

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**









- 4.16 The consultation revealed the most prominent recommendations to improve the service, these include: Access to the central belt; better advertisement; larger aircraft for greater numbers; higher fares for tourists; a greater number of flights; and, flight times better aligned with other transportation.
- 4.17 There were further recommendations which includes suggesting greater funding commenting “Approach the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and HIAL to seek out capital or operational funding. It is their National Transport strategy that seeks equitable access to services for the islands. It seems the other Island Councils are more equitable than A&B islands!”
- 4.18 In order to enhance the community benefits, the suggestions recommend extending the timetable during the summer months, a more regular service in general and better advertisement of the service with information on the flight times and fare cost.
- 4.19 Argyll and Bute Council is working in partnership with Skyports, to develop a West Coast Advanced Air Mobility Logistics Innovation Hub and Training centre. The new infrastructure at Oban Airport will support the operation of electrically powered UAVs including cargo drone deliveries, and other advanced air mobility (AAM) use cases. Royal Mail are also interested in UAVs as part of their service delivery and have undertaken trials with Skyports from Oban out to the island of Mull.
- 4.20 In the consultation, when asked if they believed the UAV hub would be ideal environment in Argyll and Bute and that it can provide real benefit, 74% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement showing a positive response to the UAV Hub. Further to this, 78% strongly agreed or agreed that the UAV Hub would benefit islands in the future.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The public consultation for the Argyll Air Services revealed the perspective of the public on the Air Service and the priorities for the communities utilising the service.
- 5.2 The main takeaway from the consultation shows that the Air Service is used most often for access to health facilities, this is particularly salient given that 56% of annual referrals in Argyll and Bute are to hospitals in the central belt and the Air Service does not link directly to the central belt.
- 5.3 The other prominent uses of the air service include access to shops/leisure facilities, tourism, for business use and employment showing that the service supports the key businesses and sectors such as tourism.
- 5.4 A key part of the service is the ability to complete same-day return, one of the main attractions for use of the service by customers.
- 5.5 The consultation revealed clear recommendations for improvements to the service including access to the central belt, better advertisement, increased flights and better timetabling as well as better links with other transportation.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy - Argyll and Bute Council provide PSO air services to some of our fragile Island communities.
- 6.2 Financial - Argyll and Bute Council has a budget of £512,207 available per annum (2019-2022) for the provision of air services. This contract is coming up for renewal for the period 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2027 and is currently going through procurement.
- 6.3 Legal - Tenders for PSO air services must be compliant with Scottish Government regulations.
- 6.4 HR - None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
  - 6.5.1 Equalities - Air services provide connections to rural island communities primarily for scholars but are also used by public and private sector services e.g. NHS, ABC, and Housing Associations.
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – The air service supports an equitable standard of living for island residents.
  - 6.5.3 Islands - The air service supports vulnerable island populations and is a lifeline service. There is a chance that if this service isn't provided, people won't want to live or work there as much, which could affect the SOA's goal of population growth.

- 6.6 Climate Change - Multiple passengers on a one-hour flight may have less of an environmental impact than those travelling by vehicle and ferry for six hours.
- 6.7 Risk - Risk of break in air services as a result of requirement to retender.
- 6.8 Customer Service – None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director responsible for Development and Economic Growth**

**Policy Lead for Roads and Transport: Councillor Andrew Kain**

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**For further information contact:**

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth  
[Fergus.Murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Fergus.Murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Moya Ingram, Strategic Transportation and Infrastructure Manager  
[Moya.Ingram@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Moya.Ingram@argyll-bute.gov.uk)