

Assessment of Social Capital on Rum and the Small Isles

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1. Executive Summary

- Rum is owned and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on behalf of the nation. The current population of thirty one residents is highly reliant on SNH for employment and housing. SNH has direct responsibility for most of the on-island infrastructure. Since the late 1990s SNH and the community have recognised a need for socio-economic development on Rum, consistent with the NNR designation, to ensure its long term sustainability.
- To facilitate socio-economic development, the SNH Board agreed to a policy of land release in 2002. Plans for new housing, community facilities and business opportunities were developed. However, to date no land has been transferred and none of the projects have come to fruition. In 2007, a Rum Development Trust was formed to create a vehicle through which land can be transferred to the community.
- The Minister for the Environment, Michael Russell MSP, visited Rum and Eigg in late September 2007. As a result of the visit, the Minister asked for further research on the social capital of Rum and the other Small Isles, in order that an informed view might be taken about the prospects for a community-based approach to social and economic development on Rum.
- This research project therefore addresses two questions: 1) Is the existing Rum community capable of managing some, or all, of the publicly owned assets on Rum? 2) If not (or only in part), is there social capital elsewhere in the vicinity which can be tapped into to provide the necessary skills and experience?
- The research was undertaken in October and November 2007. All the residents over 12 years old currently resident on Rum were interviewed in person or by phone by one of the research team. This was supplemented with visits to the other three Small Isles to interview residents active in community affairs, telephone interviews with key stakeholders from the public and voluntary sectors, and analysis of plans and strategies for Rum produced since 1998.
- There is no 'indigenous' population on Rum with the longest length of stay being 18 years. As housing is tied to employment with SNH it is not possible to remain on the Island beyond retirement age. Hence no resident is aged over 60. There are also no permanent residents aged 11 – 20. The primary school currently has three pupils and there are two pre-school age children.
- It is an (almost) universally recognised fact amongst the current inhabitants of the Island that there are two 'camps'. Both camps are numerically small but highly influential in Island life. One group appears to see themselves as the true 'community' and they strongly assert their long term commitment to the Island, whilst the other is represented by the SNH managers. Most residents, however, see themselves as 'non-partisan' and try to avoid conflict or taking sides.
- The economy on Rum is almost entirely structured by SNH. SNH is important as a stable source of income but economic development is hampered by dependency on one agency and a lack of access to housing and business

premises. Housing is tied to positions within SNH. These present significant barriers to an individual wishing to set up an independent enterprise.

- Some of the Island's current residents have prior experience of running businesses. Furthermore, independent businesses have been established on the Island (e.g. a stalking co-operative, a wood carving business and a craft shop). However, these activities are, at least to some extent, dependent on SNH resources. The current residents were able to identify a number of potential business opportunities, particularly in tourism and land based activities.
- It is clear that there are a number of individuals on Rum with extensive land management and hospitality skills although these residents are currently mainly SNH employees. The availability of such skills in the future is crucially dependent on the long term commitment of these individuals to the Island.
- The Community Association (CA) has become involved in a number of different aspects of life on Rum in recent years. One of the main achievements of the CA was the 'Sound of Rum' Music Festival which ran from 2005 – 2007. This demonstrates some capacity for collective community action and provides evidence that there is experience of project management and attracting external finance to the Island. However, some doubts were raised about particular aspects of the event's organisation such as the clear up operation and the quality of the community consultation.
- There is no doubting the determination and commitment of many of Rum's current residents to the future success of the Island. However, the lack of a shared sense of community on Rum inhibits the ability of existing residents to make the most of the skills and competencies that are available to them and to unite behind a common set of objectives.
- There is a fundamental mismatch in terms of how different Rum residents view the level of skills and experience amongst the existing population. Some members of the community believe that skills levels are high. However, there are other residents who believe that the community on Rum is too small and exclusive, with a skills set that is too limited, to take community development forward without external assistance. In addition fears were expressed that the new Rum Development Trust would not be truly inclusive, legitimate and effective.
- There is a high level of commitment on the part of public agencies (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Highland Council and housing associations) to the future development of Rum.
- The community on Canna have experience in hospitality and land management. However, they lack capacity in certain areas (project management, finance etc) and are working with the National Trust for Scotland as the owners of the Island to address some of these gaps.
- Eigg has been community owned since 1997 and they have established inclusive governance arrangements through the IEHT. There has been extensive improvement of the community infrastructure over the last decade. But while Eigg seems to possess the necessary skills and expertise for

community development there is limited appetite for direct involvement in Rum's affairs.

- Muck has been privately owned by the MacEwen family since the 19th century. The current Chair and Vice Chair of the Small Isles Community Council live on Muck. This body concentrates on education, ferries and waste issues. Again while there is evidence that the Islanders possess a range of valuable skills there is little enthusiasm for any direct intervention on Rum.
- The main findings from the research are summarised in Section 8 of the report and indicate that there are negative and positive aspects associated with the future potential of Rum for social and economic development. In response to the two questions posed in the research brief the first conclusion is that the community, as presently structured and constituted, is too small and transient and lacks sufficient social and human capital, to assume more responsibility for the management of its own infrastructure. Secondly, whilst there is ample experience within the Small Isles of community based social and economic development there are capacity and logistical constraints which limit the scope for any significant involvement on Rum.
- In the final paragraphs of the report the research team offers some pointers which may assist policy makers and the community in deciding their future direction of travel in relation to social and economic development. These refer, inter-alia, to: the restoration project for Kinloch Castle; the composition of the new Rum Development Trust; the creation of an independent community/economic development post; and resolution of the long standing deer management issue.

2. Introduction

The Small Isles

- 2.1 Canna, Eigg, Muck and Rum form a group of four islands located off the west coast of Scotland known as the 'Small Isles'. All four islands are very different physically and in terms of land tenure. Rum is the largest and most mountainous of the group, lying approximately 25km from the mainland between the Isle of Skye and the Ardnamurchan peninsula. Eigg is the most fertile of the Small Isles and is home to half the population of the Small Isles Parish. Privately-owned Muck is the most 'gentle' in terms of climate and landscape, while Canna, with its high moorland plateau and good farming soil, is a National Trust for Scotland (NTS) property.

People on Rum

- 2.2 The first settlers on Rum were Stone Age people who lived at Kinloch some 8,500 years ago. By the early 19th century, approximately 400 people lived on Rum but they were 'cleared' and sent to Canada (mainly Nova Scotia) by the landowner at the time to make way for sheep. The population of Rum stood at more than 100 during Victorian and Edwardian times, when Rum served principally as a playground for the wealthy.

Environmental Designations on Rum

- 2.3 Rum was managed as a sporting estate from 1845 to 1957 when it was declared a National Nature Reserve (NNR) under the ownership of the Nature Conservancy. The Island was sold on the understanding that it was to be used "as a nature reserve in perpetuity and Kinloch Castle maintained as far as may be practical" (Love, 2001). In 1992, ownership of Rum passed from the Nature Conservancy Council to Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 2.4 Rum is one of Britain's largest NNRs at over 100 square kilometres, and has a host of other designations. In 1982 the Island was designated as a Special Protection Area for Birds. The Island is also a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive qualifying for 18 Annex I habitats, one of the highest totals. Rum also has 17 sites which are scheduled as nationally important ancient monuments. Rum is also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Together the four Small Isles have been a National Scenic Area since 1978.

Scottish Natural Heritage's role on Rum

- 2.5 Rum is state owned and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) describes the Island as its 'flagship NNR'.
- 2.6 The overall aim of SNH's management on the Island is 'To conserve and, where appropriate, enhance Rum's outstanding natural and cultural heritage, whilst providing a demonstration of sustainable land use and facilitating compatible use of the island for study and enjoyment' (SNH 1998).
- 2.7 SNH staff are engaged in a variety of work on the Island, including serving as harbour masters, servicing the Island's infrastructure, including the power and water supplies, running Kinloch Castle, and managing the NNR. Only one household on Rum is not dependent (either directly or indirectly) on SNH for

housing and income (the school teacher's household). SNH's Reserve revenue budget in 2006/07 was in excess of £480,000. There was also £385,000 of capital projects, including a new deer larder.

Plans and Strategies for Rum

- 2.8 The management policies and prescriptions that govern all SNH activity on Rum are set out in a Management Plan. The current Plan covers the ten year period 1998 – 2008 and is now in the process of being revised and updated. The Statement of Intent that prefaces the Plan outlines a long term vision for a biologically more diverse and productive island. Two key challenges that will affect the achievement of this vision were identified as the control of grazing pressure from red deer and goats, along with measures to re-establish extensive areas of native woodland.
- 2.9 In relation to human capital it is acknowledged that Rum has “the potential to sustain a larger and more diverse human community than can be accommodated today (1998) without compromising the island's natural environment”. Furthermore, there is recognition that employment opportunities beyond SNH, as well as provision for people to remain on the Island following retirement, may have a part to play in sustaining a more balanced community structure. The Plan does, however, state that this concept needed to be developed with care. Moreover, it indicates that the capacity of utility services and housing availability on the Island “means that a significant additional and independent sector of the community is not an acceptable proposition at present”. The Plan states that the main contribution that SNH can make to community viability and cohesion is to maintain or increase the number of staff, to adapt the recruitment process (to take into account children of school age and the skills of partners), to develop appropriate community facilities, and to support the Community Association (SNH, 1998).
- 2.10 The Plan notes that the custodianship and use of Kinloch Castle has been regularly reviewed since the acquisition of Rum because the accountancy procedures associated with a commercial enterprise together with the high maintenance burden fit uneasily with the functions and responsibilities of a natural heritage conservation body. An objective to secure new funding and management arrangements for Kinloch Castle is therefore given high priority.
- 2.11 At the same time as the publication of the Management Plan, SNH commissioned a study to assess in more depth the scope for sustainable economic activity on Rum (Thin, 1998). The findings of the study are pertinent to this current assignment and some of the key points and recommendations to SNH are summarised in Appendix 1.
- 2.12 As a follow up to Thin's study, the Rum Community Association and SNH jointly commissioned consultants to produce a physical framework to guide future development on Rum (Simpson and Brown Architects, 2004). The Plan anticipates Rum's potential in integrating ecological and environmental sustainability and becoming a world class location for green tourism, environmental research and education. The needs and aspirations of the local community were elicited from a 'Planning for Real' exercise held in April 2003.
- 2.13 The Plan indicates that there is considerable potential for expansion in Kinloch village. It is suggested that a growth in population from the current

25/30 to 75/100 over 20 years can be readily accommodated by incremental development and that this would be in conformity with statutory development plans. A series of detailed maps indicate where developments of various kinds (including housing, commercial/light industrial, agricultural/crofting, visitor accommodation, etc) could be located. The capacity of the current infrastructure on the Island is identified as the main constraint on expansion of this magnitude, and provision of a renewable energy supply is identified as the most important action to enable development. The establishment of an appropriate development trust is also identified as a pre-requisite for successful change.

On-island Infrastructure

- 2.14 SNH are currently responsible for providing water, electricity and sewage services on Rum. Power on Rum comes from a hydro-electric generator and a back-up diesel generator. Whilst current service is adequate for the existing community, an increase in population and visitors will require significant upgrading. SNH are currently working on proposals to meet the future energy needs on the Island. Despite continued investment from SNH, the roads from Kinloch to Harris and to Kilmory are in poor condition. A new ferry pier and slipway were completed on Rum in 2004 meaning that transportation of people and goods by 'flit boat' was no longer required.
- 2.15 Built in 1901 for George Bullough, Kinloch Castle is a Category A listed building. It is the only wet weather attraction on Rum. The Castle is in need of major restoration, with SNH currently spending up to £100,000 per year on maintenance alone. There is a 40-bed youth hostel within the Castle providing accommodation for visitors, seasonal workers and contractors. Estimates of tourist numbers to Rum vary, but are likely to be in the region of 6-7,000 visitors per annum.
- 2.16 The Kinloch Village Development Plan (Simpson and Brown Architects 2004) recognises that Kinloch Castle could have a pivotal role to play in the future development of Rum in terms of its economic potential and contribution to public access and environmental education. Reference is made to recent investigations into different development options (Page and Park, 2002) and the first indications from the Phoenix Trust (now the Prince's Regeneration Trust, PRT) about their proposals for the building.
- 2.17 The PRT proposals have progressed to the stage of a formal planning application to create six high quality serviced tourist accommodation units and seven private apartments in Kinloch Castle. It is understood that the current development package includes a new-build 42 bed hostel located adjacent to the Castle's walled garden and two cottages for staff accommodation. The funding required for these plans is substantial.

3. The research project

- 3.1 The Minister for the Environment, Michael Russell MSP, visited Rum and Eigg in late September 2007. As a result of this visit, the Minister asked for further research on the social capital of Rum, and of the other Small Isles, in order that an informed view might be taken about the prospects for a community-based approach to social and economic development on Rum.

- 3.2 This project is a response to that research requirement and has attempted to provide evidence relating to two key questions:
- Is the existing Rum community capable of managing some, or all, of the publicly owned assets on Rum?
 - If not (or only in part), is there social capital elsewhere in the vicinity which can be tapped to provide the necessary skills and experience?

4. Methodology

4.1 Between 25th October and 29th October the three members of the research team visited Rum. They interviewed all residents on the Island at that time. All interviews commenced with a briefing on the purpose of the research and how the data would be used (see Appendix 2). The interviewer then explored a series of key areas:

- Length of stay on the Island and motivation for moving to Rum;
- Professional experience before moving to Rum;
- Future aspirations (including whether long term residency on the Island was desired);
- Employment and livelihood whilst living on the Island;
- Involvement in community life, including the Community Association and Rum Development Trust;
- Perceptions of community life on the Island;
- Current role of SNH/perceptions of SNH;
- Whether the community would be capable of managing some or all of the publicly owned assets on Rum;
- Housing;
- Perceptions of the Kinloch Castle proposals and the likely impacts on the local community.

4.2 Interviews were not recorded. Where possible, two members of the research team were present to facilitate the taking of detailed and extensive notes. Residents who were off-island during the research team's visit were subsequently interviewed by telephone. Interview based research was supplemented with informal interactions with community members during the five day stay on the Island, including for example, visits to the shop.

4.3 On Wednesday 24th October the research team visited Muck, Eigg and Canna. Interviews were conducted with residents who played a key community role and were selected from a list of contacts provided by the Scottish Government. On Muck and Eigg most interviews were conducted on a one to one basis. On Canna a group interview format was used. All interviews commenced with a briefing on the purpose of the research and how the data would be used (see Appendix 2). The interviewer then used a series of prompt questions to investigate the following key areas:

- Demographic profile;
- Employment and livelihood;
- Migration;
- Land ownership/tenure and its relation to community development;
- Role of external agencies;

- Community vibrancy;
 - Relations with other Small Isles.
- 4.4 Questions were designed to ensure consistent coverage but also to acknowledge the particularities of each island especially with regard to land ownership. On the basis of the interviews a skills matrix was completed (see Appendix 3). This enabled comparison of the relative levels of expertise in a series of areas important to rural community development.
- 4.5 A series of twenty telephone interviews were then conducted with key actors not resident on the Small Isles but who have a current or past professional involvement in the management of the Islands. The questions asked varied according to the professional role the person undertook, but all explored the key topics of community capacity and the future socio-economic development of the Island.
- 4.6 The policies, strategies and other documents relevant to the management of Rum written since 1998 were reviewed in order to understand the recent history of efforts of facilitate socio-development and the priorities for the management of Rum and the Small Isles.

5. Brief review of key concepts

- 5.1 Due to the special circumstances on Rum, an extensive literature review was not felt to be helpful for this project. Nevertheless, it is important to briefly set out the definitions of key terms used and the broader political and policy context for this research.
- 5.2 The term 'capital' is most often used to refer to money and material goods. Recently, however, it has been increasingly used in community development literature to refer to the resources available to communities in the development process. These resources, or types of capital, may include natural, built, cultural, economic, human and social capital. For the purposes of this report, social capital is taken to refer to features of social organisation, such as inter-personal networks, trust, values and norms, which facilitate the community development process. This study also focuses on the human capital that exists in the Small Isles, taken to mean the skills, knowledge and values of individuals. Again, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed that high levels of such human capital will positively influence the community development process.
- 5.3 With reference to the broader political context for this research, approaches to rural development have changed markedly in the last two decades. While once the policy solution to the problems of remote rural areas would have relied on institutional intervention and 'top down' policies, contemporary approaches more often draw on the social, economic and cultural resources found in rural communities. Such 'endogenous' or bottom up approaches to development are slowly entering the policy mainstream as experience of their utilisation grows. The best known examples in Scotland have come from the LEADER programmes. At the same time, there has been growing interest in the positive interactions between people and the management of protected areas. Reflecting changing thinking on the purposes of designation and good practice in effective natural resource management, the National Parks

(Scotland) Act 2000 cites four objectives for National Parks: 1) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage; 2) to promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; 3) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public and 4) to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area. Whilst Rum is not a National Park its future management needs to be considered in the context of recent political and policy debate on the nation's protected areas. The need to promote socio-economic development has been prominent in this debate.

- 5.4 Land reform and, in particular community land ownership, has been high on the political agenda since the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament. From 2003, communities have had the right of 'first refusal' when estates come up for sale. Also from 2003 crofting communities were granted the right to buy on a collective basis even if the landowner was not willing to sell. Community land ownership is not a new phenomena (Bryden and Geisler [2007] cite the example of the creation of the Stornoway Trust in 1923 to prove this point), but its popularity is growing in large part because of the initiation of the Scottish Land Fund in 2001 and the support available to community groups through the Community Land Unit at Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). By 2005, £12 million had been committed and over 123,000 ha of rural land was owned and controlled by local communities (Bryden and Geisler, 2007, p. 30). It is in this context of the ascendancy of community ownership as a path to rural development that this research has been conducted.

6. Research Findings - Rum

Introduction

- 6.1 This section discusses the research findings relating to Rum. Data gathered in interviews with on and off-island individuals has been analysed thematically, thus this section is divided into five sub-sections each representing a key theme. Section 7 reports the findings from Canna, Eigg and Muck, particularly in respect of the second question posed in the project brief.

The demographics of Rum

- 6.2 At the time of the interviews there was a population of 31 people on Rum (including children). Nearly all of the employment and housing on the Island are provided by SNH and because there is a fairly regular turnover of staff the population has a significant transient element. Indeed, there are no 'indigenous' people on Rum with the longest length of stay of any resident being 18 years. As housing on Rum is tied to employment with SNH, it is not possible to remain on the Island beyond retirement age. The age profile of the population is thus abnormal, with nobody falling into the 60+ age bracket. There are also no permanent residents aged 11-20. The primary school currently has three pupils.

Constructing 'the community' on Rum

- 6.3 It is an (almost) universally recognised fact amongst the current inhabitants of the Island that there are two 'camps' present on Rum. Both camps are

numerically small but are highly influential in life on the Island. One group appears to see themselves as the true 'community' and they strongly assert their long term commitment to the Island, whilst the other is represented by the NNR Management.

- 6.4 While it is important to recognise the divisions within the Rum community, two points must be made clear if this report is to aid the future socio-economic development of the Island rather than further solidify these differences. First, the information and anecdotes related to us by the residents show that in certain circumstances and at particular times the differences that are apparent between these camps can be forgotten to achieve certain common objectives, for example with regard to education. Second, many Rum residents do not identify solidly with one or the other 'camp', but demonstrate the ability to see issues from different perspectives and value having good relations with everyone on the Island. Indeed, most residents expressed a wish to essentially 'keep out of it' when relations were tense. This was because they had come to Rum hoping to find a peaceful community which they could contribute to. However, for some, 'keeping out of it' was becoming increasingly difficult.
- 6.5 We term those who claim not to be in either camp the 'non-partisans'. The 'non-partisans' are included in community affairs in most circumstances. However, many Rum residents could relate an experience where they had felt that information had not been passed to them or they had not known about a meeting or event. In some cases residents felt that their views were not fully listened to when they had attended community meetings.
- 6.6 All rural communities are characterised by the presence of different groups and by greater or lesser degrees of conflict. However, two things make the Rum experience striking. First is the recognition by virtually all the residents of the Island that particular people and their families are frequently excluded from certain aspects of Rum life. Exclusion was justified by certain members of the community on the grounds that particular people chose not to fully participate in certain aspects of Island life. However, it was also viewed as being the result of the status of individuals as SNH management, which it was argued, meant that they necessarily could not be treated as full members of the 'community'. The second striking aspect is the social status of those subject to exclusion from community life. It is unusual to find the relatively powerful and those with certain resources and competencies (be they financial, intellectual, practical or cultural) left out of key aspects of community life so explicitly.
- 6.7 The selective nature of 'the community' is a problem for at least three reasons. Firstly, it is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the NNR Managers and their families. Secondly, it impacts on the well being of the wider community and hence their commitment to the Island. People who want to live in a relatively cohesive rural community become quickly disillusioned with life on Rum. Thirdly, those left out potentially have much to offer in terms of skills and resources for socio-economic development.
- 6.8 Kinloch Castle, in addition to containing a team which works together well, forms a neutral space which everyone we spoke to was happy to make use of. The Castle was associated with good times and successful social events. In addition the Castle Manager was seen by everyone on Rum as a positive influence able to bridge differences and command respect. This is partly

because of the attributes of that individual and his wife, but also because the Castle Manager's remit is clearly demarcated and his authority over that space seems to be respected by all.

- 6.9 Understanding the differences between people on Rum requires some conception of the basis of these differences in terms of values, beliefs and attitudes. Five days is not enough time to explore fully what individuals think and why, but responses to questioning on the role of SNH revealed the importance of the conception of who owns the Island to shaping attitudes towards its current management. There is an ambiguity at the heart of the idea that the Island is owned by the nation and what this means in terms of rights and the legitimate exercise of authority. Some do not accept that public ownership should enable SNH to have the control that it currently has. Some see SNH as a 'quango' beyond direct democratic control acting more like a feudal landlord. One of the direct results of this difference in conception of 'owned by the nation' is a questioning about rights over natural resource use (timber, deer etc). SNH is itself questioning the kinds of rights and responsibilities it should exercise over physical assets, particularly in Kinloch village. However, conflicts over resource use extend beyond the village. Those who manage the NNR will perhaps inevitably be in conflict with some Rum residents over its appropriate management.

'Doing business' on Rum

- 6.10 The economy on Rum is almost entirely structured by SNH in the sense that a significant proportion of the Island's population is employed by the organisation. SNH is, therefore, hugely important as a stable source of income to many of the Island's residents. At the same time, however, economic development on Rum is hampered by this dependency and, in association with that, the ownership of most housing and other buildings by SNH. Housing is tied to positions within SNH and if an individual no longer works for the organisation he/she is expected to leave the Island. It is therefore very hard for an individual to set up a private, independent enterprise on Rum, and indeed for Rum to attract new residents, unless they are taking up a position with SNH. Currently, Rum is not in a position to offer interested new residents a non-SNH job and a house (as has been the case recently on Canna for example), nor can it offer potential residents premises in which to bring an existing business or start up a new enterprise.
- 6.11 There are some individuals currently living on Rum with prior experience of successfully running their own business (including forestry and tourism-based enterprises), although many of these individuals are members of SNH staff. Some independent businesses have been established on the Island, including a bed and breakfast (run by residents who have now left the Island), a client-based stalking operation (which is run as a co-operative arrangement with separate business entities involved in different aspects of the stalking operation), a joinery and wood carving business, a small craft shop and a self-employed individual undertaking landscape gardening and recycling duties. However, most of these activities are, at least to some extent, dependent on resources belonging to SNH, such as the deer larder, the Island's timber and other buildings and items of equipment and machinery. There was thus some criticism by interviewees that these were effectively 'subsidised' businesses that may struggle to survive in other locations.

- 6.12 Many residents identified a number of potential business opportunities on Rum, although it was recognised that the seasonal nature of many of these opportunities would require individuals to be 'multi-taskers', taking on a range of activities to ensure an adequate level of income. The Island's broadband service is relatively reliable (at least in comparison to the other Small Isles) so there may be opportunities for individuals to set-up IT based businesses, although concerns were raised about the cost of maintaining regular face-to-face contact with customers/suppliers based on the mainland. The cost of transporting goods, particularly bulky goods, by ferry to the mainland makes the opportunities for manufacturing large products fairly limited.
- 6.13 Tourism would appear to be the sector in which there are the most employment possibilities for the Island, particularly if the marketing of Rum and its attractions is done more effectively. An activities centre was one suggestion, or a purpose-built tea room attached to the existing community hall. The latter is a project which has been discussed on Rum for some time and is available to visitors on the other Small Isles (at least during the summer months).
- 6.14 In terms of existing accommodation for tourists, the Island currently offers youth hostel accommodation in Kinloch Castle, bothies and the campsite, so there is the potential for a wider range of accommodation to be offered to visitors. For example, plans for a new bunkhouse have been discussed on the Island for some time and a plot was identified for the building in the Kinloch Village Plan, although no tangible developments have been forthcoming. There is also the potential to take advantage of spin-off opportunities in the tourism sector arising from the regeneration of Kinloch Castle (such as guided walks and trips to other parts of the Island, wildlife cruises and offering short courses and workshops on craft activities), although interviewees expressed uncertainty as to the degree to which the community will be involved both in shaping plans for the Castle and in taking up such opportunities. There is clearly some uncertainty amongst residents over the extent to which the current plans for Kinloch Castle will serve as a real catalyst for economic development and new independent enterprise on the Island.
- 6.15 Crofting was mentioned by several interviewees as offering the potential for independent economic activity in future, and again something that has been talked about in the past on Rum. Importantly, establishing crofts would allow individuals access to grants for associated housing.
- 6.16 Other opportunities exist for individuals to earn an income on Rum by undertaking activities that are currently carried out by SNH, such as harbour master duties, and through contracting out work that is currently done 'in-house', such as managing the energy supplies and the joiner and mechanic posts. Some residents have done contract-based work for SNH in the past, in Kinloch Castle for example, but concerns have been raised about individual's holding the necessary qualifications, insurance cover and financial and accounting knowledge to undertake this work as an independent enterprise. In the current antagonistic environment on the Island, these concerns have been interpreted by some residents as SNH attempting to stifle their attempts to be independent.
- 6.17 Arising from these comments it would seem that future ideas for changing the housing situation on Rum should take the business situation into account, i.e. plans for housing and business premises need to be developed

simultaneously. Moreover, the design of new housing or regeneration of existing housing on Rum could incorporate work space thus giving individuals the necessary facilities to set-up home-based enterprises. A sustainable future for the Island may rest on individuals being given the opportunity to stay on, or move to, Rum without having to be an SNH employee.

- 6.18 There is no shortage of ideas for new businesses on Rum, although many of the ideas are fairly small-scale and may not provide a full-time position and income. There does seem to be some hesitancy amongst Rum's residents in turning business ideas into functioning independent enterprises, although this is likely to be partly associated with the delays in land and building release.

'Endogenous' capacity

- 6.19 This theme explicitly focuses on the skills and capacity of local residents. It is clear that there are a number of individuals currently living on Rum who have a range of practical skills, such as construction, joinery and land management (including agriculture, stalking and forestry), and hospitality skills. However, many of these skills are currently held by SNH staff. Thus, while some residents perceive that in terms of such practical skills, the Island is more than self-sufficient, the availability of such skills in future is crucially dependent on the long-term commitment of these individuals to the Island.
- 6.20 Doubts were expressed about the ability of the existing community to run the basic services required to live on Rum (such as sewage, electricity, water supply and fire prevention and detection) in the event of SNH withdrawing from this responsibility (and some current staff leaving). It was felt that dealing with sudden emergencies would prove particularly challenging.
- 6.21 The Community Association (CA) has become involved in a number of different aspects of life on Rum in recent years. The CA runs the Island's shop on an entirely voluntary basis, and the shop is seen by some (though certainly not by all) residents as a key location for community interaction. However, there were doubts raised about the ability of CA members to keep on top of the financial and administrative aspects of running the shop.
- 6.22 One of the key achievements of the CA was the "Sound of Rum" Music Festival, which ran for 3 years from 2005-2007. CA members organised (including successfully applying for external funding) and ran the Festival, which attracted up to 900 visitors to Rum each year, on a voluntary basis. The Festival was widely regarded as a success by almost all residents, who recognised the huge logistical challenge of organising such a sizeable event on an island with such a small resident population. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that not all members of the Rum community felt fully consulted prior to the decision being taken for the event to go ahead. It also seems that SNH may not have been given an opportunity to input fully into the planning of the event and, for a variety of reasons (e.g. the SNH 'duty of care' to anyone on the Island, the need for a clear-up operation after the event in SNH time), there was a feeling that the consultation during the planning stages of the event could have been much better managed to ensure that all residents felt fully informed.

- 6.23 Progress with formally setting up the Rum Development Trust¹ has been slow. Undoubtedly some of the delays have been due to difficulties associated with a small group of volunteers getting paperwork and formal arrangements in place alongside the demands of other jobs and of everyday life on the Island. However, questions about skills and competencies inevitably arise. There is also a sense amongst the wider community that information does not pass as freely as it should from the 'core' group of individuals to other residents, resulting in feelings of frustration and mistrust. Future arrangements need to ensure that the information discussed, and the activities undertaken by the new Rum Development Trust are much more open and transparent. There is also a need to spread the burden of responsibility beyond a few core individuals to ensure more capacity can be devoted to moving things forward.
- 6.24 There is no doubting the determination and commitment of many of Rum's current residents to the Island's future success. However, the lack of a shared sense of community on Rum severely limits the ability of existing residents to make the most of the skills and competencies that are available to them and to unite behind a common set of objectives. Perhaps one of the key challenges of having such a small population is that personality and opinion clashes are likely to be more visible. Until these divisions are healed, and the associated feelings of mistrust and suspicion are allayed, it is difficult to see how residents can work together.
- 6.25 There is also a fundamental mismatch in how different Rum residents view the level of skills and experience amongst the existing population. Some members of the community believe that skill levels are high, and more than adequate to enable a formally constituted Rum Development Trust to become successfully established and actively involved in various aspects of Island life. This might include, for example, acting as a designated rural housing body (as is the case with the IEHT), working with housing associations to secure affordable non-tied housing. The Rum Music Festival was cited on several occasions as evidence of the skills and competencies of Rum residents in, for example, project management.
- 6.26 However, there are other residents who believe that the community on Rum is too small and exclusive, with a skills set that is too limited to take community development forward without external assistance. Professional, entrepreneurial, management and financial skills were particularly perceived to be weak. In addition, concerns were expressed that the new Rum Development Trust would not be truly inclusive, legitimate and effective.

'Exogenous' capacity

- 6.27 The research work on all four of the Small Isles demonstrated that while there is a strong commitment to self-reliance and self-help on the part of the people interviewed, the role of external agencies and actors had been critical to past and current development. It must be acknowledged that without the support of 'external' agencies all of the Islands would find it much harder to support a community. While Rum's reliance on SNH makes it an extreme case it seems that its future relies on broadening the base of external agencies and actors involved, as well as endogenous initiative.

¹ There is some uncertainty as to the name of the new organisation. We refer to it throughout the report as the Rum Development Trust.

- 6.28 There is widespread recognition within SNH that mistakes have been made in the management of community affairs in the past. However, there is also a strong sense that those currently charged with its management have a strong commitment to ensuring the future viability of Rum. Until recently SNH has been the only employer on Rum. If land is released and opportunities to run businesses are developed, SNH will still remain a significant employer and source of contract work. SNH may be particularly significant in terms of providing part time or short term work for households who are likely to have to rely on multiple sources of income. It is therefore important that SNH's positive role as employer and hence source of livelihood is recognised by the community and other external agencies.
- 6.29 Interviews with off-island stakeholders also demonstrated the depth and breadth of interest of other agencies. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Highland Council and the relevant Housing Associations all indicated a willingness to step up the degree of their involvement. Collectively these agencies are an important source of financial capital and expertise. Engaging with these agencies more effectively will be critical to the future success of socio-economic development on Rum. Feedback from the interviews showed that in many cases direct relationships had been formed between community representatives and agency representatives. However, in several cases there was concern that the amount of work required to manage community affairs on Rum meant that there were often long periods of little or no contact.
- 6.30 During our time on Rum, and throughout the stakeholder interviews, it became increasingly apparent that there are a wide range of individuals and organisations with a long standing interest in the Island. There is already a Friends of Kinloch Castle Association which has registered charity status and which, in November 2007, became involved in community lobbying on the future of the Castle development. Interest in Rum is not confined to the Castle. Consideration could be given to how the 'friends of Rum' could be identified and used in wider socio-economic development activity.
- 6.31 The involvement of outside agencies, groups and individuals requires those on Rum to constantly monitor whether an appropriate balance between 'bottom up' and 'top down' is been achieved. Furthermore, the community needs to reflect on whether off-island assistance is contributing to development or merely fostering relationships of dependency or domination. While being aware of these problems, the residents of Rum need to exploit the opportunities for assistance currently on the table and look to develop new relationships that can bring socio-economic development dividends.

7. Research findings – Canna, Eigg and Muck

Canna

- 7.1 Canna is wholly owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). The main Island is operated by the NTS as a livestock farm. Sanday, linked to Canna by a causeway, has 10 crofts. There are currently 17 people resident on the Island (with a family of four due to move there in January 2008). The residents range in age from 3 to 73. There are currently two pupils in the primary school. The Island's principle economic activities are farming and hospitality (guest house, self-catering, café). In addition the NTS employs an

archivist at Canna House and Highland Council, a teacher and an individual on a part time basis to oversee the pier.

- 7.2 The community recognised that they lacked capacity in certain key areas important to socio-economic development. As such they were working with the NTS to appoint a project/property manager who would be able to support the community in attracting external funding and ensuring co-ordination in development activity. The residents also relied on the NTS to highlight opportunities. There had been a recent example of this with regard to wind energy which one community member was now pursuing by investigating the feasibility of a series of options.
- 7.3 Economic development was being approached carefully due to the recognition that many business ideas that would be feasible on the mainland would not be possible on an island. The unreliability of the technical infrastructure and the power supply meant that internet based businesses were not yet a viable option. Of more interest to the community was harnessing the visitor potential with, as yet, early stage plans, to develop facilities for sailors, drivers and canoeists.
- 7.4 There was scepticism that community based enterprise or the formation of a community development trust would work on Canna. This was because the community recognised that such organisations required a 'critical mass' of people to fill all the necessary posts and do all the necessary work.
- 7.5 The community on Canna recognised that in many respects they are reliant on the NTS. However, we found a strong desire to ensure that the community took an active role in planning for the future and were not merely 'guided' by the Trust. NTS have a management plan for the Island but there is no *community* development plan. This was identified by those present at the group interview as a process which should be undertaken to ensure that community ideas and aspirations were taken into account. It was seen as particularly important in the context of the plans to appoint a project/property manager.
- 7.6 The recent experience of selecting new residents for the Island had proved to be a successful example of how the NTS worked with the community. All residents were involved in the selection process with all households having access to the applications, being involved in drawing up short lists and interviewing potential residents. Attitudes to the NTS were generally positive as it was felt that they listened to the community and were responsive to their needs. The head office in Edinburgh was, however, perceived as an 'ivory tower' and there was some concern about the long term security of the housing provision with all residents living on crofts or in NTS tied housing.
- 7.7 There is relatively little expertise in the areas of governance, finance, legal and project management on-island. The Community Association has no officers and they had found the legal aspects of setting it up "hard going". There was, however, a sense that the community shared a common purpose. They reported that community life was harmonious which they put down to working together but also respecting each other's space – combining self-reliance with calling on each other when needed. Canna's expertise is in land management, construction and hospitality. There is also some experience in retailing through the café. There has been little work done to market the Island or to develop skills in marketing or communication.

- 7.8 There is little co-operation with the other Small Isles except in education. In the last year, primary pupils from the Small Isles and Inverie in Knoydart have visited each other and have participated in joint activities on the mainland. However, the travelling times between Islands and the nature of the ferry timetable make day visits largely impossible, and this was seen as a significant barrier to further co-operation.
- 7.9 The most apparent differences between Canna and Rum are the status of the owning institution and the presence of crofts. However, while SNH is a public body and NTS a charity, both are owned by non-profit making organisations that exist to conserve aspects of the national heritage. Both are large bodies which do not have a history of close involvement in rural community or economic development. Explaining the differences between the two Islands cannot simply be put down to ownership and management arrangements. There are also important differences in the structure of the population. Canna has an 'indigenous' family whose presence predates NTS ownership, in addition to more recently arrived residents. This means that unlike Rum, Canna has a retired resident – a seemingly minor detail which may be more telling than it first seems. Furthermore, two of the NTS employees lived on-island before working for the organisation. The consequence is that there is a small core of people who have extensive experience of Island living and who were members of the community before they were NTS employees. Clearly this social structure cannot be manufactured on Rum. However, there are perhaps lessons for SNH as land owner on the importance of creating the conditions whereby residents can feel secure and hence make a long term commitment to the Island. Furthermore, the management of relations between the community and the NTS as owner perhaps contains lessons for SNH and the Rum Development Trust.

Eigg

- 7.10 The Isle of Eigg was purchased by its own community following a widely publicised campaign and appeal for funds. Ownership was duly transferred to the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) in 1997 and it has just celebrated the first 10 years of its stewardship of the Island's affairs. The main driver for the purchase was to provide secure tenure for Eigg residents so that they could invest with confidence in their homes and businesses. In addition, the community as a whole wished to invest in the Island's infrastructure and create the conditions which would attract more people to Eigg and so enable the resident population to increase to a more sustainable level.
- 7.11 The IEHT comprises three members - Eigg Residents Association (ERA), Highland Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), which each nominate a total of six Directors to serve on the IEHT Board under an independent chairman. The Board meets quarterly and prior to these meetings the agenda is discussed by the ERA (all Eigg residents over 18 years of age are members and entitled to vote) and the decisions made by the Board are based on its recommendations. There is a part time administrative secretary although in the course of the past ten years the IEHT has benefited from external funding to enable a full time Development Officer to be employed to assist with specific projects.
- 7.12 The IEHT now has four subsidiary companies. Eigg Trading owns and manages An Laimhrig, a purpose built facility located at the pier which houses the Island shop, post office, craft centre and tearoom, all of which are leased

to local people. Eigg Tearoom employs up to two full time and eight part time staff. Eigg Construction carries out renovation work on the Island's properties and employs three full time staff. Eigg Electric will operate the newly installed renewable electricity generator and sustain the equivalent of two full time jobs.

- 7.13 The wide ranging achievements of the IEHT have been chronicled in a brochure to mark its ten year anniversary (IEHT, 2007). These include: the upgrading of five houses and a collaboration with Lochaber Housing to provide a further five affordable housing units; the development of the An Laimhrig facility and a major renovation of the Community Hall; the re-organisation of agricultural tenancies, the creation of four new crofts and the doubling of the area of common grazings; a substantial forestry restructuring and native woodland establishment project; and improvements to the network of paths and tracks across the Island.
- 7.14 In looking to the future, the IEHT believes that a population increase of 50% (i.e. from the current figure of c.80 to c.120) would be appropriate. It is recognised that the provision of affordable housing is a crucial factor and so in 2006 the IEHT adopted a housing policy which is intended to meet the needs of current residents but will also encourage people to move into the community. At the same time the IEHT does not wish to sacrifice the value of its assets (principally the land) to achieve this objective.
- 7.15 A range of options are therefore set out in the new policy including sale of building plots under shared equity arrangements, shared ownership, lease of building plots and rental of houses built by IEHT. It is made clear that any shared ownership arrangement would not be made available where it is believed that the objective of an applicant is to acquire a holiday property.
- 7.16 Some key lessons can be drawn from the particular characteristics of Eigg and its community and the experience gained during the formation of the IEHT, which have a bearing on the prospects for socio-economic development on Rum and the Small Isles generally. These can be summarised as follows:
- The momentum for change on Eigg was fuelled by a powerful combination of forces including the unsatisfactory behaviour of distant landowners, the insecurity felt by the community, the commitment of well informed mainland supporters or activists wishing to intervene, energetic residents (both indigenous and incomer), public sympathy for the buyout and the chord this struck with the movement for land reform in Scotland.
 - Following the acquisition, IEHT has adopted fully inclusive governance arrangements and a business-like management structure. This is critical if land and property assets are to be managed securely and in a manner which continues to command public support.
 - The IEHT operates with the minimum of administrative overheads but at the same time relies on considerable voluntary effort and commitment. Some projects (e.g. the energy scheme) can only be developed with considerable external assistance. The blend of indigenous resident and incomer in the community is a strength rather than source of division.
 - There are circumstances where, for sound economic reasons, some assets are best transferred to others rather than retained (e.g. the Lodge).

- IEHT has recognised the importance of, and practicalities associated with, partnership working. An impressive and diverse range of projects have come to fruition but all have required a range of skills coupled with considerable determination and perseverance.
- The forestry project has sustained a team of up to five workers but this is entirely dependent on grant aid and the SWT has provided invaluable expertise in relation to funding applications. The team has been contracted to carry out similar work for SNH on Rum, so establishing a precedent for other types of inter-island commercial activity.
- Multi-tasking (residents having a number of part time jobs and income streams) is a fundamental characteristic of the Eigg economy and its community.
- Broadband offers prospects for the development of knowledge/IT based enterprises but the infrastructure (satellite) is not yet sufficiently reliable.
- A number of land based business ideas have been explored (e.g. seed potatoes, herbs, cheese, eggs, tree nursery, duck feathers) but transport costs and reliability impose severe constraints. The absence of slaughtering facilities restricts the potential for adding value to beef and lamb.
- IEHT are available as a source of advice and for mentoring of similar communities (e.g. on governance or project management). Eigg Construction may be able to carry out contract work on other islands and there is enormous scope for joint marketing and the packaging of Small Isles tourism. However, the expansion of IEHT into some form of Small Isles Trust would be neither realistic nor appropriate.

Muck

- 7.17 The Island of Muck is two miles long by one mile wide, covering approximately 1,500 acres. The majority of the Island is run as a single farm of beef cattle and sheep (with approximately 600 breeding ewes and 50 cows), with one separate smallholding of 40 ewes held on a long-term tenancy. Of all the Small Isles, Muck is perhaps the least like Rum, particularly in terms of land tenure and land use. The Island has been privately owned by the MacEwen family since the late 19th century.
- 7.18 There are currently 34 people resident on Muck, representing an increase from 27 two years ago, but a level lower than in previous years (for example, during the Napoleonic wars the population reached approximately 350 and in the mid-18th century, the population was 144). The Island has the largest school age population amongst the Small Isles with thirteen children (representing nearly 40% of the Island's total population). This means that having children is no longer such an important driver in selecting families to move to the Island, although it was acknowledged that this situation may change in future. The lack of a hostel in Mallaig for secondary school age children from the Small Isles was cited as a reason why some families have left Muck. This out-migration has resulted in a loss of some key 'professional' skills in recent years, but interviewees acknowledged that increased mobility was a feature of life everywhere.
- 7.19 Muck has been successful in attracting a small number of new families in recent years drawn from all over the UK (a new family is moving to the Island in March 2008). All of the houses on the Island are owned (at least partly) by the MacEwen family and they are let to newcomers when they become

available. On the 'Properties to Let' section of the Island's website (www.isleofmuck.com) it is stated that: "*We are particularly keen to appeal to families with practical skills, or skills that will help them to be at least partially self-sufficient*". This preference is largely in recognition of the limited alternative employment opportunities on the Island. The school is a hugely important employer, providing four jobs (a full-time teacher, a clerk, a classroom assistant and a nursery manager).

- 7.20 Interviewees felt that a population of 50 would help to make them feel more secure, although being a small Island with limited infrastructure (especially in relation to the power supply, which comes from two wind turbines and a back-up diesel generator), it was felt that Muck could not support many more people. The Island secured a new resident family 'on the back of' Canna's recruitment, with one family rejected from Canna subsequently coming to live on Muck. It was noted that Canna was in the fortunate position of being able to offer a job and a house to incoming families, whilst properties on Muck are rented. Some interviewees felt that this lack of security resulted in a lower level of commitment to the Island.
- 7.21 There are some part-time jobs on Muck, including the road maintenance contract for Highland Council (currently held by the MacEwen family), fire, harbour master and coastguard services, and beating during the shooting season. The Island has a craft shop/tea room open to visitors during the summer months, but which acts as an important focus for Island life all year. Locally sourced food is used in the tea room (which also serves evening meals on request, for example to visiting yachts) and the craft shop sells items produced on the Island and elsewhere. A small-scale shooting enterprise was set-up this year as a means of extending the Island's tourist season, offering shooting packages to parties of visitors for two nights. Other residents are currently setting up polytunnels and a small market garden and plan to sell produce to the Muck craft shop and to the other Islands.
- 7.22 It was recognised that the range of possibilities for setting up a business on Muck was more limited than on the mainland, due to the cost of transporting (particularly bulky) goods from the Island and the poor and unreliable broadband connection, which restricts opportunities for IT-based businesses. It was felt to be important that an individual had some previous experience of running a business in order to be able to make things work on Muck. The need for a reliable internet connection was also recognised for educational purposes in the school.
- 7.23 There are a number of accommodation options for visitors to Muck, including a Yurt, a bunk house, two bed and breakfasts, three holiday cottages and a guest house (the cottages and guest house are owned by the MacEwen family). Activities for tourists include walking, birdwatching and water sports. The Island also attracts approximately 3,000 day trippers per year by charter boat from Arisaig, and some whale watching boats from Mull.
- 7.24 The Island has a number of committees for different projects and there was a sense in which these groups were felt to be balanced, well organised and a source of good ideas. In 2003, "Community Action on Muck for All Seasons (CAMAS)" was set-up to provide opportunities for social, community and environmental benefits on the Island, through: culture, arts and heritage; lifelong learning; sports, health and well-being; environmental protection and improvement; links with other local areas; and community and social

development. Members pay a £2 annual subscription, which helps towards, amongst other things, the cost of organising events such as ceilidhs and attracting external performers (such as the Mull Little Theatre) to the Island. CAMAS has also received some external funding, including from the Scottish Arts Council.

- 7.25 The Island receives some support from external organisations, including Highland Council (e.g. financial support for road maintenance, the primary school, and the new pier) and from HIE (e.g. funding for the Island's wind turbines and the broadband equipment). However, there was a perception that more help could have been forthcoming from these organisations. One resident noted an approach he had made to HIE with a business idea, yet despite a positive initial response, little help was subsequently forthcoming.
- 7.26 Interviewees on Muck noted little co-operation between the Small Isles, with the exceptions being the annual Small Isles Games, primary school visits and joint activities, some limited 'trading' relationships (such as the transportation of livestock from Muck to Eigg and the selling of some game to the shop on Eigg in the past), and informal links between individuals. The limited co-operation is largely due to the logistical challenges of travelling between the Islands, and, as noted by interviewees on the other Small Isles, this was seen as the main barrier to increasing co-operation. There was a perception expressed by Muck interviewees of a "*different ethos on each Island*" with each of them "*paddling their own canoe*". Yet some residents felt that more co-operation might be helpful on certain issues, such as dealing with Caledonian MacBrayne.
- 7.27 The current Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Small Isles Community Council (SICC) both live on Muck. The SICC has taken a lobbying role on issues such as improving the Islands' piers, promoting the need for a hostel in Mallaig for Small Isles children and rubbish and recycling provision on the Islands. It was felt to be a useful, albeit relatively low profile, organisation, which could be "*more vociferous and active*". It was recognised as representing one "*thing in common*" across the Islands, but more members and more regular meetings would certainly help to increase the power of the SICC, but again the logistical challenges were noted.
- 7.28 Ownership of the Island by one family was perceived as having both positive and negative impacts. On one hand it provides a stable situation for the Island with the family very committed to making the Island and its community work as "*its in their blood*". There is a perception amongst 'non-MacEwen residents' that the family are willing to let things flourish on the Island, helped by a lack of public money, which has encouraged residents to be more self-reliant and to "*rise to the challenge*" of living on Muck. 'Non-MacEwen residents' did not feel under threat or scrutiny and felt that there was a positive relationship between the family and the rest of the community. On the other hand, the land and house ownership situation makes it difficult to attract people to the Island, and to encourage them to stay. It was commented that on Eigg "*there is more island and therefore more possibilities*", whilst on Muck people "*tend to live within their means*".
- 7.29 There are undoubtedly individuals on Muck with a range of skills, including agriculture and land management, technical and engineering, construction, fund-raising and administration. Networks on the mainland provide additional skills when required. However, it was acknowledged that many of these skills

(and networks) are strongly tied to the MacEwen family. Yet, interestingly, several interviewees felt that if new skills are demanded, their commitment to living on the Island meant that they would make serious efforts to develop them in order to address the skills gap from within the existing population.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 In this section the research team presents some conclusions which have been distilled from their analysis of social capital in the Small Isles. The two principal questions posed in the research brief are then addressed followed by some tentative pointers which it is hoped may be of assistance to SNH and their partners in the future consideration of how best to facilitate socio-economic development on Rum and its integration with the long term management of the NNR.
- 8.2 The research findings reveal both negative and positive characteristics and influences associated with social and economic activity and interactions on Rum.

The negatives

- 8.3 As outlined above (paragraphs 2.8-2.13), a sequence of plans and strategies all highlight the potential and capacity of Rum to accommodate a much higher level of population. Despite the projections of 50 or even 75-100 people on the Island there has been no actual change in the population in the last 10 years. Allied to this, no new businesses of any real economic significance have been established that are truly independent of SNH, and no new housing units have been built. Similarly, there has been no major investment in social infrastructure, other than the harbour, and the Island's roads and the electricity system both need upgrading. Kinloch Castle continues to be a burden on SNH resources and the maintenance regime that has been applied has not kept pace with the rate of deterioration in the fabric of the building.
- 8.4 Two substantive proposals - renovation of the 'tattie house' to create additional social housing units and the wholesale redevelopment of the shop/community centre - have been jointly explored by SNH and the CA but both projects eventually foundered.
- 8.5 The Rum 'community' is an entirely artificial construction with an abnormal demographic structure and employment base. There are also social tensions on the Island which are complex and deep rooted and characterised by the existence of two distinct groups, one which represents SNH management on the island and a second which is focused around established members of the CA. The source of the tension between these groups relates to such matters as how SNH manage the physical assets (use of buildings and equipment); the part that commercial stalking should play in deer control and how this might be supervised; the participation of senior staff in community activities; and the exercise of staff discipline etc. Communications between the CA and SNH have also become strained over such matters as arrangements for the Sound of Rum Music Festival.
- 8.6 Attendances at CA meetings have fluctuated and some residents appear to be disillusioned with the lack of tangible achievements. There is an obvious dilemma for SNH management in the extent to which it attempts to steer

proceedings; if it does it appears dictatorial, if it doesn't it is negligent. There is now a legally constituted Rum Development Trust but its formation has been protracted and at the time of conducting this research the directors had yet to meet.

- 8.7 SNH staff on Rum inevitably become pre-occupied with the day to day operations and routines associated with maintenance of the Island's physical and social infrastructure. This impacts adversely on the core business of SNH in managing the NNR and ultimately on the job satisfaction of the personnel concerned.
- 8.8 There appears to be very limited capacity or indeed any real appetite within the three neighbouring islands to provide support and practical assistance to the Rum community in managing more of their own affairs. Any collaboration is likely to be limited to the provision of advice or mentoring services (perhaps building on the activities of the SICC), some contractual work in forestry or construction, and joint initiatives to promote the Small Isles for tourism². It is commonly accepted that the ferry timetable and vagaries of the winter weather also severely limit the prospects for interaction and cooperation.

The positives

- 8.9 Although little tangible progress has been made to date, it appears to be universally accepted that social and economic development can take place without compromising the integrity of the NNR. This principle is enshrined in contemporary policy approaches to the sustainable management of natural resources in Scotland.
- 8.10 Diversification of housing and employment opportunities are recognised by all stakeholders as the key agents for change on Rum. SNH are positive about relinquishing responsibility for the management of community infrastructure and have agreed in principle to the transfer of land and property to make this happen. There is also a political commitment to change which needs to be translated into action.
- 8.11 All of the key agencies interviewed on the mainland, notably the Highland Council, HIE, Housing Associations and the PRT are keen to take a proactive part in the development process.
- 8.12 The Rum Development Trust has now been created. This provides an appropriate mechanism for facilitating greater off-island engagement and support. It could ultimately become the vehicle through which the community takes on more responsibility for management of the Island's infrastructure and services.
- 8.13 Rum has a magnificent landscape and outstanding wildlife whilst Kinloch Castle doubles as a unique cultural asset and hostel. These attract a solid but modest visitor base.
- 8.14 The PRT, which has an impressive record in the conversion of iconic buildings, has submitted ambitious plans for the restoration of the Castle. Funding applications, business plans and proposals for transfer of ownership

² The Small Isles Development Plan (John Finlay Associates, 1996) outlines a number of possible opportunities for collective marketing.

to a charitable trust are being advanced simultaneously. The Kinloch Castle scheme as currently devised could have considerable social and economic benefits for the Island because:

- there would be major investment in capital works in the short term and the development would trigger other infrastructure improvements (e.g. electricity supply);
- at least two new businesses (Castle accommodation and hostel) will be created that are independent of SNH and the proprietors and staff could potentially broaden the expertise available within the community;
- the existing housing stock will begin to be diversified with the creation of two new units;
- there will be a new clientele using the Castle accommodation and fresh approaches to promotion of the new facilities on Rum should result in increased visitor numbers and hence business opportunities for other residents;
- A restored Castle under its new management could become a strong focal point for collaboration over the marketing of the Small Isles for cultural/eco tourism.

One caveat, however, is that a number of Island residents expressed concern that a new Castle clientele would have expectations regarding their involvement in community and economic development on Rum as a result of their status as property owners.

The research brief

8.15 The research team were asked to explore:

- a) whether the existing Rum community is capable of managing some, or all, of the publicly owned assets on Rum;
- b) and, if not (or only in part), if there is social capital elsewhere in the vicinity which can be tapped to provide the necessary skills

8.16 The existing Rum community is numerically small and largely transient in nature. It lacks critical mass and continuity. There are diverse practical skills within the community but these are closely associated with the jobs and housing provided by SNH. There is a very wide gap in perceptions amongst the Island's residents about the ability of the community to manage more of its own affairs. The neutral assessment of the research team is that the community is currently not sufficiently well constituted or organised to take on the responsibilities which SNH presently shoulder for the operation of the Island's infrastructure and services. The answer to the first question is therefore no, and is likely to remain no, unless there is a step change in critical mass. This can only occur through a combination of population growth, the diversification of employment opportunities and housing availability, and the successful establishment of new governance arrangements within the community.

8.17 In relation to the wider availability of social capital, the interviews with key contacts within the Small Isles confirm the existence of skills and expertise that are required to facilitate 'endogenous rural development'. However, the three communities are small, are occupied with their own affairs and have limited resources. There are considerable practical obstacles that would

restrict inter-island collaboration and the concept of a Small Isles Development Trust, modelled on the IEHT for example but with an extended role and remit for the management of assets on Rum (and beyond), has no real foundation. There is undoubtedly scope for further interaction in the form of mentoring, contracting, marketing, etc. but if the definition of 'vicinity' equates to the Small Isles the answer to the second question is also essentially no. That is not to say that skills and resources do not exist further afield on the mainland.

Pointers to the Future

- 8.18 The research brief was precisely defined and did not seek detailed advice and recommendations regarding future management options or actions on Rum. A great deal of information and opinion on the best way forward was nevertheless supplied to the research team in the course of the interviews and the analysis has generated a number of salient points which ought to be shared with SNH and their partners. These pointers to the future are recorded in the remaining paragraphs of this report.
- 8.19 The natural resources of Rum are exceptional and demand proper protection and appropriate management action. Whilst the Island has been in public ownership for 50 years it is not necessarily the case that this represents the most effective and cost efficient way of securing bio-diversity objectives. A wide range of NGOs and Trusts now successfully hold and manage large tracts of land for conservation purposes. The arrangements on Rum will periodically be reviewed and other alternatives can no doubt be explored. However, because of the particular socio-economic characteristics and history of Rum the option of a community buy out, as occurred on Eigg, would not be feasible.
- 8.20 The case for transfer from SNH ownership of the iconic but resource demanding Kinloch Castle is compelling, provided that this can be accomplished without detriment to the building's physical and cultural attributes and public access. The PRT proposals would achieve this and generate some positive economic spin offs for the Island (any concerns relate to loss of the community's existing 'neutral space' and possible cultural differences between the new clientele and residents). The project is however ambitious and the necessary funding, including a substantial contribution from the public purse, is not guaranteed. In the event that sufficient funding is not secured SNH will need recourse to other solutions in the knowledge that there is no 'do nothing' option. In this regard a more modest scheme might see essential restoration work take place with hostel type accommodation retained within the Castle. Unlike the PRT project, this option does not solve the ownership issue. If such a default position is needed in due course, the capital costs will have to be calculated and business plans prepared including other mechanisms for the transfer of ownership, perhaps by way of a lease or through some form of business partnership arrangement.
- 8.21 The formation of the Rum Development Trust might represent the beginnings of a process that leads to substantive social and economic development on the Island. But without additional capacity to act it may just be a false dawn. A community/economic development post for Rum would seem to be essential. The principal task would be to act as a catalyst for the implementation of key elements of the Kinloch Development Plan and to take forward other relevant community development initiatives. This post would support the strengthening

of the new Rum Development Trust. It is vitally important that this Trust sees one significant project through to completion in the short term in order to build confidence within the community. Part of the brief could also be the facilitation of economic development and collaboration within the Small Isles. It is suggested that the prospects for success would be enhanced if this was a non SNH post (perhaps employed by Highland Council or HIE) and based off-island at least initially. The need for and nature of the post and the terms and conditions of employment could be reviewed as the Rum Development Trust evolves. The Trust might also seek to expand the number of Directors. The IEHT, for example, benefits from the expertise and neutral voice provided by the SWT.

- 8.22 With the formation of the Rum Development Trust and the prospect of Kinloch Castle being transferred into separate ownership, this might be an opportune time for SNH to review its management structure on the Island. There may be merit in SNH considering whether it should separate land agency and property management type responsibilities from the core business responsibilities of bio-diversity and access management. This might have several benefits in securing better community relations, a faster transfer of assets, improved condition of the NNR and a higher level of job satisfaction
- 8.23 The controversy over deer management needs to be resolved. This is a source of continuing tension and dispute within the community as well as frustration for staff. After decades of research it might be reasonable to expect that there is sound science and consensus on what represents the optimum population of deer on Rum. There is a deer management plan which sets out policy on culling and there appears to be an acceptance of the economic benefit of stalking, but numbers and methods continue to be disputed and change each year. The Forestry Commission's stalking practices and recent experience on Knoydart in managing deer may offer useful guidance.
- 8.24 In the longer term and on the basis that the community, acting through the Rum Development Trust, can and does progressively take responsibility for more of the Island's services and infrastructure, SNH might consider whether Kinloch village and the Castle might be formally uncoupled from the NNR/SSSI designations. This might give more impetus to the development process including the possible creation of agricultural or forest crofts.

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Appendix 1: Key points made by Thin (1998)

- In order to become stable and sufficiently diverse the long term aim should be to establish a minimum population of at least 50 mixed age range inhabitants. A demographic profile showing a distribution of age and gender for the end of the Management Plan period (2008) was outlined as a possible target;
- The main constraint to socio-economic development is the lack of sufficient people with the right mix of skills, motivations and personal circumstances to create economic activity. The challenge for SNH is to find ways of attracting those people and to allow a private sector economy to flourish and develop alongside the existing public sector;
- In relation to its own terms of employment SNH should seek opportunities for flexible, part-time, job sharing, contacting out, profit sharing and other practices conducive to promoting private sector activity amongst staff and their families;
- Maintenance and capital works currently carried out by mainland contractors might be repackaged to allow some of this work to be done on a contract basis by local residents on Rum or one of the other Small Isles. The types of work might include building and road maintenance; tree planting and woodland management; livestock husbandry; and red deer/goat control. Other economic opportunities are presented by tourism including different forms of accommodation (camping, B&B, cabins, guest house) and the provision of visitor services (tours, equipment hire etc); the manufacture of crafts; commercial stalking including adding value to venison; and knowledge or IT based employment;
- SNH should define zones of the Island e.g. Kinloch Glen as being suitable for crofting type land use;
- Only a small part of the expenditure budget on Rum is under the direct control of the Reserve Manager and SNH should consider relocating more management responsibility to the island; the aim should be to make Rum an internal customer using mainland based advisers as required;
- Individual private ownership and/or long term secure tenancy arrangements are vital if people are to have an incentive to invest (both financially and emotionally). It is effectively impossible for anyone to become resident on the island even if they are economically independent, due to a shortage of available housing and housing land. Policies therefore need to be adopted that would allow existing housing to be made available on long lease and to allow private investment to take place to create affordable new homes, including developments by Housing Associations, with appropriate protection against non occupation;
- Procedures and structures should be established at the start of any development process to secure genuine participation by the local community (without implying any abdication of management responsibility by SNH). Of the public agencies, Highland Council, HIE and Lochaber Ltd in particular need to be brought into the development planning process. The formation of a Rum Development Group and preparation of a development plan would represent a first step and perhaps lay the foundations for the creation of a Charitable Trust. The process will require strong and positive local leadership;
- Promoting socio-economic development inevitably means some reduction of SNH control over the activities of residents on the island and whilst this may create difficulties the risks should be manageable.

Appendix 2: Briefing provided to all interviewees

Introduction to Small Isles Research for Interviewees

Introduce self - name, where work, a little about self (optional)

Project - focus is on community networks and skills mix particularly on Rum but also looking at the other Small Isles.

It is funded by the Scottish Government and was requested by Mike Russell after his recent visit.

We are looking to talk as many people as possible about their skills, experience and aspirations for the future.

Most of the questions I'll ask will clearly relate to these themes but some of them are to allow us to understand a bit more about the context of the islands recognising that a lot of the issues the Small Isles face are inter-connected.

Use of material - Everything you tell me today will be treated in confidence. We will make sure that it will be anonymous. No views could be attributed to individuals. The quality of the research depends on you telling us honestly what you think.

What will happen after - We expect to produce an interim report by mid November and a final report before Christmas. Our expectation is that you will get to see it although timings have not been agreed yet and are out of our hands.

Finally we might use some of the material in our academic work as a case study but again everything will be treated anonymously.

Do you have any questions on any of that?

Appendix 3: Skills Matrix for Canna, Eigg and Muck

	Governance	Legal	Finance	Project Management	Entrepreneurial	Land Management	Construction	Hospitality	Marketing/ Comms.	Retail
Muck	√√	√	√	√√	√	√√√	√	√√	√	√√
Eigg	√√√	√	√√	√√√	√√	√√√	√√	√	√	√√
Canna	√	√	√	√√	√	√√√	√√√	√√√	√	√√

No tick Absent
 √ Minimal
 √√ Adequate
 √√√ Well developed

Appendix 4: Note for Rum community about the research



Rum and the Small Isles Research Project

Between Thursday 25th October and Saturday 27th October, three researchers from the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University will be visiting Rum. They are coming to do research on the community networks and skills mix of Rum and the Small Isles. This research, funded by the Scottish Government, was requested by Michael Russell, the Minister for the Environment, following his recent visit to Rum and Eigg.

They would like to speak to everyone living on the Island about their skills, experience and aspirations for the future. The team will be based at Kinloch Castle. One of the team will always be available at the Castle to chat to you, but they are also happy to come and visit you at home if you prefer.

The team are Nicola Thompson, Terry Carroll and Jane Atterton.