

Notes from our ARG Meeting on the 11th June:

Summary:

COVID 19 and the Transport Service: Understanding the impact on our Island Community is high from our Local Authority, our MSP, Transport Minister and the Community Board and soon the Islands Minister and the Deputy First Minister. What we need now is focus and leadership to resolve the issues. (May be nothing, but a 80 meter Catamaran Ferry is docking at Brodick Pier as I write).

Arran Recovery Plan will now move to the next phase with the development of the Delivery Plan. More to follow on this soon.

VOX POP puts real lived experiences in front of decision makers to show the human side to the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19 and our Transport Service. Thanks to Sheila, Jude and Chris for pulling it together as well as a big thanks to participants.

Updates on engagements to progress the Recovery. Tom/Bill/Alastair

Tom: The issues outlined in the summary document provide the basis for our changed assessment on the speed of recovery from 18 months to 2 years to 3 to 5 years.

Primary cause of reassessment is the past experience and current performance of our Transport Service. There is little or no confidence in the current structure for delivery. This needs to be urgently addressed. As the Fraser of Allander study pointed, our island economy and social structure is completely dependent upon this service. Low confidence means slow economic and social recovery and a negative impact on population.

NAC's senior team agreed to a meeting to discuss the issues and look for resolution. The meeting was very positive, and a letter will be sent today from Joe Cullinane NAC, Ian Thomson AFC and Tom Tracey ARG to the Minister for the Islands to ask for a meeting to discuss the issues and ask for her leadership in resolving the issues.

We are pressing the right buttons and now need to establish a timescale for results

Bill:

- Community Board met with senior managers from Transport Scotland, CMAL and CalMac.
- Very pleased that Mr Dey MSP (Minister for Transport) joined the meeting to introduce himself and provide initial engagement from his first 6 days in office.
- Confirmed he had already had discussions with his officers and met with service providers. He confirmed that the recent experiences were unacceptable.
- Recognised the need for new tonnage and discussions were underway to understand what could be provided but no specific routes or vessels could be confirmed.
- The need for contingency planning was emphasised and also the process for procurement and operations. Current contracts needs to provide a service. Other

matters raised were the annual service and dry docking and reassurance was sought that this work was not being constrained by time.

- Minister confirmed that community voices should be a key input and they should be reflected in any actions going forward.
- Further discussion with the service providers built on these points and we requested visibility of any draft contingency options being considered to ensure they were comprehensive and appropriate.
- CMAL gave an overview of their 3-5 year plans which are supported by the £580m funding from Government and these will be further developed.
- The Community Board had submitted questions ahead of the meeting which were covered in the press, and we will follow up on these.

Alastair:

It is a complex time with many moving parts, including COVID recovery, BREXIT and a new Scottish Parliament with relevant new Ministers. Arran's issues need to be amplified but in a way that is understood from a Local Authority, regional and national perspective. To support this, Alastair has written to John Swinney, in his position as Covid Recovery Minister. Recovery will be supported from all levels of Government JS is keen that delivery and enablement will be through LAS but at a sub local authority level. Notwithstanding all the issues above, due to the work AEG has developed with the Arran 2030 – Island in Balance Plan, Arran is in a better place than most to highlight the problems and the opportunities that will lead to sustained recovery. As such, Alastair was advocating Arran as a demonstrator case in how best to achieve recovery.

In addition, Alastair highlighted that our plan Arran 2030 Island in Balance is well regarded within government and government agencies.

With his work with the National Tourism Recovery Task Force, Alastair was also able to present the high level ambition of the Arran 2030 – Island in Balance Plan to Transport Scotland officials. Current issues, opportunities and threats were discussed with a follow up meeting to be arranged.

Agreed we needed to make sure Arran issues are amplified on a nationwide issue. To support this, Alastair has written to John Swinney, in his position as Covid Recovery Minister. Recovery will be supported from all levels of Government but will actually happen at sub local authority level. Notwithstanding all the issues above, Arran is in a better place than most to highlight the problems and the opportunities that will lead to recovery. deliver this recovery. As such, Alastair was advocating Arran as a lead case in how best to achieve recovery.

In addition, Alastair highlighted that our plan Arran 2030 Island in Balance is well regarded within government and government agencies. The Strategic Tourism Group – has provided the latest opportunity to present to the full team around recovery and growth opportunities

All: NA) We are on the right track but response is the proof, previous experience has shown fast starts fizzling out and there is a need to keep the pressure on.

TB) Council meeting there has been a robust response and more dynamism and acceptance that there is a transport problem, Concern that Troon may become port of choice

Updates on progress of the Delivery Plan: Sarah

Context: The Arran Recovery Plan provides a comprehensive statement of the programmes required to deliver the objectives of Arran 2030. The Delivery Plan will focus in on areas within the Arran Recovery Plan that are funding focusses for Governmental agencies. The ARG plan is aligned with the Objectives of the National Islands Plan. Therefore, in time, all areas will become focus areas.

Sarah delivered a short presentation on the Delivery Plan. Highlighted items from the presentation:

☐

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 introduces a number of measures to ensure that there is a sustained focus across Government and the public sector to meet the needs of island communities now and in the future

☐ Implementation Route map with input from Islands Stakeholders published March 2021 - Living document to shape policies

☐ SG published an NIP Annual Report, outlining progress and spend. Would hope next year projects from Arran will be featured.

☐ Islands Strategic Group – membership is comprised of council leaders and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands

☐ Ministers set up NIP Delivery Group that will support implementation of the Plan and ensure that work is driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities. Sarah confirmed she sits as a member on the Delivery Group, ensuring the voices of NA Island communities are strengthened at local and national level.

☐ Having Arran 2030 Island in Balance plan and Sarah in post, puts us in a strong position to feed into Islands Strategic Group and Delivery Group

☐ Sarah is a member of both island Locality Partnerships (Arran and North Coast & Cumbrae), works across council services including regeneration/transport/housing/growth & investment to ensure that current and future Council activity and policy is island-proofed including maximising the potential of major programmes of investment in North Ayrshire.

☐ Sarah has regular pilot progress meetings with SGov and HIE

☐ Currently participating in a working group looking at population zones to address population decline

☐ The Arran Recovery Plan provides a comprehensive statement of the programmes required to deliver the objectives of Arran 2030. The ARG plan is aligned with the Objectives of the National Islands Plan, in time, all areas will become focus areas.

☐ Currently drafting the island plan much of which will be lifted from Arran Recovery plan with national and stakeholder input added

☐ Island Programme funding coming on stream soon - £30M investment form SG Infrastructure investment plan – capital/infrastructure funding covering transformation and well-being projects

☐ NAC applied to UK Community Renewal Fund for an Island Green Programme – an NA islands specific integrated package of 3 projects – business support fund/accelerating towards net-zero and an island connectivity study.

☐ TT asked if because plan not ready would that prevent Arran accessing the £30M fund – Sarah confirmed no and that we should be developing projects and going for funding now as projects will fit in with, and align to the plan in its development.

☐ Sarah hopes this provides some context as we progress with the development of the island plan. She then provided a timeline indicating the key milestones this year and that it was important that Arran recognises this is the island communities plan and not a local authority or government plan. It is key that the work of the Locality Planning Partnership in undertaking their priority refresh is considered and that it's essential the priorities identified are included in the island plan.

BC 17th June is next locality meeting TB will ask for Island Governance to be put on agenda. Meeting agreed that we need clear guidance and leadership to support the delivery of the plan. TT suggested that the next scheduled meeting on the 25th June could be a face to face (or as much as possible) to help further development of The Delivery Plan.

The formal meeting ended at 11.00 am

AOB/ Vox Pop: Context: Lots of numbers, now need real life experience input from Islanders.

All: Heart felt inputs from a cross section business, community and age groups These are honestly held beliefs and would be generally supported across the Island. They are therefore real and should be shared. If those beliefs are not correct, they can be addressed separately but they indicate people's perception.

Next steps: Agreement from participants for further distribution. A cover note will be added to explain the exceptional circumstances and then shared with media outlets.

Brodick Hall: Brodick hall transfer of ownership is a key issue it is the islands key community facility, consultation was done at a poor time, a stand needs to be taken against ongoing community ownership and management of assets. If ongoing costs are going to be covered elsewhere why not for Brodick Hall. Suggestions to Tom on how to progress this issue

Regards Tom

14/06/21