

SHORELINE PROJECT PUBLIC CONSULTATION : SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE AND FEEDBACK

Details of Events and Publicity

Public consultation sessions were held at the Council's Service Point, Jamieson Street, Bowmore from 10.30am-12.30pm on Friday 27 November and from 10am-12.30pm and 1.30pm-4.30pm on Saturday 28th November. A session for 5th and 6th years students at Islay High School took place in the afternoon of Friday 27th November. Friday sessions were hosted by Richard Heggie and Susan Galloway of Urban Animation, with Neil Sutherland of Neil Sutherland Architects and Brian Burns of Brian Burns Associates joining the team on Saturday. Willy Inglis, Islay Estates Factor and Malcolm Younger of CKD Galbraith also attended intermittently.

An advert and letter were published in Islay's local newspaper, The Ileach, which ran front page and centre page coverage of the story. Emails were sent to several individuals or groups who had been contacted previously.

Press releases were sent to the Argyllshire Advertiser, Oban Times, Campbeltown Courier, Scotsman, Herald and a number of professional journals. It is not known if any of these published the story. However, it was featured by forargyll.com, Islayblog.com, Islayinfo.com, scottishproperty.co.uk, urbanrealm.co.uk and argyllcommunities.org. BBC Alba filmed an interview with Richard Heggie and this was broadcast on the evening news programme 'An La' on Tuesday 1 December 2009.

Project and consultation information were available at www.urban-animation.com, including details of the events and a copy of the questionnaire, which could be filled in online and emailed, or printed off and posted. Copies of the questionnaire were also left with the Council's Service Point. Large display graphics and a power point presentation were used at the consultation sessions.

It was clear from informal discussions with numerous local people over the weekend of the events that there is good awareness of the Project amongst the population. The Ileach has been a particularly useful means of spreading information.

Public Consultation Sessions - Attendance and Response

Numbers attending the sessions were :

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Friday morning public session | - 14 |
| Friday afternoon school session | - 20 |
| Saturday morning public session | - 20 |
| Saturday afternoon public session | - 23 |
| Total | - 77 |

The Urban Animation office also took several email queries and a few phone calls asking about the Project.

All who attended the consultations sessions were asked to complete a questionnaire. Twenty-one of those responding live in the Bowmore area, with the remainder spread across Islay. Numbers returned were :

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| At public sessions | - 21 |
| At school session | - 17 |
| By post | - 9 |
| By email | - 5 |
| Total | - 52 |

In some cases, couples filled in only one form. Some took forms away and promised to return them by post. Many people took a great deal of time over responses to our challenging questions. Most people attending the sessions stayed for at least 15 minutes. Many stayed for at least half an hour. Some stayed longer! Most people participated fully in good natured and lengthy discussion of the issues at hand.

Approach to Information Gathering

Whilst the 'red line' Project site is the focus of the study, there are a number of broader considerations and issues which set the context for the proposals. Some of these are relevant to Islay as a whole, others relate to Bowmore in particular. The consultation exercise therefore aimed to set the Project within the wider context, ensuring that local people were aware of those matters the Project could control and others which might only be influenced, relying upon other private, public or community interests for action.

It was important to illustrate knowledge of Islay, Bowmore and local issues to give members of the public confidence that their views are understood. The efforts of the team to gain this local knowledge through visits, discussions and background reading appeared to be appreciated (including by one individual who posed a few trick questions to test our credentials!).

Much time has been devoted to preliminary discussions with local community leaders, businesses agencies and individuals. Through this process, key local issues have been identified. These were highlighted through display material, the questionnaire and discussion sessions. It was helpful for the team and those who attended the sessions to have an agenda to respond to, since there was no detailed development proposal on the table. Many people were pleasantly surprised to have the opportunity to comment before the development proposal had been prepared, reflecting the aim of achieving a genuine consultation.

Feedback Received from the Questionnaire : Public Responses

The following summary takes each question posed in the questionnaire and sets out the range of responses and the number expressing a view.

1 - Some people say housing is expensive in Bowmore and on Islay and more affordable housing is required. What do you think? Would you like to move house if you could find a suitable property?

More affordable housing is required (22)
I don't want/need to move (9)
Lack of housing for young people (7)
Lack of housing for key workers (6)
Houses needed for locals - not more holiday homes (6)
Housing is generally too expensive (6)
I want/need to move/larger house (5)
General shortage of houses (4)
Housing for elderly required (2)
Need plots for local people to build on (2)

2 - Some people say a bigger supermarket is needed, or that the Co-op needs some competition. What do you think?

Protect village centre / Main Street and small shops (14)
I would like a bigger supermarket (12)
I don't want a bigger supermarket (11)
Competition not needed /Islay can't support another supermarket (10)
Competition required for Co-op (9)
Wider choice of products / better service needed (7)
Move Co-op to site with better parking / access / unloading (3)
Cheaper shopping required (2)
Supermarket should sell local produce (1)
Need alternative to Co-op when weather delays deliveries (1)

3 - Some say supermarket shopping must be on Main Street, others say it can be on the edge of the village. What do you think?

Keep supermarket shopping on Main Street / in village centre (22)
Supermarket shopping would be better at the edge of the village (8)
Any site with good pedestrian access and parking would be fine (4)

4 - Some people say there are car parking problems at Main Street and road safety issues at main junctions. Do you think there are problems and how can they be solved?

More / better parking should be provided (12)
The parking and road problem is not serious (6)
Better road markings / enforcement (5)
I have road safety concerns (5)
People should park more kindly (4)
Relocate Co-op and larger shops / new supermarket elsewhere (4)
Bypass Bowmore with a new road (3)
Council should address these long standing problems (2)
Discourage vehicles in Main Street, encourage walking (2 each)
Dedicated Co-op car park required (2)
Provide parking behind Co-op or at shore west of harbour (1 each)
Provide communal electric vehicles, introduce 20mph limit, one way system (1 each)
Demolish Village Hall and build car park (1)
Improve disabled or priority parking in village centre (1 each)

5 - Are community and leisure facilities adequate at present? What improvements would you like to see?

New/cheaper/better multi use village hall or building /sports centre (12)
Facilities are generally adequate (10)
Improve existing facilities and use them more (including village hall) (6)
Facilities are not good enough (6)
Need facilities for teenagers (6)
Better play areas for children (6)
Soft play for young children (5)
Better sports pitches (4)
A permanent library, not just a mobile one (4)
Youth / cyber cafe (4)
Improve schools (2)
Drop in advice centre, cycle/skateboarding, old people's home, tennis (1 each)
Dance studio, family centre, meeting rooms, cinema, (1 each)
Sports changing, sports centre, campsite at Bowmore, large function space (1 each)
Joint campus community school with sports centre (1)
Improve harbour area (1)
Shared craft shop space for local businesses (1)
Fitness classes out with swimming pool (1)
Dog agility training centre! (1)

6 - Some people say Islay needs improved attractions and more hotel beds for tourists and visitors. Some say there are too many holiday homes. What do you think?

Too many holiday homes (12)
More bedspaces needed (9)
Visitors like the peace and quiet (5)
Holiday homes are not a problem (4)
There are enough bedspaces already (3)
Need better hotels, not more / Ferries can't cope with current visitors (2 each)
More restaurants / Campsite at Bowmore / Cafe overlooking Loch Indaal (1 each)
I don't want more tourists / Good mix of locals and visitors already (1 each)
Need more quality accommodation / need bunkhouse or youth hostel (1 each)
Hotels need to market themselves better (1)

7 - What positive changes would you like new development at Bowmore to achieve?

More housing /affordable housing for locals / key workers (14)
Leisure and community facilities for all ages / better services (11)
Increase revenue for Islay / Create jobs (5)
A more motivated / successful / integrated community (4)
A quality development for the community / something to be proud of (3)
Increase visitor numbers (3)
Better car parking or traffic management (3)
Use renewable energy / low carbon construction (3)
Better shops / supermarket / Bowmore bypass (3 each)
Establish local needs and meet them (2)
More or better tourist facilities, campsite, (2 each)
Don't want any new development (2)
Improve relationship to sea / wheelchair accessible walks at shore (1 each)
Affordable meeting rooms, cyber cafe, restaurants, Travel Lodge hotel (1 each)
Encourage healthy lifestyles (1)
It will spoil the character of Islay (1)

8 - Do you have any concerns about changes new development might bring to Bowmore and Islay?

Need to protect village centre/local businesses (10)
Need to ensure the new development is properly integrated with existing (7)
Concerns over road safety and access routes (5)
No concerns (5)
The development will be a benefit to Islay / growth is needed (4)
Concern over increased traffic (4)
Without community 'ownership' or support it will not succeed (3)
Concern over large supermarket / too much retail space (3)
Urban sprawl and ugly development / respect village character (2 each)
Don't build holiday homes (2)
Ferries can't cope / provide adequate facilities / crime (1 each)
Council should upgrade schools / water supply / WWTW (1 each)
Protect Battery walk / over reliance on tourism (1 each)
Ensure private and affordable housing are of compatible design (1)
Concerned there will be more 'trouble' / too close to WWTW (1 each)
Development area is too large / in wrong place / Primary school can't cope (1 each)
Population should be spread throughout Islay, not just Bowmore (1)

9 - What other points would you like to make? What questions do you have?

(Where there is duplication with requests for facilities already mentioned above, this has not been recorded within summary answers to this question.)

Put development elsewhere (eg by hospital, form a bypass etc) (4)
Don't open a road between the schools (4)
Should development be sited next to WWTW? (3)
Aim for carbon neutral development / biomass heating system? (3)
Would like future consultation and to see development ideas (2)
Don't develop Battery / retain Battery walks and open fields (2)
Work together with marine energy initiatives to meet housing needs / provide quality jobs (2)
Ferry services are inadequate (2)
Make this a development for local people and for real benefit of Islay (2)
Protect otters at Shoreline (2)
How can development be integrated with Loch Indaal / sea (1)
Council can't cope with road repairs / schools need investment (1 each)
Encourage Estates to sell off ruined houses throughout Islay (1)
Will air ambulance still be able to use playing fields / Will Boys Club have new premises (1 each)
Great initiative, Islay needs to be reborn (1)
Can water system cope with new development (1)

Feedback Received from the Questionnaire : School Student Responses

Responses from the school session have been summarised separately, since the survey group was a distinct section of the local population. Only two of the students lived in Bowmore, with more living in the Port Ellen area (7), Ballygrant/Port Askaig (4) and Jura (3). 17 questionnaires were returned, all at the school event.

1 - Some people say housing is expensive in Bowmore and on Islay and more affordable housing is required. What do you think? Would you like to move house if you could find a suitable property?

Houses needed for locals - not more holiday homes (5)
More affordable housing is required (4)
Flats required (3)
Lack of housing for young people (2)

2 - Some people say a bigger supermarket is needed, or that the Co-op needs some competition. What do you think?

Wider choice of products / improve or extend Co-op (6)
Co-op is fine (6)
Protect village centre / Main Street and small shops (5)
Competition required for Co-op (2)
Competition not needed / Islay can't support another supermarket (2)
I would like a bigger supermarket (1)
I'd like to complain about the Co-op (1)

3 - Some say supermarket shopping must be on Main Street, others say it can be on the edge of the village. What do you think?

Keep supermarket shopping on Main Street/in village centre (13)
Supermarket shopping would be better at the edge of the village (1)
Location not important (3)

4 - Some people say there are car parking problems at Main Street and road safety issues at main junctions. Do you think there are problems and how can they be solved?

More parking required (7)
The parking and road problem is not serious (5)
There is a parking problem (4)
Better road markings / enforcement (2)
Encourage walking (1)

5 - Are community and leisure facilities adequate at present? What improvements would you like to see?

Improve existing facilities and use them more (6)
Improve extend swimming pool / gym (3)
More community / leisure facilities needed (3)
Youth / cyber cafe (2)
Better sports pitches (1)
X-scape adventure/theme park (1)

6 - Some people say Islay needs improved attractions and more hotel beds for tourists and visitors. Some say there are too many holiday homes. What do you think?

Too many holiday homes (15)
More hotel beds / B&Bs / restaurant required (5)
There are enough bedspaces / visitors already (3)
Holiday homes are not a problem (1)
Use existing hotels more (1)

7 - What positive changes would you like new development at Bowmore to achieve?

*More or better housing /affordable housing (11)
Leisure and community facilities (2)
Increase economic activity and visitors / Create jobs (2)
Reopen Islay Farmers outlet (2)
Protect character of Bowmore (1)
Hotel / restaurant (1)
Increase population (1)*

8 - Do you have any concerns about changes new development might bring to Bowmore and Islay?

*It could ruin the character of Bowmore and Islay (7)
Loss of scenery / peace and quiet (5)
No concerns (4)
Protect Battery area (3)
Might add more holiday homes (2)
Need to protect local businesses (2)
Traffic congestion (1)
It could increase visitors -there are already enough (1)*

9 - What other points would you like to make? What questions do you have?

(Where there is duplication with requests for facilities already mentioned above, this has not been recorded within summary answers to this question.)

*Improve what's already there instead of building more (5)
Bring benefits to local people, not incomers (1)
A facelift for all villages is required (1)
Improve schools (1)
No need for new 'iconic' buildings (1)*

Review of Main Findings

In general, there was a healthy mix of views concerning the likely benefits and threats the development might bring. In some cases, the concerns may well be addressed if people can be given confidence in the scheme as the proposals develop and the Project takes shape.

Many who attended appreciated the opportunity to comment in advance of proposals being produced. A few others may have found it easier to express their views if there had already been a proposal on paper.

Some remain sceptical that Islay Estates Company is committed to a development of quality that will meet local needs and achieve benefits for Islay. Most understand that as a commercial development, it will be necessary to achieve a viable financial outcome. However, there remains some concern that new development could dilute the character and qualities of Islay, unless it is designed to meet local needs and is of an appropriate scale and design.

Some of the key findings were :

1. Broad support for affordable housing for local people, particularly the young and key workers.
2. Competing views on need for a larger supermarket, favouring the protection of Main Street.
3. Broad concerns over lack of car parking, poor road layout and road safety at Main Street
4. Competing views on need for new facilities, set against refurbishment or extension of existing.
5. Various new facilities requested, including cyber cafe and permanent library
6. Mixed views on encouraging more visitors, some resistance to holiday homes.
7. Range of opportunities identified as beneficial outcomes of scheme.
8. Fewer concerns raised and many relate to matters which can be addressed by the scheme.

Amongst the school group, there was a strongly expressed antipathy towards holiday homes and an evident fear of change, loss of island lifestyle and excessive increase in visitor numbers. Improving existing facilities was favoured over the provision of new buildings such as community and leisure centres.

In general, the quality of feedback was excellent, with many people willing to participate in open group discussions and spend significant time completing the questionnaire. Most people understood that some of the issues, particularly within the village centre, do not have simple solutions and may need concerted effort by a number of partners to achieve progress.

A few points raised in discussion at the sessions were not mentioned in the questionnaires. These include dissatisfaction with the public square at Main Street, Bowmore and a willingness by the local football club to share use of any new changing facilities or pavilion with other sports clubs using the pitches adjacent to the Shoreline site.

Conclusions

In responding to community views, the following principles should be addressed in the preparation of development proposals -

1. The development should seek to respond to local needs;
2. Protect Main Street as the retail and commercial centre of Bowmore and Islay;
3. Opportunities to promote partnership approaches with other agencies should be fully considered;
4. Land uses, routes and building form should be designed to achieve integration with the village;
5. Pedestrian and vehicular access routes should be carefully considered;
6. Other parties should be encouraged to address parking and traffic issues in the village centre;
7. Delivery of affordable housing opportunities for local people will be an important issue.

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Director

Urban Animation

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