

REPORT ON MEETING OF LOCAL ECONOMIC FORUM TO COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP - 05 JUNE 2006

Scottish Water issues were discussed. SW resources are limited, and these are now holding back economic and housing development. It has become apparent that SW was planning on the basis of a reducing population in the Highlands, when in fact, there are other agencies who aim to grow the population of the area.

National Transport Strategy (NTS). In other circumstances the NTS would inform regional and local transport strategies, however at present all these are currently under consideration. The NTS is a consultative document with just over 60 questions that the Executive is asking. Priorities are economic development and social inclusion.

It was generally agreed that each organisation should respond (13th July 2006 deadline) and the LEF would put in a response of its own.

Pilot projects should run for at least a year so that the public can ascertain that it is in place. Integration (buses meet ferries meet trains) of transport is an important issue.

Argyll Air Services New airports on Coll & Colonsay and improvements to Oban airport are almost complete. The service proposals are with Europe for approval, and then tenders will go out, probably at the end of the summer. A Development Manager has been appointed to get the airports licensed. Licensing is dependent on physical inspection of airports, not plans, so construction needs to be completed before licensing can be implemented. The airfields determine that island planes will be used and therefore availability issues will have to be addressed.

Future of LEF and Enterprise Company Boards (LEC)
In view of the common membership and interest of the LEF & LEC boards, it was agreed to hold both meetings on the same day. A LEC would look at the LEC only business, then all common business covered by the LEF part of the meeting. The efficiencies of time and people in view of the geographic constraints are obvious, and dates will be circulated to all involved.

Ken Abernethy provided an update on activities involving population growth and maintenance. Population growth has been taken on as a priority by H&I Enterprise and a new team is being established to focus on this. In AIE there is a project to encourage people to move to Kintyre as part of a lifestyle choice. Articles will be written in outdoor sports magazines that will show people that they can enjoy their activity close to home and work.

It was noted that the local papers are full of pages of job adverts and employment appears to full. Some of these relate to vacancies out with the circulation of the local paper. It was noted that should population growth be successful, pressure will be transferred to elsewhere, perhaps housing or water supply but this

did not affect the reasons for encouraging population growth.

Josephine Stojak explained the context of the Clinical Service Strategy of the NHS Highland, Argyll & Bute Community Health Partnerships. The main society issues include:

- Aging population
- Birth rate
- Consumer expectations
- Life expectancy

and health issues include:

- Specialization (no more general surgeons)
- Quality
- Manpower issues
- Aging workforce
- Emergency admissions
- Health improvement
- Policy initiative (e.g. waiting times)

These are being considered against the issues raised by the Kerr Report and issues that are particular to Argyll:

- Over 75
- Single - handed practitioners in rural practice
- Aging workforce
- Community expectations/concerns
- Low level of un-employment in the workforce - the labour pool is limited.

Ken MacTaggart outlined some of the data in the **Strategy Progress Measurement**. Data shows:

- New business starts in Argyll decreasing compared to previous years.
- 3825 businesses in the AIE area.
- Unemployment follows a similar profile to other years, but with a trend of more people in employment.
- Visitors to about 25 visitor attractions within the AIE area indicate that overall numbers have declined slightly.
- Bed occupancy in hotels etc compares well with Scotland overall.
- Population of Argyll & Bute over the last 10 years has been constant at about 90,000

Jane Fowler provided details and background to the **Rural Development Programme for Scotland 2007 - 2013** Consultation (deadline is 27 June 2006). This is looking at:

1. Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS)
2. Land Management Contract (LMC)
3. EU Leader (Leader)

There is significant concern that the opportunities presented by the Rural Development Regulation to develop integrated rural economies are not taken forward in this consultation document. A number of excellent joint initiatives like Rural Business Rings, joint marketing would not be eligible for funding. It was noted that it would be better to use existing groupings, (CPP, LEF, WHELK) and not create new bureaucracy.