



Ross of Mull & Iona Community Plan 2011

In 2010 the Ross of Mull (including Pennyghael and Tiroran) and Iona were identified by Highlands and Islands Enterprise as being an area which could receive support through their Growth at the Edge (GatE) programme. This involved supporting an anchor organisation, in this case Mull and Iona Community Trust, to facilitate community growth through the employment of a Local Development Officer and the creation of a Community Plan based on consultation with the local community and a socio-economic analysis. The project is funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise & LEADER.

The document will always be open to suggestions and changes from the community and should not be regarded as being inflexible.

Pennyghael village, A. MacCallum



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Kilvickeon Beach

Introduction

"It is a beautiful place to be brought up and you get to know everyone really well." Oban High School Pupil

About the plan

In creating this plan, we aim to define our scope of activities over the next 5-10 years and give you an insight into how wide our ambitions are to be a sustainable community and where we, as a community, intend to go. The plan is an opportunity for our communities to control our development and implement projects, which will be of direct benefit to the Ross of Mull and Iona.

We recognise Argyll and Bute Council as being partners in all areas of development and we aim to work better with the council and other agencies in order to implement the actions detailed in our plan.

Ross of Mull & Iona

The Ross of Mull (including Pennyghael and Tioran) makes up the area on the south west peninsula of the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. The Isle of Iona is separated from Fionnphort on the Ross by a mile wide stretch of water known as the Sound of Iona. The area, famous for its diverse and beautiful natural landscape, not only attracts high numbers of visitors each year but instils pride in the local people who live here. There are four main villages in the area – Pennyghael, Bunessan, Fionnphort and Iona – each with its own village hall. Apart from the main villages there are many small clusters and townships across the area e.g Kintra, Tioran and Ardtun.

Where we are now...some interesting facts

The Ross of Mull and Iona has a population of 730, showing a rise of approximately 13.6% since 2001. This is in contrast to the population of Argyll and Bute, which fell by 1.4%. The number of young people between the ages of 16-19 years rose by 200%, from 9 to 27, between 2001 and 2009 and those aged 5 to 19 years remained constant and make up 16.4% of our population. Our workforce is ageing slightly, however this gives motivation to provide opportunities for our young people to encourage them to settle here. Furthermore the proportion of young people in our area is a reason in itself why, as a community, we must plan for the future. Our lack of crime and minimal unemployment further enhance the rationale that, on the Ross of Mull and Iona, we have the indigenous resources to enable our communities to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

What the people of the Ross and Iona say...

The results of the household survey commissioned by HIE showed that, overall, 84% of people were satisfied with the Ross of Mull and Iona as a place to live and more than 60% of residents felt optimistic about the future. 86% of respondents felt part of the community to a greater extent or to some extent. People were most likely to agree that we have an accessible GP surgery and good primary school. Issues included transport, social housing, job opportunities and the state of the roads.

Members of the community were asked to share their ideas for possible projects for the area in both the household survey and the consultation sessions in the village halls. The ideas were wide ranging and included housing, infrastructure improvements, business ideas and community facilities and each theme is covered at points throughout this plan.

We invite you to join us on this journey. Regardless of whether you are a community member, representing a community group, a public agency or a private investor we ask that you form a partnership with us to ensure that the Ross of Mull and Iona grows socially and economically in a way which is sustainable and fitting for our community.



"Where do you see the community in 15 years time?"

How the plan was created...

Community ownership of the Ross of Mull and Iona Community Plan is a necessity. In endeavouring to achieve this, extensive community consultation has been carried out including public sessions, one to one consultations, visits to local groups and a household survey.

The Local Development Officer is overseen by a steering group made up of sixteen members of the community. Care was taken to ensure that there is representation of each area on the group and also representation from the main employment sectors, fishing, agriculture and tourism.

In November there were six consultation sessions in the four village halls across the Ross and Iona. The purpose of the meetings was to encourage participation from the community by getting together to discuss the issues they face, their ideas for the future and the aspects of the area which they appreciate and hope will continue. The events were informal and provided an opportunity for people to write down their thoughts and engage with other community members in discussion. Refreshments were provided by local groups – Ross of Mull playgroup, Iona playgroup and the SWRI.

It was clear from the sessions that there was much interest in the possibility of developing the three piers in the area, in order for the locality to benefit more from them. As a result of this, two more consultations were set up for those in the community who regularly use the piers and focused on what kind of development people would like to see at each pier. One meeting was in Fionnphort and one on Iona, both were well attended and it was evident that members of the community shared similar priorities for development.



The enthusiasm from the public was encouraging at the meetings and many people requested feedback and so another round of consultations was held in January to provide this and to prepare people for the forthcoming Highlands and Islands Enterprise household

survey. This time there were three sessions, one in each village hall except Pennyghael. Pennyghael has a very dispersed and ageing population and many were unable to attend the initial consultation session. As a result of this a phone around was arranged, so that each household was given the opportunity to participate.

A household survey from Highlands and Islands Enterprise was sent out to 333 households in early February. The aim of the survey was to gauge the level of community confidence in the area and it will be repeated in 3-5 years to see if the Growth at the Edge project has had a positive impact. 48% of households returned their survey; this was a good result and has provided us with a strong base of information to build on.

The information gathered from the community at the consultation sessions, one to one conversations and the household survey has been combined with a socio-economic analysis of the area to produce the Ross of Mull and Iona Community Plan.

Our Vision

In 10 years time the Ross of Mull and Iona will be a proactive community, developing practical ideas and opportunities to achieve a balanced, socially and economically viable and prosperous population.

The Ross of Mull and Iona will be an even more attractive place in which to live, work and visit, by revitalising our fragile and distinctive settlements and communities, with an upgraded infrastructure, wholly in keeping with our outstanding natural environment.

Our Outcomes

In carrying forward our plan we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- **A larger and more balanced population**
- **A fit-for-purpose infrastructure**
- **A stronger more diverse business base**
- **Increase in average household income**
- **Strengthened local culture**
- **Improved community resilience**
- **A fully developed social infrastructure**

The following sections of the plan will detail the actions which we will take in order to achieve the above outcomes. We are aware that the current economic climate is difficult and it will be necessary to agree priorities. In order to carry out the plan, we aim to develop local support from new and existing groups and individuals, to help prioritise and push forward our community plan.

1. Population

Our population has increased steadily in the last 10 years. However, to bring forward a more balanced demography, we need to understand more about housing needs and demand. With that knowledge, we can work towards a more dynamic population structure.

The population of the Ross of Mull and Iona is approximately 730 people and has increased by 13.6% between 2001 and 2009. This increase is healthy in comparison to Argyll and Bute as a whole which saw a population decrease over the same period. From the statistics relating to the 2001 -2009 period we can also see that the number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years rose from 9 to 27 and the number of children between the ages of 0 and 15 years stayed constant. There was a slight drop in the working age population and an equally small increase in those of pensionable age.

The above statistics relating to our demography paint a healthy and promising picture for the Ross of Mull and Iona as population growth, in itself, is a prerequisite for economic growth. People recognise that our young people will be the future leaders of our community and encouraging families and young people to remain in the area should be a priority. However, it should be pointed out that in the same period of time those of working age in our community have fallen from 64-60% and those in retirement have increased from 20-24%.

There has been an increase of some 60 dwellings built within the last 10 years.

There are a number of matters which need to be taken into account when considering maintaining and growing our population, for example infrastructure, employment opportunities, services for the young and old, education and facilities. Each of these will be examined in subsequent chapters of this plan.

In order to encourage people to remain in the area one of the biggest challenges is adequate housing for both families and small households. This was reflected throughout the consultation meetings and over 60% of respondents stated that housing was a priority for the area in the results of the household survey. In 2010 Argyll and Bute Council produced a Housing Needs and Demand Analysis which identified that 81% of the housing need on Mull and Iona cannot be met, this is intensified by the lower than average turnover of housing stock.

Currently there are 43 units of social housing in the area, the majority spread between Fionnphort and Bunessan and one unit on Iona – there is no social housing in Pennyghael. The existing stock of rented social housing belongs to West Highland Housing Association and Argyll Community Housing Association. In addition to this, the Iona Housing Partnership, a community run housing association, has recently purchased land for building four housing units on Iona to address the lack of year round affordable accommodation on the island for local people– over 40% of the housing on Iona is holiday accommodation.

It is encouraging that we have the level of capacity in our community, as demonstrated by the Iona Housing Partnership, where we can begin to address issues relating to housing for ourselves. In considering the Ross of Mull, it is apparent that there is a lack of detailed information about the type of accommodation which is required and a more specific study relating to the Ross should be carried out in the first instance.

Actions

- **Carry out a comprehensive market appraisal of housing, incorporating a housing need survey for the Ross of Mull. As a complement to this study there will be an analysis of investigation into barriers to development and land ownership**
- **Support the Iona Housing Partnership in creating affordable housing on Iona**
- **Influence planning policy to support a wider demographic mix**

2. Physical Infrastructure

The Ross of Mull and Iona is a very remote area, it has the Scottish Government Classification of remote rural which describes areas with a population of less than 3000 people and a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement with a population of 10,000 people or more. This increases our dependency on all forms of transport, making it essential that our transport infrastructure is fit for purpose. Drip feed funding has not reversed the deterioration of our infrastructure and more innovative means of addressing these challenges must be found.

Piers

There is an operational pier in Fionnphort, Iona and Buessan, all have slightly differing functions but each is essential to one or more of the following sectors – fishing, transport and tourism. All three piers are owned by Argyll and Bute Council.

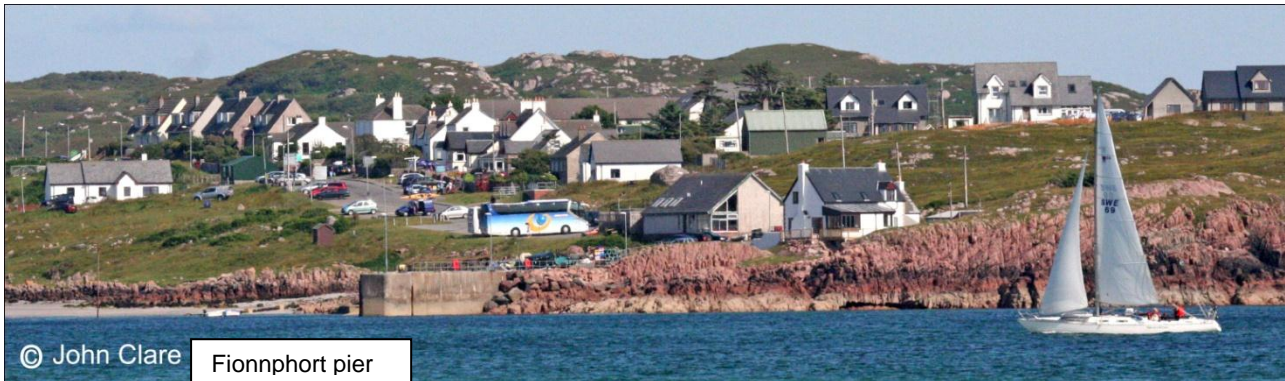
The rich marine environment of the Ross of Mull and Iona results in fishing contributing significantly to the local economy. There are currently eight vessels working from Fionnphort and six from Buessan, which are fished by approximately 12% of the working age population of the area. The catch mainly comprises brown crab, prawns, lobster, velvet crab, crayfish and scallops. In 2009 the catch landed between Buessan and Fionnphort piers was £1,169,453; this amount was higher than anywhere else on Mull.

In addition to the importance of the piers to the local fishing industry, Fionnphort and Iona piers are essential for the provision of a transport link between Iona and Mull. Iona is separated from Fionnphort by a mile wide stretch of water known as the Sound of Iona. The route is serviced by Caledonian MacBrayne and ferries operate daily providing a necessary link for locals, visitors, commuters, home carers, medical services and supplies. The total number of passengers transported to and from Iona in 2009 was 232,215, a 4.48% rise from the previous year.

The Iona ferry carried 232,215 passengers in 2009, a 4.48% increase on the previous year.

A significant portion of the above figure will have been visitors to Iona and this is not surprising considering the strength of our natural and cultural environment. The marine heritage is also an attraction to people who visit on holiday and there are numerous yachts which sail around Mull and Iona in the Summer time, many looking for safe overnight mooring and places to eat and to stock up on supplies.

From the above, it is clear that the pier infrastructure in each village should be of a high standard in order to support the local economy. Unfortunately, at the moment, this is not the case.



Fionnphort pier is a slipway with a breakwater which provides limited shelter from high winds. The ferry lands on the slipway and fishing boats and other, smaller, passenger boats can tie up at the side depending on tidal conditions. There are limited facilities for pier users and inadequate shelter for the high number of visitors. Water is situated at the top of the breakwater making it difficult for fishing boats to use, lighting is on the wrong side of the pier to be beneficial to fishermen and other smaller vessels but is of use to the ferrymen and there is no electricity available. There is limited parking for fishermen and their vehicles. The pier can become crowded in the summer months with the high number of visitors queuing for the Iona ferry and fishermen landing their catch.

Alongside berthing is only possible in Fionnphort in ideal weather conditions, and so, when not in service and overnight, the ferry, MV Loch Buie, is berthed in Bull Hole alongside the island, Eilean nam Ban. Although there is safe berthing here for the ferry and other boats, the ferrymen need to undertake a journey each morning and evening by dinghy to transfer the ferry to the slipways. This journey is done throughout the dark winter months and often during adverse weather conditions, with associated risks.



Across the Sound, Iona pier has a slipway used by the ferry which has no shelter for the ferry in times of unfavourable weather conditions. There is also no indoor waiting area near the ferry where passengers can wait with their luggage in wet and windy conditions, bearing in mind that cars are not authorized on Iona without a permit. There is also a small jetty alongside the slipway

and this is used by passenger boats which visit Staffa and the Treshnish Isles and other small vessels including the shuttle boats transporting passengers from visiting cruise ships.

Bunessan pier was constructed from granite in 1846 and was built to provide a place for cargo ships and passenger ships to tie up and unload. There is a deep water anchorage along the coast at Bendoran and a deep water channel which links to the pier. The pier can be used in all tidal conditions except very low spring tides. There is the option of alongside berthing for two boats. Fishermen use the pier and moor their boats in the bay

or at Bendoran. The pier has been renovated twice in twenty years and facilities include parking, water, lighting and electricity.

Bunessan has been a favourite stopping place for yachtsmen over the years, due to the sheltered anchorage it offers. Over the last few years the number of yachts in the bay has declined, this may be because the nearby boat yard has closed down and there are no longer shower and laundry facilities. The Argyll Arms Hotel in Bunessan is being refurbished and a shower block, especially for yachtsmen, will be in use by 2013. There are few moorings available for visiting yachts and small boats and this was seen by the community as being a wasted opportunity.



Bunessan Pier, J. Noddings

The need for solid infrastructure is reflected in the response from the HIE household survey and the community consultation meetings. The two consultation meetings which were specifically about pier developments were attended by 45 members of the public who all saw developing the pier areas as not only a necessity for day to day life but as an opportunity to generate income for the community in the future. The scale of development which has been discussed varies from short to long term projects, before we can begin to carry out any of these projects the appropriate studies and research must be carried out.

Actions

- **Develop a mini-master plan for each of the piers – Fionnphort, Iona and Bunessan. This will include the relevant engineering and ecological studies and will address the feasibility of any development.**
- **A variety of options will be examined which will lead to a full options appraisal and identification of the preferred way ahead.**
- **The intention is that each pier will have short term and long term development projects associated with it.**

Roads

It has been documented that the condition of the roads in the Ross of Mull and Iona is worse than anywhere else in Argyll and Bute. Respondents of the household survey were least likely to agree with a statement that implied we had adequate roads. The main road, A849 needs serious attention and the side roads are in such a state of disrepair that local people have been working to fill in potholes, voluntarily, to ensure safe passage to work and school. Apart from the effects of the inadequate roads to local people living and working here, the adverse economic impact which poor infrastructure could have on business and tourism is a growing threat.

“Improve the roads to a standard suitable for summer traffic.”

Community member,
Pennyghael

There is no doubt that, currently, we are experiencing an uncertain economic climate but nevertheless the issues we are experiencing regarding our infrastructure need to be addressed. We need a fresh look at how we can ensure investment in our roads and maintenance and this will involve forming new partnerships and new thinking to address problems within our infrastructure.

Villages

The Ross of Mull and Iona is renowned for its beauty. In spite of this, throughout consultation with the public, many described the lack of attractiveness within each settlement. The extent of the comments varied between each village but there are instances of unsightly refuse areas, under investment in public buildings, unappealing frontages and poor condition of council owned properties and pavements. The attractiveness of our village centres should be enhanced so as to increase the vibrancy and vitality of the area; we should be working towards encouraging the organisations involved in our villages to be more responsible for maintenance.

Renewable Energy

The communities of the Ross of Mull and Iona are over-dependant on the use of fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transport. Investigations into reducing this over-dependence are ongoing and options are being considered for the most appropriate action to be taken, examples include small schemes to power public buildings such as the village halls. Local people are in support of island wide renewable initiatives which benefit the local communities.



Actions

- **Continued informing and influencing of our representatives and officials of local, national and European government to secure new investment into our roads and harbours.**
- **Increased partnership working with Argyll and Bute Council**
- **A fresh investigation into how we can encourage investment into our local infrastructure – roads and villages**
- **Work with the rest of Mull and other fragile communities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels**
- **Be proactive about renewable energy sources to benefit the community**

3. Business, Employment and the Economy

In the last 10 years the predominance of our primary industries has reduced and the economic importance of tourism has increased. Nevertheless the great potential of added value still exists in our primary industries and we need to address how to strengthen our business environment.

Tourism, Agriculture and Fishing

Tourism is the main economic sector in the Ross of Mull and Iona.

According to a recent socio-economic analysis three times as many people depend on tourism in the area for income than on the public sector. The fact that there are over 54 businesses in the area related to tourism further illustrates its importance to the Ross and Iona. While tourism is a key sector in the Scottish economy, the Ross of Mull and Iona are over dependant on the

George at Buessan Show, J. Greenhalgh, Round & About



In 2009 the gross value of the catch landed locally was £1.2 million; this amount was higher than at any other landing site on Mull.

success of tourism patterns. Other key sectors of the economy including business services, knowledge based activities and general added value (e.g. fish processing) are under represented in the area and this could result in a serious risk to the local economy should tourism go into decline.

The primary industries, fishing and farming, are also of critical importance to the area and there is more primary sector employment in Ross of Mull and Iona compared to the

rest of Mull. Agriculture is the main source of income for approximately 10% of the working age population of the Ross of Mull and Iona. There is little arable land in the area and lamb and beef make up the main produce from the agricultural sector. Many crofters supplement their income by also working in fishing or tourism.

Many local farmers and crofters find themselves facing barriers and threats to the success of their crofts and farms on the Ross of Mull and Iona. These include the cost of fuel and ferry transport to the mainland for sales, and the threat of increased weight restrictions on the roads which would impact on delivery of supplies into the area as well as the transportation of livestock out. External forces such as these are impacting adversely on the future of agriculture in the area.

Fishing, as discussed in section 1, is an important source of employment in the Ross of Mull. There are currently 14 boats, which fish from the piers in Fionnphort and Buessan, employing approximately 30 people. The catch mainly comprises brown crab, prawns, lobster, velvet crab, crayfish and scallops and, after landing, is transported off the island – the majority to the continent and the rest to be processed in Eyemouth. Many see

In the last 10 years employment in primary industries has fallen from 22% to 15% and increased from 27% to 29% in tourism related

this as a lost opportunity with the fishermen making a small profit compared to those who sell it on the continent and the processors.

Business & Employment

In order to have a vibrant and wide-ranging economy it is important to consider both the demand and supply aspects of business. Demand relates to healthy businesses looking to increase employees, improve the product or service they provide and increase profits.

The supply needed to meet this demand comes from the workforce and the availability of materials and supplies.

Key benefit
claimants in
ROMI: 7%
(A&BC: 13%
Scotland:
16.5%)

In terms of business 29% of the working age people in the area are self employed. This figure is higher for our communities than anywhere else in Argyll and Bute. It shows that people in our area work hard and have drive and ambition, this is an aspect of our economy which should be encouraged and supported where possible. We need business advice and support services readily available in the Ross of Mull and Iona to provide assistance for those who require it.

A problem which arises for businesses in the area is the lack of business premises. At the moment there are several buildings which are empty and unused across the area, this provides a possibility to create opportunities from property which already exists and in turn increase the vibrancy of our villages. This was a main concern for respondents of the household survey with many stating the need for a café, visitor centre, craft centre or similar in the main villages to provide a social hub and to increase attractiveness and vitality for visitors and locals alike.

Other issues include infrastructure which has already been discussed in a previous chapter; however it must be reiterated that an improved physical infrastructure would impact very positively on our local businesses.

In terms of employment people on the Ross of Mull and Iona work hard. 81% of people in our area are economically active, the highest figure when compared to figures for similar island communities such as Coll and Tiree and those for the whole of Argyll and Bute Council. The percentage of those claiming key benefits in the area is significantly less than that of Argyll and Bute. It is interesting to note that the number of people who are on job seekers allowance in the area falls by almost half every May and rises by a similar amount in November each year. This illustrates the important effect of seasonal employment in communities such as ours.

29% of our working
age population are self
employed.
(A&BC: 12%
Scotland: 6.6%)

Respondents of the HIE household survey felt that there were inadequate employment opportunities on the Ross and Iona, particularly for young people. 18% of the sample declared that they were considering moving away from the area in the foreseeable future and employment was the reason given by most when asked why. Currently on the Ross and Iona there are limited training opportunities to help people to achieve qualifications and learn new skills. If the objective is to strengthen and expand the business base in the area it is a necessity that the appropriate opportunities are available to develop a skilled workforce to support it.

It is clear that in working towards creating a more vibrant and diverse economy there is so much already in place which can be built on. The challenge is to provide supportive structures to enable existing businesses to improve, new businesses to begin and to give people the potential to continue to develop new skills through training and apprenticeship programmes.

“How do we encourage local people to start new businesses when the risks to begin can be so daunting?”
Community member,
Bunessan.

Actions

- **A study to look at how to create opportunities to add value to our primary produce – farming, fishing and forestry**
- **Examine the potential business opportunities of existing premises across the area. This will include the appropriate feasibility studies and surveys**
- **Press for the upgrading of our ICT infrastructure in order to support businesses and employees alike and to open up the labour market more for the people who live here**
- **Enable a local business support facility to provide support and advice for existing and new businesses**
- **Investigate the creation of more training, education and apprenticeship opportunities for the area, working with organisations such as UHI, Business Gateway, Chamber of Commerce, FSB and Skills Development Scotland**

Culture and Heritage

Our heritage and culture make our communities particularly distinctive and, through them, the character of the area is reinforced. In order to ensure that our culture and heritage remain an important part of community life we need to create further opportunities to allow them to develop.

The communities on the Ross of Mull and Iona all have their own identities. This could be attributed to the fact that the area is rich in culture and heritage. Local people take pride in this culture and heritage and visitors are drawn to it.

The landscape of the Ross and Iona tells us a story of early economic development. The abandoned villages of Shiaba and Knocknafenaig are evidence of the original inland



villages where people farmed before the potato famine and the highland clearances, after which many were forced to leave the area for America and Canada. Those who remained moved nearer the coast and began to forge a living using the sea. Today each of the main villages on Mull and Iona are all situated on the coast.

© John Clare

Suidhe, Bunessan

The Ross of Mull contains three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, identified by Scottish Natural Heritage, and these are at Ardtun, Ardanish and Carsaig. Burg is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest. A large area including Uisken, Scoor, Carsaig and most of the Pennyghael area is a Special Protection Area because it is a breeding ground for Golden Eagles.

There are three historical centres in the area. Tigh na Rois Visitor Centre, next to the old corn mill in Bunessan, tells the story of the Ross of Mull. It has interpretive displays, photographic, oral and documentary archives; and library and research facilities. The Mull and Iona Ranger is also based here. The Iona Heritage Centre is in the old manse on Iona and tells a history of Iona which includes information on fishing, crofting, historical events and geology. There are a number of artefacts on display and also an area to have snacks and drinks. There is also the Pennyghael in the Past Historical Archive at Tiroran which has an admirable collection of primary data and artefacts relating to the Pennyghael, Tiroran and Gribun area.

The Isle of Iona is world famous for the arrival of St Columba in 563 AD who built the original abbey. Although nothing is left of the original abbey, the 13th century abbey church was restored in 1899 and the residential buildings during the twentieth century, resulting in a fine example of a Benedictine monastery. People visit Iona every year to view the abbey and visit the beautiful beaches which surround the island. The abbey is now in the care of Historic Scotland.



Iona, G.Bruce

For people who live on the Ross and Iona there is pride in our culture which comprises traditional music, arts and the Gaelic language. Gaelic conversation classes are held locally. Feis Mhuile used to take place in the Ross of Mull, bringing people of all ages together for workshops in musical instruments, Gaelic singing and Gaelic conversation. The Feis no longer operates in this part of the island apart from Gaelic singing workshops for the children and other activities in Tobermory.

The Ross and Iona are steeped in culture and heritage and, in order to keep traditions and history of our area alive, we need to make the stories, folklore and culture more available to our young people. Not only do the culture and heritage of the area provide opportunities for education, they can also promote social cohesion in communities and reduce isolation. This is already visible in relation to the Ross of Mull Singers, Remembering the Ross sessions at Tigh na Rois and the Storytelling Group.

Many of the annual events in the area are run by volunteers who are passionate about carrying on traditions while enjoying social interaction with community members. For example, the Bunessan Show is an agricultural show which has been running for approximately 125 years and people still volunteer to keep organising the event, which celebrates farming and crofting, gardening, arts and crafts and ends with a dance with traditional music.

Our culture and heritage is important to us on a number of levels and we aim to promote it and ensure that it remains in the lives of the communities of the Ross and Lona for years to come.

Actions

- **Develop an improved interpretation of the area through an equal partnership between communities and agencies such as Historic Scotland, National Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and Argyll and Bute Council.**
e.g a long distance pathway from Craignure to Fionnphort with appropriate interpretation
- **To work with the resources we already have in place i.e. Tigh na Rois Visitor Centre, Pennyghael in the Past and Lona Heritage Centre and the Mull and Lona Ranger Service in order to continue to educate our young people about local culture and heritage.**
- **Form a relationship with the Mull and Lona Gaelic Partnership so as to encourage greater Gaelic provision in the schools**
- **Work with Feis Mhuile to try to bring some Feis workshops back to the Ross and Lona**
- **To encourage more performances and workshops from Mull Theatre and An Tobar in the Ross and Lona**

Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure

The social infrastructure which supports the quality of life on the Ross of Mull and Lona has developed through statutory and voluntary investment. However with budget restrictions upon us it is imperative that the key elements of our social infrastructure are properly developed and supported.

A healthy community will have a wide range of services and facilities which form its social infrastructure. These services and facilities will include health, transport, education, leisure facilities and community groups and organisations. By aiming to strengthen the social infrastructure in the Ross of Mull and Lona we will promote well being across our communities improving community innovation and quality of life for all.

Health

It is encouraging that, according to the HIE household survey, most respondents from the Ross of Mull and Lona agreed that we have an accessible GP surgery and from the consultation meetings people are confident that we benefit from a high standard of healthcare. However, it should be documented that there is currently no health visitor or midwife based at the surgery in Bunessan. The health visitor and community nurse are based in Tobermory and the midwifery team is based in Oban, both visiting the Ross and Lona regularly. In addition, a chiropodist, physiotherapist and community psychiatric nurse all visit the surgery monthly, the optician and consultant psychiatrist visit quarterly and the dentist visits fortnightly in his mobile dental unit. Until now care for the elderly has been provided through Argyll and Bute Council's Homecare Service. However the council have now decided to put the care of the elderly out to tender and so a new organisation will be contracted to provide the service.

Education

There are two schools in the area, Bunessan Primary and Iona Primary. Bunessan Primary has 36 pupils on the school roll and Iona Primary has 6. Both primary schools have a pre-five unit attached and provide five 2.5 hour sessions per week for 3-5 year olds. Most respondents to the household survey agreed that the Ross and Iona have good primary schools, however, most disagreed that the area had good access to a secondary school. At present, young people stay in Glencruitten Hostel in Oban through the week and attend Oban High School.



Bunessan Primary P4-7 – trip to Burg. *E. Wilkins*

Young People

Roughly 21% of the population of the Ross and Iona is made up of children and young people from birth to 19 years, with the number of 15-19 year olds trebling between 2001 and 2009. One of the strengths of our community lies in the willingness and enthusiasm of the people who live here to volunteer their time to do activities and clubs. As a result there are two playgroups in the area, a children's music club, four sports clubs, a nature club which operates on Iona and in Bunessan, two Sunday schools and Brownies. It is clear that there are many activities which the younger children can enjoy. Unfortunately, the household survey results showed that people felt that the Ross of Mull and Iona catered less for teenagers than for any other group. There are no sports facilities in the area and no play areas for younger children.



Bunessan Iona football match 2011. *G. Bruce*

Transport

There are both bus and ferry services in the locality, which have regular and frequent timetables in summer and reduced timetables in winter. There is no Sunday bus service in winter and

so a car share scheme is operated by volunteers. As the bus follows the main road route from Fionnphort to Craignure, a car is a necessity to those who live in outlying settlements and this can be a problem, particularly for the elderly and infirm. Until recently a carer/driver was employed through the Supporting People programme which ensured that the elderly and less able in the area could attend medical appointments and lunch clubs. This has ceased in the last few months due to lack of funding. There are people in our community at the moment who are unable to attend necessary appointments and, with 29.3% of our local population being of pensionable age, there is a concern that this situation may worsen as time goes on.

Lack of transport is also proving to be a problem for the primary schools. Formerly, there was a minibus in Buinessan which was used for school transport and to transport the children to Buinessan Hall for PE and on educational visits. The minibus was redistributed by Argyll and Bute Council, to a school in Oban, despite it being necessary for the Buinessan children to attend Physical Education lessons (the school has no sports hall and the local village hall is used for PE). The Parent Teacher Association has managed to pay to hire a private bus service to take the children to and from swimming lessons in Craignure but this is taking a substantial amount of the funds and will not be able to continue for much longer. The additional transport costs make other educational visits difficult to arrange.

Village Halls

There are four village halls in the area which play a large part in community life and all hall committees are working towards improving them. At the moment Pennyghael Development Association are working with Community Links Scotland to regenerate the Pennyghael Community Hall; Creich Community Hall has undergone major exterior refurbishment; Buinessan Hall Committee are looking to extend storage space; there have already been refurbishments done to Iona Hall and the committee are keen to carry on improving it. At the consultation meetings people were in agreement that our village halls are a precious resource and we should be using and supporting them as much as possible.

Community Organisations

Across the Ross and Iona, there are currently 45 community groups in operation all run by volunteers and ranging from Badminton and Yoga to storytelling. In addition, 22 annual events are held across the area and again all are run by volunteers. We have dedicated coastguard and fire services in the area and again these are manned by volunteers and are vital to life in the area. It is evident that the level of volunteering and community spirit is high in the communities of the Ross of Mull and Iona. The reorganisation of service provision by Argyll and Bute council will prove to be an increasing challenge for volunteers in our community and may see volunteer capacity being stretched to the limit. Pressures on volunteers to meet these changes will be a challenge for the future.

“There is great community spirit here!”

Community member, Fionnphort

Actions

- **Develop a strategic community run transport scheme which will take into account the needs of all age groups. This will involve research into a community vehicle**
- **Work towards providing children’s play areas in the main settlements**
- **An investigation into the provision of an all weather sports facility**
- **Support facilities which encourage socialising and interaction while reducing isolation**
- **Create community notice boards in order to keep people up to date with events, meetings and activities**
- **Work with existing organisations in the area to provide more activities for our young people – e.g. Camas, Tavool, Stramash**

“Some form of kids play area would be wonderful for residents and visitors alike” Community member, Iona.

- **Support the four village hall committees in our communities and projects which they are undertaking**
- **Working with communities and individuals in the Ross and Iona to maintain and increase capacity in ways which pertain to each settlement**

How does the Ross of Mull and Iona Community Plan fit in with European, national and local government outcomes?

The actions identified in this plan are consistent with the outcomes of LEADER, the Scottish Government and those of Argyll and Bute council. Fitting with European, national and local strategies is, not only, important in the success of our plan but will help us to attract more support in implementing it.

LEADER outcomes

- An increase in the accessibility of information, support and services within the rural community
- An increase in the sustainability of the voluntary sector
- An increase in the number of community groups that identify and successfully deliver community priority projects
- An increase in the number of community-based actions to enhance the rural heritage of Argyll and the Islands
- An increase in the sustainability of tourism within Argyll and the islands
- An increase in cooperation between the aquaculture and fishing sectors and the wider rural community.

National outcomes

- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Scotland (1)
- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our young people (2)
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens (4)
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed (5)
- We live longer, healthier lives (6)
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger (9)
- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need (10)
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others (11)
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations (12)
- Our public services are high quality (15)

Argyll and Bute Council Single Outcome Agreements

- An area that is accessible, yet retains its remote character
- Vibrant local economy that is based on core attributes of the area, flexible and open to new opportunities
- Well-connected economically and socially
- High quality public services and leisure/community facilities that attract people to settle in Argyll and Bute
- Partnership working across all sectors to coordinate developments, market Argyll and Bute and remove constraint
- Well balanced demographically with young people choosing to stay or move to the area
- Proactive communities where local people and organisations look for and create opportunities
- Dynamic public services with more delivery of high quality 'professional' services from Argyll and Bute
- Partnership working across all sectors to coordinate developments, market Argyll and Bute and remove constraints
- Communities that encourage lifelong learning
- A sense of history with a view to the future
- Communities that are culturally rich with a desire to excel
- Safe supportive communities with positive culture and sense of pride in the area
- Housing that is appropriate and affordable with local people able to participate in the housing market
- High quality environment that is valued, recognised and protected
- The environment is respected as a valued asset that can provide sustainable opportunities for businesses

Proposed Timescale

The proposed timescale, shown below, is a break down of the main projects identified in the plan and shows an estimate of how long each stage is likely to take. It is very difficult to gauge this and the timescale will be subject to change and if, at any time, a project appears to be no longer feasible it will stop. The main priorities are included in the proposed timescale, other actions, such as supporting existing groups, will be ongoing and are not included below.

Timeline will go here!!!

Thank you for reading the Ross of Mull and Iona Communtiy Plan, we hope that you recognise the effort which has contributed to its creation. We are committed to following this plan through and if you have any thoughts, comments, or a desire to become involved with any of the projects mentioned, please contact me. This plan would not have been produced without the commitment of the local GatE steering group, the involvement of the people in the local communities across the Ross and Iona and the support of Mull and Iona Community Trust, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and LEADER.

Thank you,

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