

ARG Meeting Notes on the 20th August...Draft.

Bill Calderwood, Tom Tracey, Andrew Stirling, Vicki Yuill, Tom Jessop, Jude King, Sheila Gilmore, Timothy Billings, Neil Arthur, Sheena Borthwick-Toomey, Linda Johnston, Alastair Dobson, Susan Foster,

Apologies from Sarah Baird, Ruth Betley, Ian Staples

- **Summary of Notes:**

Identify Issues and Priorities for Ministerial discussion: The primary objective is to be heard above the loud voices of Island and Mainland neighbours.

Population:

- Clyde Island 12% of the population and 61% of the depopulation. Arran population declined by 8% in the last Census.
- Arran has 23% of housing stock empty or second homes. There are twice as many second homes as social homes. Arran has a critical shortage of affordable homes.
- Arran has 139 staff shortages (HSCP, Education, Private Sector) from recent survey. Using FoA baseline data, this represents £5.4m GVA hit to the Arran economy. The private sector survey received 6.4% responses. Conservatively, 200 or £7.9m GVA is the more likely impact. Additional 200 staff needed for 2030 growth plan.
- Staff shortage comparison: UK data shows that vacancies represent 2.5% of working population. On Arran it is 7% or 10%. NAC unemployment rate is joint second highest in Scotland. Go figure?

Transport:

- Clyde Islands has 21% of CalMac's serviced population and 49% of passengers.
- Ardrossan to Brodick is the busiest Ferry Passenger route in Scotland. Both pieces of data emphasise the dependency on Tourism.
- Fraser of Allander study indicated that the ferry service represented £170k GVA/Day.

Economic Impact:

- Fraser of Allander identified a high dependency on tourism in the Arran economy with a significantly disproportionate COVID impact on the economy and community.
- Over the last two years the Arran economy reduced by 65% and 22% respectively on 2019 levels. Primarily caused by COVID restrictions, helped by poor ferry service.

Conclusion:

Most Islands suffer from Service Access Inequalities (Transport, Health and Housing). In addition, it costs more and pays less. This is balanced by a strong sense of community and high quality of life. COVID significantly exaggerated these issues on the Islands. When negatives exceed positives, depopulation is the result. Clyde Islands are the primary source of Island depopulation.

COVID apart, the unreliability ferry service and the lack of affordable housing are the primary reason for Arran's population decline, staff shortages and economic slowdown. The problems are significant. The response should match the scale of the problem.

Details:

- The objective of the meeting was to identify and prioritise our issues supported by facts where possible and projection based on facts and stated assumptions based on papers already distributed.
- **Transport/Ferry:** Bill, pulled together the CalMac data which is the base for much of the work. A subset of the AFC met with the Transport Minister. (Unofficial notes issued separately by Sheila). Same message delivered for 3 years +. We need a Commercial. Problem solving, Customer focused Operator with a “can do attitude) On the plus side the Minister had taken the time and was listening. A good start but we need visible measurable actions now to improve the service.
- **Economic Impact:** Tom Jessop, using Bill’s carrying numbers as a baseline and STEAM spend data calculated the Economic Impact on Arran’s tourist economy, including carry over expenditure into other sectors. The projection is £54m for 2021 or £15m. 22% down on 2019. Add this to the 2020 impact of £45m or 65% and we have a **£60m negative impact** to the Arran Economy over the two years. One consistent piece of information was that almost all businesses are working below capacity because of staff shortages. This may need to be another factor added into the model. We will work on and finalize this through next week. General discussion on linking this information to other sectors through the FoA data and getting NAC do it and own it. We should be able to reference everything back to the £170 k/day Ferry Benefit to the Island. Will discuss how this can best be achieved with NAC. Tom T.
- **Staff Shortages:** Sheila did an excellent piece of work in identifying staff shortages supported by Ruth, Susan and Shirley. In summary there are 139 identified from the survey (Education 13, HSPC 19, VA 107). The HSCP has been running at this level for the last 3-4 years with increasing workload. Similar duration in Education. VA membership have identified a sharp increase in vacancies with many operating below capacity for the first time ever. The Primary reason for vacancies, as in every survey back to 2017, is a lack of affordable housing with the addition of Brexit and Covid. General stress caused by additional work falling on fewer people was highlighted as a significant and growing issue.

We need to do more work to extrapolate the 107 number up to reflect the position on the island’s full tourist sector and make some assumptions on the “others”. We need this to make comparisons with other Islands and the mainland. Tom T will work with Sheila on this.

Also, need to re-invigorate the Skills Training Plan and put it to actions. Alastair agreed to follow up on this.

- **Identify Issues and Priorities:** Tom T distributed the paper with amendments added by the group. This was the basis of the discussion.
Several comments: In general the right stuff. Needs a little work to top and tail. The primary objective is to be heard above the loud voices of Island and Mainland neighbours.
Clyde Island 12% of the population and 61% of the depopulation.
Clyde Islands 21% of CalMac’s serviced population and 49% of passengers.
Ardrossan to Brodick the busiest Ferry Passenger route in Scotland.
- Several comments against each of the sections which where all Strategic Objectives from NIP and as such part of the 2030 Plan.

Population: As we decrease in population so does our share of funding.

Housing: Need to give it more of a bite. Vicky, Timothy, Sheena happy to take input. If it can be made "bulletproof". Alastair, suggested just support the ADT may do it as encompasses the detail but perhaps lacks the bite. More work. Will issue update next week.

- **Delivery Plan Update: As per Sarah's mail:**

Vicky commented that the consultation needs to avoid talk of strategy and talk about Outcomes and Actions. General agreement from the group. Folk are tired of consultations. Need to focus on specific pieces of work. Vicky would like to be involved in the Short Life Oversight Group that will be working with the communities to validate and prioritise their needs. A few folks have asked to be involved in this and as there is only one rep from each Island I will kick it off we will figure out how we can do this.

The next ARG meeting will be on the 10th September and the primary update will be from Sarah on progress and timings with the Delivery Plan

Timothy updated the group on correspondence with Craig Hatton which recognised and supported Arran 2030 Island in Balance. Timothy also informed the group that Audrey Sutton will be off work for the next 8 months. All members of the group wish Audrey well and a safe return. An interim Director will be appointed, and we will continue our Governance conversations with them.

- **ARG Response to Island Bond Consultation:**

- Paper issued earlier: General agreement with paper. Additional comment that it needed a transparent process for distribution of funds. We should use the fact that we have a 2030 Plan to attract people to the Island. That is; we have a plan for their medium- and long-term future.
- Thank you for your support and engagement. The next meeting will be the 10th September.

Tom Tracey

20th August:

- P.S

Digital Connectivity: I log this an issue for discussion at a subsequent meeting. However, Andrew and Alastair asked to include it as a holding position. Data and Communications

*Establish a **Digital Readiness Hub**, to support businesses and residents in reaping the benefits of data & digital technology [supplementing and supporting the valuable work that ACVS has been doing for vulnerable members of the community]. The hub will aim to start work on establishing a data platform accelerate moves to co-creation by empowering*

(b)

- *Work with the community to ensure that all are included in the planning/implementation of fixed and mobile broadband network enhancements. Also work with the community on the integration of new infrastructure in an environmentally sensitive way [This includes work relating to the [recently published Shared Network Plans for increasing mobile coverage](#) – where the use of more numerous and higher masts is the traditional approach*