

# 5<sup>th</sup> Islands Strategic Group Meeting

Thursday 4 October 2018, 13:00

## Attendees

### Council Representatives

Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Alastair Buchan, Chief Executive, Orkney Islands Council

Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive, Argyll & Bute Council

Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council

Cllr Roddie Mackay, Leader Comhairle nana Eilean Siar

Cllr James Stockan, Leader, Orkney Islands Council

Cllr Robin Currie, Islands Policy Lead, Argyll & Bute Council

Cllr Steven Coutts, Leader, Shetland Islands Council

Cllr Allan Henderson, Vice-Convenor, The Highland Council

Cllr Alex Gallagher, Cabinet Member for Economy, North Ayrshire Council

Karen Yeomans, Executive Director (Economy & Communities), North Ayrshire Council

Paul Maxton, Orkney Islands Council

Peter Peterson, Executive Manager, Chief Executive Department, Shetland Islands, Council

### Scottish Government Representatives

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands

Fiona Simpson, Assistant Chief Planner

Dean Brandon, Assistant Private Secretary to the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands

Murdoch Macleod, Location Director for the Outer Hebrides

Karen MacNee, Head, Rural Communities

Catriona Maclean, Head of Rural Economy & Communities

Gail Clapton, Local Government Policy & Relationships

Adam Scott, Divisional Office Manager, LGAS

## **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

1. Meeting began with Mr Wheelhouse, the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands welcoming everyone to the fifth meeting of the group. As there were a number of new members to the group, attendees (as per list above) quickly introduced themselves.

## **2. DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING ON 11 JULY 2017**

2. Draft minutes from the meeting of 11 July 2017 were agreed.

## **3. THE ISLANDS ACT**

3. The Minister mentioned the Stage 3 debates and briefly covered the contents of the Act; those sections that had been commenced today and those that were to commence at a later date. The Minister also covered the commencement of the Shetland Mapping requirement, covered heavily in the media and advised that he was aware that the Additional Powers functions had also been of interest. The two areas with timescales, the National Island Plan and the Additional Powers were the initial priority.

4. In discussion, members made a number of points including:

- Development of a mechanism for Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs) and guidance to bring this into effect as soon as possible.
- Although ICIAs have not yet commenced, this mind-set should be encouraged in advance of the legal backing to ensure Bills currently in the process of being implemented are also encouraged to comply with the Islands Act, reducing the need for retrospective corrections in the future.
  - The Minister would raise this message with ministerial colleagues
- Rural colleagues will be engaging with the Act and considering island and rural affairs in tandem
- Acknowledge areas of crossover work, such as Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty
- Waste regulations may need to be reviewed with respect to islands.
- A desire to start the process as soon as possible.
- Potential of using the format from discussions with other groups as a base template, if all were agreeable.
- Marine licenses
  - This area will be taken forward by other officials who were not included in the meeting, as the section of the Act relating to this has not yet commenced.

#### **4. ICIA & NATIONAL ISLANDS PLAN**

5. The Minister introduced this item and acknowledged that some discussion on the ICIA had already been covered. It was considered how the Islands Plan and Community Plan can operate together to avoid duplication of effort and consultation fatigue.
6. It was mentioned that the National Islands Plan could dovetail into local plans, making it easier for people to engage. The Gaelic Plan was referenced as a positive example of national and local co-operation.
7. There was recognition of opportunities for a coherent framework, covering all policy areas, to ensure measurable and tangible outcomes.
8. There was recognition of the need for the Act to be a living document, open to review, with milestones reflecting desired outcomes.
9. It was mentioned that early reporting on progress will be useful for short- to medium-term goals but may not cover long-term impacts. Format may need to be adjusted to include some indicators of long-term changes.
10. A need for mainland bodies to consider island councils and communities in their own processes and decision-making was mentioned.
11. A need to include other public bodies not named on the schedule was raised.
12. A need to identify resources and availability of group members in order to organise meetings was recognised.
13. Responsibility for the Islands Act currently still to be decided within Rural Economy & Communities and it was suggested that councils also decide how to allocate responsibility so that a collaborative approach can begin.
14. Further discussion covered the financial impact of the National Island Plan and the influence it would have on resource allocation alongside other plans including the Infrastructure Investment Plan, Scotland's Energy Strategy and the recently published Climate Change Plan. The Minister highlighted the importance that the First Minister and senior Ministers place on delivery of the National Islands Plan and that there have already been discussions with other Ministers on matters of a cross-portfolio nature.
15. Mention was made of HIAL, self-directed support and the Fuel Poverty Bill, the latter being one where the Minister acknowledged that island concerns could have been dealt with better and that an early review of the final version would be appropriate.

## **5. REVIEW OF THE ISG**

16. The review of the ISG's work had been raised in earlier discussions with acknowledgement that there was a lot of short-term work required. There may also be a need to reconsider the purpose of the group in the long-term as there are already established groups covering some similar work areas so rather than duplicate work streams, some incorporation could be considered by these groups.

17. This suggestion was seen as sensible as it would bring in the Leaders and would include transport amongst other issues.

18. It was accepted that others would need to be incorporated into the group and officials would check what other meetings were arranged that could coincide with the ISG – possibly with CoHi etc. – as well as the length and timing of meetings.

19. The Minister asked for future meeting contributions and there were offers to distribute papers on fuel poverty from Councillor Coutts, self-directed support from Councillor Stockan and waste issues from Mr Sneddon.

20. Officials agreed that after the meeting they would approach councils to obtain the identity of a contact to work collaboratively with on the next steps of implementing the Act e.g. development of the ICIA tool.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

21. It was agreed that there should be a dialogue between local authorities and central government regarding the Community Planning Consultation.

22. Ferries were mentioned and the Minister acknowledged he was aware of the issues and that these were being taken seriously. It was agreed that matters relating to ferry services could be raised in future meetings and it would be helpful to have a dialogue with ISG members on such a key issue.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

23. A meeting at some point after the Islands Consultation to discuss the outcome was suggested. This would be agreed with Officials and the council individuals identified to take forward the collaborative work plans.