much help as possible.

Demand assessment: VA will pay for the Community survey to go into the Banner (£250) as there had been complaints previously about availability and the lack of technology/skills to take part. AD mentioned that out of the 87 businesses he dealt with, 16 businesses had already closed with another 12 or more planning to before the year end.

Ferry assessment: Bill updated the group.

- Transport Scotland have clarified service to Claonaig will continue until 24th with the service returning to usual daily winter schedule to Tarbert.
- Discussions continue to resolve infrastructure damage at Ardrossan Arran Berth.

- Also proposed that when CI is required to berth overnight in Brodick that they will cancel the 19:20 and operate an additional early morning sailing to allow 07:00 from Ardrossan (weather permitting) to get supplies and services onto the island.
- Capacity is showing seasonal high demand for holiday period
- 80/20 allocation only applies to passengers with 20% released on day of travel. Full vehicle capacity is bookable until passenger limits are reached.

Governance Update: TT confirmed there was a meeting planned to cover governance with NAC next week.