



*isla*

final report march 2008



*a meaningful role for islands in the spatial development of North West Europe*

*on my island*



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- Bere Island Project Group, Ireland
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**Bere Island  
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## *Building the boat together*

At the thematic conference in Rotterdam on March 7 and 8 2007, all ISLA-partners wrote down the dreams they had concerning the future of their islands.

One important key word that arose during that exercise was sustainability. Sustainability in economical, ecological, social as well as environmental terms. The dream is the opposite of the nightmare: islands falling into decay because of lack of sustainability.

The Dutch island of Tiengemeten can be seen as a metaphor for many other islands.

Tiengemeten, near the harbour of Rotterdam was once identified by the government as being an ideal location to build a toxic waste dump, an oil terminal or an airstrip.

The place was isolated; it was hardly developed and land prices were very low. It was thought that there wouldn't arise considerable objections against such a development. Ecologists thought otherwise. They had their dream of a sound ecological delta system.

Only because ecologists managed to anchor their dream in the national spatial policy the island was 'saved'. Not for agricultural purposes, but for nature, culture and recreation. The isolation, once its biggest threat, turned out to become its greatest strength.

Isolation, often thought of as being one of islands' natural weaknesses, will not always pose a threat as it did for Tiengemeten. All islands experience problems in maintaining the provision of adequate energy supply, employment, housing, schooling and other amenities. The result will often be a decline of the landscape, the cultural heritage, the ecosystems and the overall standard of living of the islands.

In Rotterdam, the ISLA partnership started to build a boat which enables them to set out in the right direction, towards a sustainable future.

Today we present the boat that we have built.

We hope that it will inspire others to pursue their dreams as well.

Joop Eilander  
projectmanager

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Islands have particular characteristics and qualities which set them apart from other places. These characteristics also affect their capability for sustainable conservation and development, thus requiring island-specific solutions. The ISLA-project has been set up by five European Partners, to work on the sustainable development of their islands and to jointly identify solutions for their common problems.

Through the medium of this report, the ISLA partners wish to record and share their experiences and the lessons they have learned. The report is based on studies conducted during the ISLA project (see Appendix), the results obtained from demonstration projects and an analysis of the main lessons learned.

The ISLA-project which lasted from 2005 to 2008 has been very successful for the partners and they wish to continue cooperation both with partners in the partnership and beyond. In the conclusion of this report, some possible ways forward for such cooperation are sketched.

## 1.2 The ISLA Project

The ISLA project deals with five islands or island-regions in Northwest Europe: Bere Island (Ireland), the Shetland Islands (UK), the Iroise Archipelago (France), Tiengemeten (The Netherlands) and the islands within Argyll & Bute council administration (UK). The ISLA partners were a mixture of public and private organisations and voluntary community groups from the four countries.

ISLA's vision is to support the growth of a meaningful role for islands in the spatial development of North West Europe, while anchoring their social and economic well-being. The goal of the project was to provide best-practice solutions for spatial development, aimed at enhancing social and economic well-being and maintaining the attractiveness of the natural and cultural landscape of islands.

The project has been built around three main themes: the role of government, island tourism and cultural and natural landscapes. Within each of these themes, focused studies have been conducted. In addition, a wide range of pilot investments have been made in order to test innovative solutions.

The partner organisations look back on a fruitful project. The restoration and development projects have already created tangible results that are enjoyed by a large audience: residents as well as visitors. Moreover, the cross-reflection on the joint working conferences has been a great source of inspiration to the partners.

## 1.3 Need for a Strategy and Clear Choices

An important insight that has arisen from this project, is the need for a strategy and clear choices at the beginning of a development process, whatever the theme or cause of that process may be: an investment, landscape management plans or a tourism project. After the goals have been set, well-considered choices need to be made on target groups and methodology, as well as on when to involve which stakeholders.

## 1.4 No Single Solution but a Range of Inspiring Examples

The partners do not wish to present the solutions found as blueprints for other islands. Rather, the results offer a range of inspiring examples that can offer insights for partners working on other islands or in remote rural areas. Despite their significant differences in geography, in institutional contexts and administrative settings, the ISLA partners have found this to work very well in practice: cooperation and exchange have proven a very fruitful help for the islands in creating their own island-specific solutions.



*Building the boat together, Argyll & Bute Coll Beach*

## 1.5 Building the Boat Together

The ISLA-project has created a dynamic and positive atmosphere amongst the partners. This is clearly illustrated by an expression used during the ISLA Thematic Conference in March 2007: 'Building the boat together'.

ISLA has built a boat for the project partners and their island communities. The partners hope that their solutions can inspire others to set sail to their desired future destination!

## 1.6 Pen portraits of the ISLA Partner Islands

To assist the reader a short description of each of the partner islands is given below:

**Bere Island** Bere is approximately 9.5 km long and 3 km wide. It is 1.5 km from the mainland and lies opposite Castletownbere in County Cork, Ireland. The island is dominated by the high ground at Knockanallig which looks across to the mainland and Hungry Hill. 1,600 hectares of the island are available for farming – mainly sheep farming. At the eastern end of the island is an Irish Army camp used for light military training in the summer months. Tourism is important to the island with walking a key attraction. Bere Island has a population of some 210 persons and supports a national (primary) school. Many of the inhabitants work on the mainland commuting on a daily or weekly basis.



*Bere Island*

**Inner Hebrides – Islay & Lismore** Islay is the southernmost island of Scotland's Inner Hebrides. It lies some 22 km west of the nearest point of the mainland of Scotland, the western coast of the Kintyre Peninsula. The neighbouring island of Jura lies between Islay and the mainland. Islay is some 40 km long and 32 km wide, has an area of 61,497 ha and, in 2001, had a resident population of 3,457. The main sectors of the Islay economy are farming, fishing, whisky distilling and tourism. The island has an amazingly rich and complex history and heritage. It is served by both ferry and air services.



*Argyll & Bute Market Bay*

Lismore is located at the southern end of Loch Linnhe, which is a sea loch on Scotland's west coast. It is only about 1,000 metres from the Scottish mainland at Port Appin and also lies relatively close to the much larger island of Mull. Lismore is a small island measuring 16 km in length and 2.5 km in width. Its total area is 2,244 ha and its population in 2001 was 146 (more recently estimated as 168). The main sector of the island economy today is farming (mainly sheep and some cattle) and crofting and there is one full-time fisherman. Tourism has a limited but growing role. Lismore is only ten minutes by ferry from the mainland.



*Iroise Archipelago, Stiff Quessant*

**Iroise Archipelago – Ouessant & Kéménez** The Iroise (or Ushant–Molène) Archipelago is situated some 12 km W of the westernmost tip of Brittany. The island Ouessant is the largest, consisting of a rocky plateau, some 30 to 65 m high, hollowed out to form a deep bay on the south west. The main town is Lampaul, some 4 km away on the opposite shoreline to the natural harbour of the Baie du Stiff. Annual visitor levels exceed 250,000 and tourism constitutes between 70–80% of the island's economy. The island's exposed location and lack of suitable harbours meant that there was never any substantial fishing industry on the island.

Kéménez is by contrast a tiny island though with a long history of habitation and agricultural use. However it has not been permanently farmed or inhabited for over two decades which has led to a significant deterioration of the natural environment.

Ouessant is well served by ferry and air services but there is no scheduled ferry to Kéménez.

**Shetland Islands** Shetland (The Shetland Islands) has over 100 islands, including Fair Isle which is some 39 kms from the main cluster. The capital, Lerwick, is located on Mainland, the largest island in the whole group. Lerwick is 170 kms from the mainland of Scotland and 360 kms from the mainland of Norway. The Shetland Islands are the most northerly part of the UK and must be accessed by sea or air. Flights to Aberdeen take one hour while the ferry service to Aberdeen takes some twelve hours across waters that can be described as often stormy. The population of Shetland is 21,870 (2003). The main sectors of the Shetland economy are oil production operations, fishing (catching, processing and farming), agriculture, knitwear, tourism and public administration. The Shetlands are remote and rugged and the landscape may be described as bleak. They are noted for their Nordic traditions and connections.



*Shetlands, Scalloway viewpoint*



*Tiengemeten, windmill*

**Tiengemeten** The Haringvliet is a large estuary to the North Sea, in the province of South Holland in the Netherlands. The Haringvliet estuary contains the island of Tiengemeten, which is separated from the mainland by the Vuile Gat strait. Tiengemeten is some forty five minutes drive from Rotterdam and is reached by ferry which takes some ten minutes to cross to the island. Tiengemeten is unlike any of the other islands in this study apart from Kéménez in that it is being actively managed or 'developed' to facilitate leisure and tourism use. It is also an estuarial island rather than in the open sea and it is currently surrounded by fresh not salt water. In 1994 the provincial government designated Tiengemeten as a "green area" and three years

later the island was sold to the 'Vereniging Natuurmonumenten' (Dutch Association for the Preservation of Natural Reserves) by Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG).

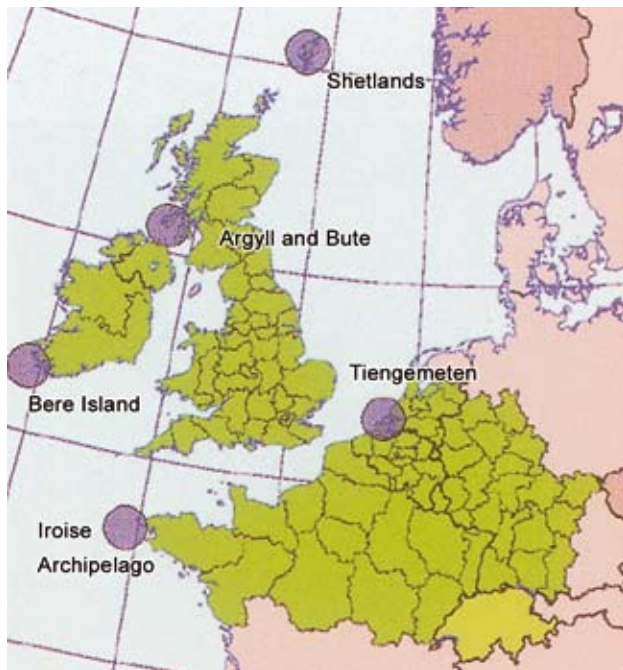
Since then the plan to return the island to its previous condition and use it for leisure and care farming has been carefully and sensitively put in place with the final 'opening of the dykes' taking place in 2007.

## 2. Islands in North West Europe

### 2.1 Shaped by their Location

The many islands of North West Europe have been shaped, in their landscape, culture and traditional habitation patterns, by their location at the “edge of Europe”.

The weather dominates, with the prevailing winds, seas and weather patterns coming from the broad Atlantic Ocean as it drives Eastwards, impacting not only on the usually jagged coastlines and the rich natural flora and fauna of the islands but also on their accessibility and economic viability.



In general NWE islands have been relatively under-populated in relation to mainland areas. This has intensified during the last fifty years with a general depopulation of many islands and, in particular, a major demographic shift as young people leave, often never to return.

A related issue, which varies according to both climate and accessibility, is the extent to which household and land ownership patterns are changing. Many islands are experiencing a significant rise in second home ownership by “incomers”, creating social stresses and adding to pressures on housing affordability.

Secondly, changes to economic activity have been substantial, usually involving a shift from production (agriculture and fishing) to a variety of service provision activities, including tourism and second home construction and maintenance.

The exposed locations and often fierce climate of most NWE islands has meant that few have seen the intensive tourism developments of the type that characterises so many other islands, whether in the Mediterranean or further afield such as the Caribbean. The corollary of this is that many NWE islands have potential for a different type of tourism development although they share many physical and logistical issues such as access, water supplies and restricted medical and educational services are shared with other European islands such as those in the Mediterranean.

The islands are obviously highly variable in terms of their needs, infrastructure, size, population density, physical characteristics, accessibility and land use patterns. Distinct cultural attributes have been preserved in many cases as well as a real sense of identity and ‘belonging’.



## 2.2 Organisation of Government

Table 2.1 shows the organisation of government as it relates to the different ISLA partner islands. “Government” is here defined as a political unit with any combination of executive, administrative and controlling power.

ISLA Islands	Shetland Isles	Argyll & Bute	Iroise Archipelago	Tiengemetten	Bere Island
National	United Kingdom		France	The Netherlands	Republic of Ireland
Devolved national	Scottish Government				
Regional			Region Bretagne		
Regional	Shetland Islands Council 22.000 inh. 1,500 km <sup>2</sup>	Argyll & Bute Council 90.000 inh. 6,900 km <sup>2</sup>	Département Finistère 850.000 inh. 6,700 km <sup>2</sup>	Provincie Zuid-Holland 3.400.000 inh. 2,800 km <sup>2</sup>	County of Cork 450.000 inh. 7,500 km <sup>2</sup>
Local			Commune Ouessant 950 inh. 15 km <sup>2</sup>	Gemeente Korendijk 11.000 inh. 80 km <sup>2</sup>	

Table 2.1: Number of administrative divisions in the ISLA regions.

Looking at the ‘lowest’ level of government administration the differences – between France and The Netherlands on the one hand and the UK and Ireland on the other – are noteworthy. In France and The Netherlands the government is more institutionalised i.e. present as administration on the lowest level on or near the islands. In the UK and Ireland this type of government administration does not exist.

France and The Netherlands have a large, active steering ‘state’, with an institutionalised local administration (a municipality with own staff and budget). Many of the public services are organised by this lowest level of government. As a result, even on islands, the ‘government’ is relatively ‘nearby’, easy to visit and often considered as part of the community. It also works the other way around: for the people working for the government it is easier to stay informed on local matters and to organise local consultation.

In the UK and Ireland the state acts more as facilitator and there is more flexibility in regard to civil society and market mechanisms. The ‘local’ government (as an administrative/political entity) is responsible for a much larger spatial area than in mainland Europe. As a result, for Irish and Scottish island communities, the ‘government’ is further away and therefore more difficult to visit and consult. This implies a greater need for self-reliance at the local level, which has resulted in the establishment of local NGOs and Trusts. Also the operating environment for public-private and “quasi non-governmental” organisations is much more developed in comparison with mainland Europe where the municipality has the principal responsibility and funding to support local services.

## 2.3 The ISLA Partners

### Partner organisation: *Bere Island Projects Group*

The Bere Island Projects Group (BIPG) is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation with over 20 years experience in initiating and fostering development projects and activities on Bere Island. The Group has a full-time development officer and administrator funded under the Community Development Programme of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, which provides financial assistance towards the staffing and equipping of local resource centres. These are intended to provide a focal point for community development activities in an area and to other specialised community development projects.



*Bere Island, Heritage weekend, Education*

### Partner organisation: *Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG)*

DLG, the Dutch Government Service for Land and Water Management, is an executive agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. It has twelve regional branches throughout The Netherlands. DLG implements integrated rural development and acts as a land agency for rural areas for central government, the provinces, municipalities and water control authorities.

It can acquire land, take care of its redevelopment, advise on land use management and eventually transfer the land to other organisations or owners. DLG has a range of experience in participatory planning approaches. Its rural development plans are multi-sectoral, taking into account natural water systems and infrastructure as well as cultural heritage aspects. DLG also advises on financing and acts as subsidy agency for a number of national and European grant and subsidy schemes.

### Partner organisation: *Shetland Amenity Trust*

The Shetland Amenity Trust is a charitable trust set up to conserve and enhance Shetland's heritage. It was established by the Shetland Island Council in 1983 but operates independently. It is mainly involved in:

(1) the protection, improvement and enhancement of buildings and artefacts of architectural, historical, educational and other interest for public benefit and enjoyment and

(2) the provision, development, conservation, research and improvement of facilities that will ensure public enjoyment of Shetland's countryside, flora and fauna.

The Trust was formed in 1983 and now employs over 30 staff. A core office staff of eight administers the Trust and manages the various projects and schemes. In the field the Trust employs two full-time Archaeologists, six full-time Construction Squad workers, a Woodlands Squad of four, and four in what are termed 'Muck and Bruck' Squads.

**Partner organisation: *Conservatoire de Littoral***

The «Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres» (The French Coastal Protection Agency or CdL), is a public administrative body with the responsibility of conducting appropriate land-use policies for the protection of threatened natural areas. CdL was founded in 1975 and now consists of a team of one hundred and fifty permanent staff. It is organised regionally with eight centres spread out along the coast and also has offices in Paris.

The main task of CdL is to acquire land in sensitive areas, and to develop and implement appropriate land-use policies for this land. CdL has three procedures it can use to acquire land: either by private agreement, by pre-emption in coastal areas defined by the départements or, more rarely, by expropriation for reasons of public interest. The great majority of acquisitions today are made by private agreement. Once acquired the land becomes inalienable, meaning that it cannot be resold. Land management is normally undertaken as a partnership contract with the local communities.

**Partner organisation: *Argyll & Bute Council***

Argyll & Bute Council, technically a unitary authority, is responsible for delivery of a wide range of services, including education, waste management, maintenance of public roads (other than trunk roads), planning and building control, social work, housing, environmental health and emergency planning.

The council covers 10% of the land area of Scotland; the second largest geographical area of any Scottish local authority, stretching nearly 130 km from the western island of Tiree to Helensburgh in the east and over 160 km from Appin in the north to Campbeltown in the south. The Council's area includes 25 inhabited islands. Argyll & Bute continues to experience population decline, at a faster rate amongst the 16–24 year age band. This loss is most rapid in the Atlantic Islands where a lack of opportunities for jobs and further education drive this process.

At present there is no specific islands or coastal policy on a council-wide basis. This reflects the lack of a cohesive national policy for peripheral areas.



*Argyll & Bute, Colonsay*

## 2.4 ISLA Partner Islands Tourism Characteristics

### Shetland Islands

The Shetland Islands consist of a large island group located far to the North of Scotland. They are characterised by their remoteness from the Scottish mainland being over one hour's flight North from Aberdeen.

Heritage, both natural and man made, is their chief point of tourism interest. For the purposes of the ISLA study the main focus was on the island of Bressay. Bressay's main attractions are the trip to Noss to see the birdlife; the walks on Bressay itself (with attractive views out and some close encounters with wildlife); the heritage centre and a number of historic landmarks including the Shetlands Amenity Trust owned lighthouse.

The development of more interpretation and signage across the Shetland Islands as a whole is a key element of the Shetlands Amenity Trust strategy for growth in tourism. It is being backed in ISLA and will improve the understanding of visitors and help to increase length of stay.



*Shetland Islands, Leaflets*

### Argyll & Bute

Argyll & Bute district lies in Western Scotland and consists of a highly dispersed set of both mainland and island communities. Its coastline alone is nearly as long as that of France. Four of Argyll & Bute's islands, Islay, Lismore, Gigha and Mull, were involved in ISLA as well as a sea-based project.

Islay is a relatively established tourism destination accessible by both ferry and air. Tourism is gaining in importance within the local economy, especially in association with whisky distilling, an important element of the island's economy. Natural and manmade heritage are also key attractions of Islay and it is an important nature reserve where over 50,000 migrating geese arrive every October. In peak season there is a lack of accommodation.

Lismore is a much smaller island than Islay and primarily attracts day visitors, not least because it has very little accommodation for overnight stays. Its Christian heritage is its key tourism asset coupled with a charming ambience and unspoilt natural environment.

Gigha is a community owned island, bought from its former private owner in 2002. Since the island purchase, the community has been working to improve the quality of life for islanders and to generate economic opportunities. A number of community projects have either been completed or underway including the provision of community housing, developing community businesses and improving tourism opportunities. Tourism on the island is a fairly recent phenomenon and the islanders have reacted to the opportunities presented by undertaking work to enhance the visitor destinations and to provide catering and visitor facilities.

Mull is one of the larger Argyll and Bute islands and has a population of over 2,500. Tourism is a vital contributor to the local economy, with some of the main attractions being the main town of Tobermory, the inspiration for a popular children's TV programme, and wildlife tourism notably bird watching. Many visitors are drawn to the island to explore its rich heritage and maintaining this heritage is an integral part of attracting tourists to various locations around the island.

The sea is an underused asset but presents many opportunities. Enabling locals and visitors to understand the contribution of the sea to their surroundings through interpretation provides an educational tool as well as an incentive for further exploration of the local area.

### **Iroise Archipelago**

Ouessant and Kéménez, the partner islands, are contrasting locations within the Iroise Archipelago, an important marine and nature conservation area located off the North–West coast of Brittany and known as the Parc naturel marin d'Iroise.

Ouessant (Ushant in English) is the largest island and has a permanent population of over 700 though this at least triples during the peak summer months. The island has a dispersed pattern of habitation and agriculture and provides a highly appealing “natural” environment which, together with the local micro–climate, attracts both second home owners and tourists (both staying visitors and day trippers).

Kéménez is by contrast a tiny place, effectively uninhabited for the past two decades although it has a long history of habitation and agricultural use. It has some parallels with Tiengemeten but the scale of development and operation is minuscule in comparison.

Ouessant is the most tourism intensive of all the ISLA partner islands. Its visitor numbers support a substantial and varied range of accommodation supplemented by a good number of bars and restaurants. Its economy is substantially dependent on visitor traffic although this includes the impact of second home owners.

### **Tiengemeten**

A unique experiment, both in The Netherlands and within the ISLA project, Tiengemeten is a controlled development situation for nature conservation, tourism and recreation. The pace, intensity and scale of infrastructure development has been well–planned and is closely controlled and co–ordinated by several organisations. In contrast to the other ISLA partner islands, Tiengemeten is an estuary island, located in the south–western delta of The Netherlands. It is thus protected from the full furies of Atlantic gales – if not the cold North sea wind. Traditionally Tiengemeten has been an agricultural island with virtually no tourism but is being explicitly developed as a recreational centre, part of the “Green lung” for this highly urbanised region within The Netherlands.



*Tiengemeten, visitors*

### **Bere Island**

Bere Island is some two hours drive from Cork Airport and is located in a highly scenic area of South West Ireland. It is only minutes from the mainland by ferry. Its tourism is relatively limited although recent accommodation developments are providing the opportunity to convert day visitors into staying visitors. The island has a considerable military and maritime history which provides good opportunities for future development. Its small marina is successful and the opening up of walking routes on the island, coupled with the provision of an interpretative centre, will enhance its growing appeal.

### 3. Tourism

#### 3.1 Tourism as an Economic Driver of Islands in North West Europe

Tourism has traditionally been a relatively low economic driver for the majority of NWE islands but is becoming of increasing importance. The brief descriptions of the tourism characteristics of the ISLA partner islands give a more detailed focus on the individual island partners within ISLA.

The SWOT analysis below is our departure point for considering tourism’s potential for North Western European islands as a whole.

#### SWOT analysis for North West Europe Island Tourism

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The generic appeal of “islands”</li> <li>• A destination rather than just a point of passage</li> <li>• The geography reinforces the dream</li> <li>• Sense of place/identity/community</li> <li>• Island culture/character/heritage</li> <li>• Nature and scenery assets</li> <li>• Wildlife</li> <li>• High coastline to inland ratio</li> <li>• Remoteness/quietness</li> <li>• Human scale of many islands</li> <li>• Scale of places/buildings/businesses</li> <li>• Community self-help mentality</li> <li>• Friendliness and hospitality to visitors</li> <li>• Local produce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access issues including cost and connectivity</li> <li>• Lack of reliable statistical data regarding volume and value of tourism</li> <li>• Availability of capital and funding for infrastructure and other developments</li> <li>• Seasonality/viability of tourism services</li> <li>• Cost of products/food may be higher than mainland</li> <li>• Unpredictable weather patterns</li> <li>• Carrying capacity issues and vulnerable eco-systems</li> <li>• Poor Visitor Management capability</li> <li>• Limited marketing and information provision capability</li> <li>• Hospitality and catering skills base can be limited</li> <li>• Restricted range of tourism services</li> <li>• Insularity and resistance to visitors</li> <li>• Waste disposal and water supplies</li> <li>• Poor environmental management e.g. abandoned vehicles/litter</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing demand for ‘green tourism/eco-tourism products’</li> <li>• Increasing demand for niche products and ‘something different’</li> <li>• Identifiable and addressable market segments</li> <li>• Extend length of stay/participation</li> <li>• Improve visitor engagement</li> <li>• Encourage repeat visits</li> <li>• Integrate product offers and marketing</li> <li>• Improve inter-island collaboration e.g. Les Iles du Ponant</li> <li>• Exploit strength of individual and generic “island identity” in marketing</li> <li>• Develop new niche/luxury products using island qualities and image</li> <li>• Focus on value vs. volume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islander vs. visitor conflicts</li> <li>• Imbalance of residents vs. second home owners</li> <li>• Loss of cultural heritage (generic, not usually directly because of tourism flows)</li> <li>• Uneconomic to provide appropriate visitor services</li> <li>• Dependency on access routes</li> <li>• Ageing populations and demographic imbalances</li> <li>• Environmental degradation</li> <li>• Other economic forces unbalancing island economy</li> </ul>

It is abundantly clear from the SWOT analysis above that in general there are significant tourism opportunities opening up for many NWE islands despite the many constraints and difficulties they have to face.

In particular the growing match between new tourism trends (health and wellness, close to nature, de-stressing, a more physical type of holiday e.g. walking, cycling) and the kinds of products and services islands offer is noteworthy.

With the exception of Ouessant, the ISLA island partners have a generally under-developed tourism industry as do the majority of other NW European islands – the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey being the main exception. The weaknesses however are genuinely highly significant inhibiting factors, impossible for the ISLA project to address in their totality but nevertheless, on the principle of “How does one eat an elephant?” “Answer – A bite at a time”, progress has clearly been made, albeit on a small scale.

Addressing the weaknesses on a broader basis, building on the commonalities of NW Europe’s islands, is an important future task. Each island on its own can never expect to have or to receive either the human or financial capital necessary to overcome the many constraints. So collectively there is real opportunity for islands to address and resolve common problems. A major weakness is the lack of a solid statistical basis for establishing the real value of tourism to each island, thus inhibiting both inward investment and political decision making.

The threats identified are primarily generic threats to island existence as a whole rather than being specific to increased tourism flows. What is clear however is that additional tourism income and activity has the potential to address or mitigate many of these threats, in particular depopulation and the lack of economically viable services for both islanders and visitors.

### **Box 3.1 Tourism as an Economic Driver in Lismore**

Lismore is one of the least known of the Scottish isles and for the tourist it did not hold much attraction despite a fascinating history linked to St Moluag who came to Lismore in 561AD. The Christian Heritage of the island was an untapped resource. Through the work of the Historical Society – Comann Eachdraidh Liosmor a crofter’s cottage known as Tigh Iseabal Dhaidh was reconstructed as a first project phase. This was followed by the opening this year of a visitor and resource centre or Lismore Heritage Centre (see also Box 6.2). As well as a museum, café and gift shop, the building has become a cultural venue for the area.

The tourism significance stems from the creation of a central point for visitors to gain information, understand the history and find a café – the island had none up to now. By creating the focal point the Historical Society has created an asset that will help extend the stay of visitors, encourage return visits and in a sense provide a reason to visit the island. Tourist amenities are justified on islands that are not trying to remain uninhabited or wilderness areas – especially when there is a need to provide economic activity that will help sustain the population and create some wealth. When this is done through a sustainable building with multi purpose community uses then it is something to celebrate and to recommend to others.

### 3.2 Access

It is an obvious point but the question of accessibility to an island determines not just the quality of life and the economic costs of living there but act as the key to tourism development and sustainability. Whether the means of access is air or sea the tourist's decision of whether to visit or not will be strongly influenced by the cost, frequency, safety and reliability / regularity of access.

An examination of the ISLA partner islands indicates in every case that access is a high priority not just for every day life of the islanders but for encouraging tourism. The geographic location of the partners covers extremes of distance with Bere and Tiengemeten both a short ferry ride from the mainland and both rarely being cut off due to extreme 'sea' conditions. Lismore is more susceptible to weather conditions than they are but is much less vulnerable than Islay due to a shorter island to shore distance. Islay is also backed up by aircraft service.

Ouessant can be very vulnerable to the Atlantic and has many stormy days but the air service provides supplementary access. The Shetlands represent the furthest extreme in the partners' geography. There is not only a network of quality ferries operating between the islands but the key linkages from Scotland itself by air and sea are seen as critical factors for success in everyday living and for tourism.

The question of access is high on the Shetland agenda firstly because the ferry services from Aberdeen, although subsidised, are perceived as expensive and vulnerable to bad weather. Secondly, the islands' air services are constrained by the length of the runway at Sumburgh and its vulnerability too to weather such as fog. The runway length prevents regular jet aircraft services and hence Shetland has no Low Cost Carrier air link. Costs are perceived as high, particularly for tourists.

It is not well known that many Caribbean islands pay subsidy to the major European and US airlines to provide air services to each island. These subsidies once started are hard to stop as the threat is that the service will be ended and another island is willing to pay. This is an extreme example of access for tourism development being a hostage to the international carriers. Thankfully subsidies for air services in Europe are highly regulated and transparent.

In the ISLA study on Regulation of Island Tourism, it was considered that the regulation of ferry and air services to the islands was of critical importance in the regulatory field. This is a lesson to read across to all islands for tourism purposes – and links back to the first points made – cost, frequency, safety and regularity /reliability. These are the essence of access to islands.



*Ferry to Lismore,  
Argyll & Bute*



### 3.3 Understanding the Islands

From a visitor's perspective it is often important to understand the environment, heritage and community in which a visit is taking place. This may not be the case for 'sun and sand' tourism but it is increasingly important to many segments of the market – especially those who are likely to pick a North Europe island to visit.

Visitor management, capacity and tourism infrastructure are important issues for islands and were all addressed in the project. Many examples of good practice were identified such as wildlife engagement on Islay; the careful preparation on Tiengemeten and the long term vision for both Ouessant and Kéménez. However the outstanding example identified was on Shetland where the Amenity Trust has a process in place to engage with the visitor and to assist their movement around key sites and intellectually engage and challenge them.

Interpretation is a topic that may not receive serious attention in tourism at times and may be dismissed as 'clutter' or something that is optional. It is however an essential part of good visitor management and good marketing as it can hold the visitor longer, increase his/her enjoyment and increase length of stay and visitor satisfaction. This in turn will help the visitor recommend the destination to others.

Interpretation is an essential part of the tourism infrastructure and needs careful planning and design and should be implemented in a strategic and not piecemeal way. This is the essence of the Shetland Hub and Spoke system discussed in Box 3.2 below.

#### Box 3.2 Shetland Hub & Spoke System

The Hub & Spoke System is a communications concept where the Hub is the new Shetland Museum and the Spokes are the links (trails) to the other sites across the Shetlands; the themes, styles and means of communication form an integrated whole. Because 77% of visitors to the Shetlands claim to visit for heritage reasons then the priority is to help them understand and navigate the key areas of archaeology, birds, 'remoteness' and culture. The objective is to improve physical and intellectual access to culture and heritage using signage, information leaflets and interpretation.

The Hub is new Shetland Museum which opened in June 2007 and whose visitor numbers reached 37,000 in just three months. 10 trail leaflets and 18 out of 28 site leaflets had been completed by September 2007 and the interpretation board design was complete with manufacture due to begin. Work was also well under way on the website which also links into the Hub & Spoke concept.

The new museum is the catalyst for the design of the brand associated with the system and the branding is applied consistently across all elements of the project. This sense of continuity and design assist the integration of the approach and gives reassurance to the visitor as he/ she journeys around the islands.

The completion of the project will give Shetland an outstanding example of a system that adds value to the visitor experience, is at one with the environment and is visually and intellectually exciting. Progress to date also indicates that it will be extremely effective in enhancing the visitor experience.



*Shetland Islands, new museum*



*Argyll & Bute, Lismore Heritage Museum, interpretation panels*

### 3.4 Investment

The tourism industry worldwide depends on investment for expanding and updating product, accessing product and accessing the destination itself. In many cases the investment comes from the private sector which will typically invest in accommodation, attractions, air services and some other sectoral services – retail, taxis etc.

Depending on the type of economy, public sector investment usually focuses on the provision of infrastructure such as roads and harbours and on the provision of cultural or environmental services which are non profit making such as museums. Public transport will vary from country to country with state owned organisations in many European countries or privatised yet subsidised as in the UK.

Community investment in tourism is usually seen where it is perceived that the private sector will not invest due to limited opportunities for profit making and where the public sector considers that it is neither appropriate or opportune to make an investment. Although community businesses can be profit making, many often are not and require direct or indirect subsidy through volunteer labour and/or through some grant mechanisms.

The experience of the partner islands has tended to reflect the need for both public sector investment and community investment as the private sector's role in tourism on the islands is limited – mostly to accommodation provision, retail, visitor services and the operation of ferry or air services which themselves are mostly subsidised in some way.

Investment therefore is critical to many aspects of island life and tourism is no exception.

In the ISLA partner islands there are limited examples of substantial private sector investment, most likely because of the scale of the island and domestic market and constrained visitor numbers. The most significant example of investment by the private sector is in the whisky sector in Islay and this is referenced in Box 3.3 below.

#### Box 3.3 Private Investment in Islay Whisky Visitor Centres

The whisky industry has a fascination for tourists and it is a strongpoint of 'industrial' tourism in both Scotland and Ireland. Visiting distilleries is a very popular tourist activity – even more so than visiting breweries. While the investment in the distillery itself is based on demand for the product, market share, projected growth etc – the decision to invest in a visitor centre is taken for other reasons. These may be to enhance the image of the product; to encourage loyalty to the product and to build up a database of current and potential customers. Because distilleries tend to be located in scenic places, look old and romantic and have an interesting and accessible production process they are generally high profile for tourism. Islay is probably the best example of this in Europe with its concentration of eight distilleries.



*Whisky distillery*

Islay has eight working distilleries, all of which are open for tours and tasting, some all year round. This includes one at Kilchoman, described as a farm distillery, which has a visitor centre, café and shop. It is relatively new and less well-known than Bowmore, Ardbeg, Lagavulin, Laphroaig, Bunnahabhain, Bruichladdich and Caol Ila.

Bowmore Distillery – in the centre of Bowmore town – is Japanese owned. The company has not only invested in a new visitor centre but also operates five self catering cottages in the village as tourist accommodation. The cottages may be 'explored' on line and booked directly on the Bowmore website. All are rated 4\* by VisitScotland. The distillery tour itself is one of the few awarded 5 stars in the Journal's Malt Distillery of Scotland classification reflecting the investment in the visitor centre and tour. This tourism investment in Islay is a prime example of a clear strategy coupled with a synergy between primary and secondary tourism products linked to the main business.

Investment by the community sector is detailed in text boxes in this report – 3.1 and 6.2 for Lismore and 6.1 for Bere. These are good examples of such investment partly for tourism and partly for community reasons. They provide both a community centre and a community resource area.

Community tourism businesses are susceptible to failure if they rely entirely on a new and unproven in some cases tourism market. The need is for the amenity to have multiple purposes rather than to have to rely on what may be a fickle visitor market. It would be invidious to provide a text box illustrating community tourism projects that have failed. Such businesses are not unique to islands but as some partners do depend on them the wider lessons are worth examining.

There are many examples in Ireland and Northern Ireland where the availability of grants has led to a number of ill-judged schemes. The text box below (3.3) sets out some characteristics that community tourism projects must have to succeed rather than pointing to any particular one.

#### **Box 3.4 Planning Community Tourism Businesses**

Care must be taken in developing community tourism businesses or projects. They are often begun on a wave of enthusiasm with little recognition of market realities and can experience severe cost underestimates in terms of both capital and running costs. Initial enthusiasm can then be replaced by the grim reality of a lack of cash flow, poor visitor numbers and a downward spiral of depression leading to the 'why bother opening' viewpoint. Good community tourism projects or businesses will usually:

- › Have a thorough understanding of the market or segment they are targeting;
- › Have a realistic view of the likely number of users and therefore cash flow and ability to service debt;
- › Have a full grasp of capital costs, of planning issues including potential delays;
- › Have a complete understanding of the requirements of potential grant sources and the cost & time of meeting the necessary steps to receiving grant especially where grant is paid in arrears;
- › Have an understanding of marketing the project – the cost of marketing and the means of getting market penetration;
- › Have a succession plan in place if a key committee member leaves or has to be replaced.

## 4. Cultural and Natural Landscape

### 4.1 Introduction

Over the last decades, the ISLA partner islands have witnessed a change in economic activities from agriculture and fishing to tourism and nature conservation. The ISLA islands are of high ecological interest. For example, the islands of Ouessant and Kéménez lie within the Armorique Regional Park and are of significant ornithological importance.

The island landscapes represent a unique asset whose preservation is most of the time recognised at a European level. They offer visitors an experience that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Islands should collectively seek to exploit their unique nature and landscape to their benefit. To achieve this will require the maintenance or restoration of the authentic natural & cultural landscape.



*Argyll & Bute, Ha-Ha wall restoration*

On these islands, agriculture, often in the form of sheep farming, has long played an important role in shaping and maintaining the landscape and natural and cultural heritage. If farmland is abandoned, it may be overgrown by weeds, specific species may disappear and traces of cultural heritage (e.g. landscape patterns and elements) may no longer be seen. However, if agriculture is to play a role in maintaining the landscape, it should also do so by complying with the objectives of nature conservation and maintenance of an attractive landscape. It should fulfil certain conditions to minimise negative environmental impacts, but should also at the same time be sufficiently economically attractive as an activity in which to invest time and money.

The major question therefore is what kind of agriculture is desirable and feasible in the context of islands and the objectives of maintaining their landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

## 4.2 Importance of agriculture and fishing

The agricultural situation of the ISLA islands varies considerably. For example, Kéménez (France) and Tiengemeten (The Netherlands) are essentially small 'nature islands', owned by a nature conservation organisation and where one organic farm will be operating. There are no or few other inhabitants on these islands. On the other ISLA islands, the number of inhabitants is higher and agriculture is still considered to be a significant economic activity.

The islands of Argyll contain around 1000 farms and the Shetland Islands in total about 2000 farms, of which the majority are livestock farms. Fisheries and fish farming are relatively important on Bere Island (30% of the 45 farms), especially trout and salmon fish farming. At farm level, there is often a combination of fish farming and animal husbandry (especially cattle suckling). However the number of farms growing arable crops and vegetables is quite low.

Considering the importance of natural resources, both for the maintenance of biodiversity and for (eco)tourism, it is essential that agricultural activities are not harmful to these resources. Hence the importance of encouraging sustainable agricultural practices. In this context organic farming is one but not the only option for sustainable agriculture.

### Organic Farming

The total acreage and number of farms, as well as the relative importance of organic farming on the ISLA islands, accounts for a maximum of 2% of the total. The relative importance of organic farming on the study islands is more or less similar to the mainland data for organic farming. There would appear to be some potential therefore for increased organic production, both in total acreage and the number of farms.

However, lessons learned from various studies and 'best practice examples' suggest that while organic farming on islands may contribute positively to landscape maintenance and cultural heritage it is unlikely to be economically viable on its own. In particular it can be difficult for island organic products to compete with organic products from the mainland. Furthermore, the claim 'organic', relating primarily to production methods as such, is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to attract sufficient consumers.

## 4.3 Regional Products or 'Island Products'

Islands may have specific characteristics, because of geographical location and climate conditions, which may be helpful in positioning an agricultural product as a regional product or niche product. A good example is the one of potatoes with a distinctive taste, coming early to market (see Box 4.1).

### Box 4.1 Potatoes from the Island of Ré and the Island of Batz

Potatoes from the Island of Ré are the only potatoes in France to have been awarded an AOC label (Protected Designation of Origin). They are grown over 200 hectares by 35 producers. These potatoes have a distinctive taste, 'a subtle sweet flavour' and come early to market. Farmers are organised as a group of producers to defend their interests as growers of this specific potato. To promote its image as a 'potato island', an annual 'Potato and Salt Festival' is organised in each spring.

The island of Batz (near Roscoff in North Brittany) has a population of around 600 on an area of 320 ha. The island is known for its agriculture, which shapes the landscape. As a result of the mild climate, farmers are able to produce the first vegetables of the season, such as potatoes, cauliflowers, artichokes, tomatoes, etc. They use seaweed as a natural fertiliser. Farmers receive a premium price for their potatoes as these are the first on the market and have a distinctive taste because of the seaweed.

Sources: [e.europa.eu/agriculture/qual](http://e.europa.eu/agriculture/qual); Press comm. M. P. Jean, Association Iles-du-Ponant; [www.iles-du-ponant.com](http://www.iles-du-ponant.com)

The recently installed farmer on the island of Kéménez (France) is also planning to make use of this island quality and produce early potatoes for the urban market (see Box 4.2).

#### **Box 4.2 Restoration and rehabilitation of the natural landscape of the island of Kéménez**

On Kéménez, the process of re-starting agriculture is seen as a means to preserve as much as possible of the island's story. The last and only farm on the island was abandoned in 1973, although the land was occasionally grazed by sheep until 1993. The aim of the project is to establish an economic activity compatible with the preservation of key characteristics of the island; its natural habitats and breeding grounds, its landscape including the farm buildings, its archaeological artefacts and traces of cultural heritage, such as the 'Four à soude,' where in former times seaweed was burnt to produce soda.

The ISLA project has contributed to this initiative by investing in the restoration of farm buildings, the access pier and establishing energy and water supplies and water treatment.

The arable field area is very small, covering only two hectares out of the total of 40 on the island. The aim is to produce potatoes to be exported and sold via a niche market strategy together with the development of an associated vegetable plot to provide food for visitors. On the other parts of the island, a small flock of a local breed of sheep will be of great help to maintain natural habitats (pastures & moorland). A premium market for lamb is also anticipated as lamb from Ouessant is in high demand in the market and fetches higher prices because of its distinctive salty taste and limited availability.

The second aim of the project is to welcome tourists to the island with the provision of accommodation as well as educational programs with local school supported by local communities.



*Kemenez, buildings restoration for organic farming*

A 'multiple claim' product, adding an island image to unique product qualities such as taste and a 'smell of the sea' is likely to have a greater chance of success than a purely organic product.

Collaboration between farmers and other enterprises can lead to more effective and efficient marketing and distribution (see Box 4.3). Collaboration between farmers and nature organisations can also help by combining nature conservation and agricultural objectives. Salt marshes and salty meadows (managed by nature organisations) may be used for grazing by sheep and cattle (owned by farmers). Meat can be sold in premium markets as it is known to be of high quality, produced in an animal friendly manner and have a distinctive (salty) taste.

### Box 4.3 Collaboration to promote island products

Since 1991, asparagus has been cultivated on the island of Texel in the Northern part of The Netherlands. This asparagus has a special flavour, because of the specific soil qualities of the island. Irrigation on Texel is not permitted because of scarce water resources, which makes asparagus grow slower than mainland asparagus, which also contributes to its good flavour. Tourists much appreciate this asparagus and local restaurants put it on the menu. Asparagus grown at Texel has now officially been registered as a regional product, a 'Texel product'. It is also sold to restaurants in the premium market segment on the mainland. It should be noticed that transport to the mainland from Texel is very well organised, which facilitates marketing and distribution.

The asparagus farm is member of the 'Association of Texel Producers', comprising around 40 entrepreneurs (farms, hotels, restaurants, gift shops) who work together promoting the island and its products. Together they offer and promote various local products such as cheese, fish, meat, fruit, wool, jams, liquor and ice-cream.

The Texel brewery produces branded 'Texel beers', using barley grown by farmers on Texel. The farmers work according to certain production conditions (limited use of pesticides and mineral fertiliser) and receive a premium price. Around 90% of Texel beer is, through wholesalers, sold to restaurants and shops on the island where it is bought by both local people and tourists. Yearly, about one million tourists visit Texel.

An initiative to further promote products from Texel is the cookery book 'Taste of Texel' presenting recipes with tales of Texel. Local restaurants include these recipes on their menus, thus stimulating the local agricultural economy.

Source: [www.echttexelsproduct.nl](http://www.echttexelsproduct.nl), [www.texelseasperge.nl](http://www.texelseasperge.nl)

Inter-island collaboration or regional collaboration may lead to a joint promotion effort which generate economies of scale. The Wadden Gold initiative is a good example (see Box 4.4).

### Box 4.4 The Wadden Gold Brand - 'honestly enjoying'

In 1996 the Waddengroep Foundation (The Netherlands) was started with the objective of producing beautiful and special products from raw materials from the Wadden Sea region, aiming at a sustainable, environmentally friendly development of the countryside. The Wadden Sea region includes both the Wadden Islands and a part of the mainland up to 25 km from the coast. To increase the number of producers and get the attention of consumers, the regional brand 'Wadden Gold' was created in 2003, using 'honestly enjoying' as a slogan. The Wadden Gold branding confirms the product's connection 'with one of the world's most valuable and authentic nature and culture areas'. It guarantees regional origin and production, gives expression to the belief of customers that products are authentically produced in the Wadden Sea region, have specific taste characteristics and are produced according to sensible and sustainable production methods.

Wadden Gold branded dairy products are combined with unique berries, such as the sea buckthorn berry, resulting in new products such as sea buckthorn bavarois, ice cream and curd cheese. The Wadden region is famous for its sheep and Wadden Gold offers organic sheep milk and dairy products such as sheep's milk ice cream as well as meat products from the Texel sheep breed. Wadden Gold also offers jams, syrups, wines and juices made from cranberries, sea buckthorns, aronia and other berries and mustard, honey, vinegar and other products from the salt meadows. Wadden Gold skin care products use Wadden salt and organically grown herbs and flowers.

Wadden Gold branded products are much appreciated by tourists visiting the Wadden Islands. They also appeal to consumers on the mainland, especially in areas within reasonable distance from the islands.

Source: [www.waddengoud.nl](http://www.waddengoud.nl)

Options to combine farming with other economic activities such as eco-tourism and 'Green care farming' or 'Social care farming' will make agriculture more economically sustainable (see Box 4.5).

'Social care farming' refers to offering farm-based recreational or work-related activities for psychiatric patients, people with learning disabilities, a drug addiction history, burnt-out, problem youth or elderly people. Research and experience indicate that in these cases working with animals and plants and being in a green environment may have therapeutic value (Hassink and van Dijk, 2006). Furthermore, an important condition of success is that clients feel that their activities matter, that they contribute to an enterprise run by a farmer. Care farming originally started on organic and biological-dynamic farms as these had a substantial demand for manual labour, but it now also takes place on regular farms.

Social care farming is increasing in many European countries. For example, the number of care farms in the Netherlands increased from 75 in 1998 to around 600 in 2006. The large majority of Dutch care farms receive payment for their services, financed by the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act and/or by special programs set up by Municipalities or health insurances. However little data is available for France and Ireland. In 2006, a research project entitled 'Social Services in Multifunctional Farms' (SOFAR), funded by the European Union, started to exchange experiences and conduct research concerning social care farming. The countries participating are Belgium, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands and Slovenia.

#### Box 4.5 Social care farming on Tiengemeten

On the ISLA island of Tiengemeten one of the redundant farm buildings, the 'Idahoeve' built in 1807, is being restored to be used for care farming. The care farm will be established by a Rotterdam-based health institution. Natuurmonumenten, the nature conservation agency, is the owner of the building. The health institution is participating in the initial investment for restoring and adapting the building to its new function, while maintaining the historical value, and will be responsible for the management and development of the care farm. Key characteristics of Tiengemeten such as its remoteness, quietness and nature are therefore to be exploited as health promoting qualities.

About 24 clients with mental disorders will live and work on the farm for a maximum period of 2 years. They will be involved in farm work in the 'Old Polder' and nature conservation activities. They will also assist in the running of the visitor centre of the island and the museum for rural history. The clients will be guided and supervised by staff of the health Institution. Some of these staff will live permanently on the island, in the surroundings of the Idahoeve.



*Tiengemeten, Social care farming*



## 4.4 Fishing

Fishing is an activity obviously associated with islands. Sustainability can be used as an additional selling point to distinguish the product in the market (cf. Box 4.6).

### Box 4.6 Wadden Gold – Let's try Harder

Fishing is still an important economic activity on the northern islands of the Netherlands, the Wadden Islands. The Wadden Sea is an international important nature reserve. To make small-scale fisheries more sustainable, a certification programme was initiated in 2005. Certified shrimps and fish (Thick-lip Mullet) were introduced onto the market and sold under the Wadden Gold brand. The fish is sold in about 50 'nature shops' in the Netherlands.

Results to date indicate that fishermen are satisfied with their efforts. They received considerable recognition for their work to prove the sustainability of their specific fishery in the Wadden Sea. One of the objectives of certification was to secure their future as fishermen in this nature reserve. Although the product (smoked mullet fillets) was well received in the local market, a considerable proportion of the produce is still sold as 'conventional'. The major reasons are:

- The fish (mullet, in Dutch: harder) is not well-known among Dutch consumers;
- The distribution channel does not yet reach many consumers. Fish is not (yet) generally seen as a product sold in a 'nature shop'. Consumers visiting these shops are not purposely looking for fish. These shops do not yet have an assortment of fish products. Consumers tend to buy fish in specialised fish shops or in supermarkets.
- Small-scale production leads to relatively high costs of processing and distribution.
- The product gets a premium price for export (almost all mullet caught in the Netherlands is exported to France where it is a known and well-appreciated product).
- Marketing of the product was not well taken care of when starting the certification procedures and a follow-up project has not yet started due to funding problems.

See also [www.waddengoud.nl](http://www.waddengoud.nl)

The example of the mullet or harder fish indicates that market introduction is a step-wise process: consumers need to know the product and distribution channels should also be appropriate to reach target markets.

Apart from fishing in natural habitats, fish are also 'cultivated' in fish farms. Promising initiatives for more sustainable practices are taking place (cf. Box 4.7). A number of small salmon producers in Shetland have also achieved organic fish farming status: both cod and salmon are farmed organically (OFF certified) and produced according to the animal welfare guidelines of the RSPCA (Freedom Food). The move to organic is in response to low prices for conventional farmed salmon as well as growing market demand for a better, more natural product.

### Box 4.7 From 'Salmon Natural Choice' to 'Organic Brand' salmon

Framgord, a company based in the Shetland Isles, developed in 2000 the 'Shetland Salmon Natural Choice' brand. This salmon is produced on farms selected for their remoteness as well as their minimal impact on the environment. Reducing the density of fish in cages, using feed from sustainable sources and not using chemical treatment gave the fish a premium of 10–30 %. In 2005, Framgord introduced its fully certified Organic Brand, describing it as a natural progression from its Natural Choice product. The market price of organic salmon is around 50 % higher than that for conventionally farmed salmon.

Source: [www.shetlandmarine.com](http://www.shetlandmarine.com)

# Partners meeting...





## 5. Water and Energy

### 5.1 Introduction

For many islands water resources, in terms of both water quantity and quality, is an important issue. Water supply, wastewater treatment and surface runoff differ for individual islands. Most islands with a significant tourism industry experience variation in demand because of the seasonal influx of visitors and tourists which demands a flexible capacity or over-capacity in water and land use management.

Problems to address include insufficient water supply, water quality, the cost of updating infrastructure, leakage, pollution and sludge disposal. Needs and possible solutions vary according to island size, population density, climate, land use, physical characteristics (soil type, hydrology) and remoteness. Capital investment requirements for water supply and drainage per head of population are often much higher on islands than on the mainland.

### 5.2 Water

#### Rainfall and storage

The incidence/ amount of rainfall is often reasonable for the islands studied, but using this resource for obtaining a steady drinking water supply can be an issue. The high rainfall on some islands, while beneficial for water supplies, can have a negative impact on pollution through the overflowing of private septic tanks. Hence improved interception and storage would lessen pollution as well as levelling out supplies.

Control and regulation of incident rainfall can increase and stabilise water supply, reduce pollution of the water environment as well as decrease the amount of wastewater that requires treatment. Localisation of water supply and treatment of waste minimises environmental impact and can reduce infrastructure and maintenance costs. Solutions for water supply should combine increased water collection and decreased losses (through leaking pipes), with more and better storage facilities at individual property level, such as water cisterns with water collecting pipes, or at island level, such as dams (Cf. example in Box 5.1).

#### Box 5.1 Increasing storage capacity on the Orkney Islands

The main freshwater supply on the island of Orkney comes from two natural lochs surrounded by farmland. The water levels are controlled by dams. In order to increase supply without flooding the low banks and destroying the surrounding farmland, farmers were asked to set aside a strip of land along the loch margins which would prevent cattle from eroding the shores. These buffer zones allow vegetation to grow which helps reduce phosphate leaching from fertilisers into the loch. The upgraded and expanded treatment plants on both lochs each produce around 10 million litres of water per day.

Source: [www.tyco.com](http://www.tyco.com)

#### Water supply from the mainland

In certain cases water supply is provided from the mainland, e.g. for the islands of Texel and Tiengemeten in The Netherlands. However, this option is normally only feasible when an island is not too far from the mainland.

#### Desalination

In some cases where water resources are scarce an additional supply is needed from desalination. Desalination refers to a range of processes that remove excess salt and other minerals from seawater, brackish water or wastewater in order to obtain fresh water suitable for either irrigation or animal or human consumption (see Box 5.2).

### Box 5.2 Desalination: examples Belle Ile En Mer, Ile de Sein and Jersey

At Belle Ile En Mer (France) water supply is a problem, owing to low rainfall. The initial solution was the introduction of desalination plants. The infrastructure includes 2 units each of 25 m<sup>3</sup>/h. Costs are between €3 and €4 per m<sup>3</sup> depending on the quantity of purified water produced. To decrease the reliance on desalination, improvements were made in the collection of rainwater in a dam ('barrage'), the supply network was adapted to low water pressure and an information campaign on water saving methodologies was launched.

Drinking water on the small Ile de Sein, off Brittany, is entirely supplied via desalination.

On the UK Channel Island of Jersey, in order to meet the challenge of variable feed water quality, a desalination plant was installed to add to Jersey's ability to meet peak demands.

Compared with other methods for water purification, desalination requires relatively high amounts of energy. Also the disposal of desalination waste products can be an issue. Where solar energy is available (and where the feed water temperature is comparatively high) desalination has been widely adopted e.g. the Middle East, North Africa and California.

### Box 5.3 Water supply and water treatment on the island of Kéménez

On the island of Kéménez water is supplied from a well and from rainwater collected from roof surfaces. The installation of a reverse osmosis system was considered, but due to the high-energy input it has not yet been realised, as it would overload the energy production system on the island.

The water quality of the well is below acceptable standard for human consumption because of traces of cyanide as well as organic pollution. The collected rainwater however is of sufficient quality. The supplied technology uses a filter system which provides good water quality from both well and rainwater collection.

### Option for reducing water usage

Reducing water demand and the consequent production of waste and dirty water can be achieved by awareness campaigns. Practical potential solutions are:

- Water saving by individuals, farms, companies and public facilities through public awareness campaigns and promoting water saving technologies: composting toilets, cisterns with reduced flush volume, spray taps
- Improved water collection and storage, such as rainwater collection
- Leak loss reduction: improved transport of water (better infrastructure, shorter distances between source and consumer);
- Minimising dirty water production and 'recycling': Use of rainwater for toilet flushing, watering the garden, washing the car, etc; Roofing dirty areas (e.g. silage clamps and yards on farms)
- More environmentally-friendly water treatment facilities: individual water purifiers, DynaSand filters, reed-beds, bio-digesters, bio-disks;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems.

## 5.3 Sanitation

Disposal of sludge is one of the issues highlighted by several of the islands. The use of composting toilets is a potential solution for remote island situations where population density is low, and conservation of water resources and minimisation of wastewater and sludge are of importance. Composting toilets are systems that treat human waste by composting and dehydration resulting in an end product suitable for use as a garden fertiliser. All systems treat the waste by composting, breakdown by worms and micro-and macro-organisms, evaporation and dehydration.

There are several designs available based on either batch or continuous processes. In the batch process a container is replaced when full, either by a single container or by one of several on a carousel. Composting is carried out in individual sealed containers. The continual process involves continuous composting of material moving downwards, where it is harvested 6 to 12 months later.

Advantages of composting toilets generally include:

- Water use reduced by between 20 to 50%;
- Flexibility in choice of size gives variable capacity to cope with different loads and loading shocks;
- Odour reduced as air taken out through suction flow;
- Recyclable end product;
- Reduced grey water loading;
- Capacity for the recycling of other household waste;
- Installation possible in locations otherwise unsuitable for conventional toilets;
- Reduction in pollution of the water environment; and
- Reduced environmental impact.

### Box 5.4 Composting toilets on the island of Kéménez

To avoid the maintenance requirements of a septic tank-type system, composting toilets are to be installed on the island of Kéménez, thus reducing the amount of wastewater. For water treatment the installation of a wetland water system with reed-beds is considered. This system is then only needed for waste water from washing.

For more information on composting toilets see [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk); <http://compostingtoilet.org>; [www.itdg.org](http://www.itdg.org)

## 5.4. Energy Resources

Sustainable energy generation by the use of specific island resources as wind, sea and sun is an interesting option. Remote islands could rely on these endless resources and could be pioneers or laboratories of sustainable energy innovation or production.

Examples of sustainable energy production on islands are:

- On the island of Gigha a wind farm has been set up, using second hand wind turbines, which is owned by the community. The islanders sell any surplus energy thus creating income.
- On Unst in the Shetland Islands a community organisation has developed a hydrogen technique for energy storage and now promotes its dissemination.
- Several tidal and renewable energy experiments are being carried out in County Cork, Ireland.

### “Islands can be laboratories for sustainable energy production”

On the island of Kéménez solar and wind energy will be used for generating electricity and heating water (Cf. Box 5.5). It is important to consider the type of materials and equipment to be used for solar and wind energy production in order to respect the surrounding landscape.



*Iroise Archipelago,  
Ty-Kozh, Solar panelling*

#### **Box 5.5 Solar and wind energy on the island of Kéménez**

A diagnostic survey in 2006 showed that the use of renewable energy on Kéménez would save around 500 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. The choice of solar panels (shape, colour) so as to enable their blending in with the surroundings (farm buildings, landscape) was an important issue. Solar panels are also used for hot water production during summer when tourists will visit the island.

For wind energy a low windmill of less than 12 m high was selected and installed near the farm in order to respect the landscape. A three-bladed model was chosen as it will create less visual impact than a two-bladed model.

Source: Le Fol, 2007.

The Lismore Heritage Museum makes use of a heat exchange pump to provide energy and has invested in insulation.

#### **Box 5.6 Lismore Heritage Museum – a carbon neutral building**

The Lismore Heritage Museum consists of a former croft and a newly erected carbon neutral building. A heat exchange pump provides heating, and the turf roof provides insulation and also contributes to the aesthetics of the building. The walls are insulated with sheep wool. The water for the museum is sourced from an underground well on the island, and is kept to the standard specified by the responsible authorities.

The Danish island of Samsø (4,300 inhabitants and with a significant summer tourist traffic) has achieved international recognition for its progress since 1998 towards its goal of being an energy neutral island. Currently 100% of its electricity comes from an offshore wind farm and over 75% of its heating from solar power and biomass energy. Surplus energy from the wind farm is sold to the mainland. In the transportation sector the use of rapeseed-based biofuel is already in place and plans are underway for the production of hydrogen as a by-product of surplus wind power. This island initiative is a source of inspiration for other islands such as Texel.

## 6. Redundant Buildings

### 6.1 Introduction

Most islands have redundant buildings, often abandoned and no longer in use because of a decreasing population and changing (economic) functions. However these buildings may well be an important part of the cultural heritage of the island and are therefore worth considering for preservation and restoration.

Various types of redundant buildings exist. The most important on the ISLA islands are:

- Lighthouses
- Military buildings
- Farms
- Buildings related to social services (e.g. schools)
- Buildings reflecting former trade & local industries: mills, etc.
- Domestic buildings, including those of special crafts or trades: crofts, labourer's houses, houses used by the 'goémonier' (seaweed collectors), fishermen's huts, etc.
- Religious buildings (churches, chapels)



*Quisant, Stiff house rebuilding*



## 6.2 Options

Basically, four strategies exist to deal with redundant buildings:

### 1. Demolition

The redundant building can be demolished. It might be too expensive to renovate the building and find an appropriate use for it. For cultural heritage purposes, information boards could describe the former building and its function.

### 2. Using it or its remains as an indication of a former function

The building might not be wholly demolished, but its remains can provide an indication of an island's cultural heritage. A good example is the remains of farm houses on the island of Lismore, indicating the importance of agriculture in the past.

### 3. Reuse of the building for a similar function

The redundant building might be reused for a similar function as in the past, but adapted to today's needs and requirements while still telling a story of cultural heritage.

Examples are:

- Use of former fishermen's huts as warehouses for hobby fishing materials.
- Renovation of former farm buildings on Tiengemeten for use as a care farm and on Kéménez for an organic farm combined with eco-tourism.



*Tiengemeten, restoration social care farm*

#### 4. Reuse of the building for new functions

The original function of the redundant building might no longer be valid. However, if the building represents an important aspect of the cultural heritage of the island, sustaining its presence is important. Creating new uses for such redundant buildings requires a clear and well-informed decision-making process.

In order to succeed, projects for redundant buildings need to be appropriate to their locality and its heritage and have the potential for economic sustainability, which is the key to success. A combination of functions might increase the chances of success.

Potential new functions or combinations of functions are:

- Domestic purposes (houses, holiday homes, apartments)
- Tourism (B&Bs, cafés/restaurants/hotels, visitor centres)
- Culture and education (museums, theatres, cultural venues)
- Crafts & 'local industry'
- Offices and shops
- Other services (care farming).

Adjusting redundant buildings to present-day criteria is by no means always easy, whether as a result of financial constraints or modern regulations. In certain cases it may be necessary to add new elements to the former building (cf. Old School House on Bere Island).

##### Box 6.1 Restoration of Bere Island's Old School House

Former residents of Bere Island, now living abroad, felt that memories of their youth on the island were encapsulated by Bere's Old School House. Together with the islanders they took the initiative to restore it to be used as a multi-purpose community centre reflecting best practice in building design, in meeting heritage and sustainability considerations and in optimising the use of energies.



*Bere Island old schoolhouse construction box*

A building to give new life to the island. An initial feasibility study indicated that the restoration and subsequent use of the building would not be economically sustainable on a stand-alone basis. However, the initiators and the community went ahead with a plan to extend the footprint of the building and its uses. The restored building was extended with glass wings to trap a maximum amount of heat generated by sunlight and is well insulated. The Old School House is now a landmark building, used as a community venue for a range of activities.

The 'Old School House Group' is a legal identity, which has a link with Bere Islands Projects' Group. A marketing plan has been made and a strategy will be developed for fund-raising and income generation, e.g. support for investment on the part of the Bere Island Diaspora or descendants of emigrants.

A former croft now houses the Lismore Heritage Museum. The development also made it possible to create new jobs on the island (Cf. Box 6.2). The example shows the need to be flexible and to add new functions to former redundant buildings to improve their economic sustainability.

#### **Box 6.2 Lismore Heritage Museum as a flywheel for development**



*Argyll & Bute, Lismore Heritage Museum*

The starting point of the Lismore Heritage Museum was the need of the Lismore Historical Society to have a place in which to store their archive and artefacts. A local landowner contributed to this purpose by making available a plot of land. The former cottage of a crofter has been restored and is kept as a museum, representing a picture of what life was like in the 1890's . Adjacent to it is a new building designed to fit in with the landscape. A café in this new building is now a hub for tourists, providing a destination on the island where they can take a break, have a nice coffee or lunch and obtain information on the cultural heritage of the island. It attracts quite a number of visitors and has resulted in job creation for those working in the café.

The centre displays much of the Island's heritage that would otherwise be displayed only in mainland museums, if at all. In 2007, Lismore Heritage Centre was selected to display the Book of Kells, a rare honour.

As well as a museum, café and gift shop, the building has become a cultural venue for the area – so far it has hosted a touring string quartet, poetry readings, and more recently the local High School students on the island organised a play based on Lismore Legends to be shown at the Heritage Centre.

A small conference room within the building is rented out to local businesses as a meeting space, generating a small income while supporting local groups. The conference room also doubles as a library for the Islands Gaelic heritage. As well as providing the Island with its own public library, it has become an educational resource for local children.

## 7. Stakeholder Involvement in Island Settings

### 7.1 Introduction

'How to organise participation of civil society (stakeholder consultation)' has been defined as one of the most pressing governance issues for governments and NGOs in the ISLA territories. Islands have such specific characteristics that 'general' stakeholder-involvement procedures are often not applicable. The ISLA project has analysed the way in which the island partners have involved stakeholders in their development.

In this chapter we present the analytical framework that has been used in the study on 'Stakeholder involvement in island settings'. Subsequently, we reflect on two of the cases, present the main lessons learned and recommendations on stakeholder involvement.

### 7.2 Stakeholder Involvement: a Conceptual Framework

The specific characteristics of island settings require special attention for the design of the stakeholder processes. It also requires that the conditions within which such processes take place are carefully considered.

Stakeholder consultation may serve different purposes which are partly dependent on the governmental context. Essentially, stakeholder participation is considered to lead to more:

- Legitimacy: more direct bottom-up involvement, which leads to a more democratic decision-making process;
- Quality of content: improvement in the quality of decisions and plans; and
- Effectiveness and efficiency: more effective and efficient governance.



A useful typology of interactive approaches, which is linked to the three arguments explained above, is to make a distinction between communicative, instrumental and strategic approaches.

- *Communicative approach.* Here the central aim is to emancipate groups, which currently have little influence over decision-making, by working in a bottom-up way and increasing the input from the grassroots.
- *Instrumental approach.* In the instrumental model, interaction is aimed at bringing together different kinds of knowledge. Improving the quality of plans and decision-making is the main motivation behind this model.
- *Strategic approach.* In the strategic approach, efficiency and effectiveness are central. The aim is to achieve more rapid and effective planning and policy-making. By involving stakeholders at an early stage, plans can be better attuned to their wishes.

A further explanation of these approaches is shown in Table 7.1 below.

### Box 7.1 Typology of interactive and participative approaches on policy-making

The table shows a brief overview of several aspects of planning processes and the way they emerge in a communicative, instrumental and strategic approach. Please note that one type of approach is not better than the other, but it is crucial to apply an approach that suits the challenges that need to be faced. In practice, models are often used in combination. Using combinations is very well possible, provided that the method applied and the actors involved are explicitly linked to the motive and aim of the policy process.

Table Typology of interactive approaches to policy and planning

	Communicative	Instrumental	Strategic
<b>Subject / motive</b>	Legitimacy	Quality / innovation	Efficiency / effectiveness
<b>Issue at stake</b>	Emancipation / democracy (having a say)	Improvement in terms of content (rationality)	Public support
<b>Participation based on</b>	Who has the right to co-decide?	Who has knowledge or skills?	Who has power or influence?
<b>Actors generally involved</b>	Basis, marginal groups	Experts / carriers of knowledge	Interest groups, actors who possess power to influence
<b>Governance</b>	Bottom-up	Network	Top-down within network
<b>Policy goal</b>	Involving stakeholders in policy-making	Developing better plans and policy	Create support for policy decisions
<b>Dependencies</b>	Social relations	Knowledge and skills	Power relations
<b>Technique</b>	Mirroring norms and values	Activating knowledge and creativity / learning process	Creating win-win situations; exchange
<b>Criteria for success</b>	Strengthened autonomy / influence of the target group	Renewed policy / better quality of the content	Smother implementation of policy
<b>Fail-factors</b>	Power relations dominate	Lack of resources	Framework unclear
	Existing role patterns are not changed	Failure to stimulate creativity and activate knowledge	Too many different actors involved
	Lack of motivation		Lack of trust

Taken from: Caalders, 2002 Rural tourism development: a network perspective. Eburon

### 7.3 Lessons learned

According to the ISLA partners, one of the most important lessons learned on stakeholder involvement is that a bottom-up, communicative approach, with the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible, is not necessarily always the best one. Depending on the aims of the project, it should be carefully considered which stakeholders are to be involved, and at which moment. The most important question to ask oneself is what should be expected from the stakeholders. Are they expected to have a strong contribution to the contents of a complicated plan? Or is it more important to create support and enthusiasm?

We will highlight two ‘extremes’ each of which can in its own context be considered a successful example of stakeholder consultation: Bere Island (box 7.2) and Tiengemeten (box 7.3).

On Bere Island, in formulating the Conservation Plan, a communicative approach has been chosen with good reason. Setting conservation goals is not a technical exercise, it strongly depends on values. Moreover, to attain those goals, a strong support and collaboration of islanders is a prerequisite. For this reason, islanders were allowed substantial input in the Conservation Plan. This resulted in a plan which may – from a technical and ecological point of view – be sub-optimal, but which all stakeholders can adhere to. In addition, because it is supported locally, it is more likely to be implemented successfully.



For Tiengemeten, the choice was made to adopt an almost totally opposite process, which can be characterised as a strategic and instrumental approach. The choice not to involve the island inhabitants in the process may seem unacceptable from the point of view of community involvement, but was in fact the only way to constructively develop the plans further – as the decision to develop the island into a nature resort had already been made. Involving the inhabitants would merely have created false expectations. Intensive and creative sessions with external experts also resulted in a plan that was much richer in content compared to the original concept.

### 7.4 Accessibility issues and their potential for stakeholder involvement

Part of the study on stakeholder involvement was a quick scan of issues at stake regarding the accessibility of islands, and the opportunities to generate solutions through stakeholders involvement.

Two main clusters of issues were discerned, i.e. deliberation of costs against desired level of services and EU-regulations and their appropriateness in peripheral settings.

The potential to deal with these issues by applying methods of stakeholder involvement is modest. Especially on the more remote and smaller islands, most services require subsidies to be able to operate. It is then a matter of political priorities how much support should be provided though limits also apply under European regulations. There are examples of profitable locally owned passenger ferries (e.g. Texel), but these are mainly interesting in cases where there is a threat of overcrowding.

Some EU requirements (safety regulations/tendering procedures) seem quite excessive for small island situations. For example, recent regulatory changes mean for Bere Island that it is no longer possible to carry cargo on a boat licensed to carry passengers. This has led to an enormous rise in tariffs – whereas the actual safety benefits are not clear. Smaller, less populated or remoter islands would especially benefit from an approach where regulations can be tailored to the local situation. It is clearly unlikely for individual ISLA partners to be able to act effectively on this. One option would be to raise this issue within the ESIN-network and to work collaboratively.

## Car regulation

Within the accessibility inventory, one separate issue has been identified which does have a potential to be addressed through stakeholder involvement: the regulation of the number of cars. This can be illustrated with the example of 'Iles du Ponant', where the number of cars on the islands is considered a problem. Prohibiting car access is not possible, as the free accessibility of all public roads is a major right in France and it is not legally permissible to make an exception for islands. However, there are opportunities to stimulate the use of alternative means of transport at a local level, particularly bearing in mind issues of visitor management and carrying capacity of the islands. Such issues could be addressed through a participative process including island stakeholders.

## 7.5 Recommendations

In conclusion, we present some of the recommendations for project-related stakeholder consultation in island settings.

- Links to the needs and wants of the stakeholders needed to make a project a success. If there is relatively little local interest in an issue – e.g. ecological conservation as such, it is wise to start an integrated project in which ecology, cultural heritage and tourism development are closely interrelated (like on Ouessant).
- An appeal to island identity can be used to stimulate local stakeholders to jointly work out plans for their island. On the island of Texel, island identity has been successfully linked to sustainable development, and there is now a pride in regarding the island as a forerunner in sustainable development.
- Invite experts (personally – not as representatives of organisations) with a certain 'distance' from the project – this will enrich the content of the plan (ref: Tiengemeten). A risk in small communities is that policy plans too easily become a product of the need for consensus and that stakeholder consultation merely leads to a continuation of the status-quo.
- Pay attention to social relations and social activities. Especially in island settings, social relations should not be harmed by the participative process, as all stakeholders will inevitably keep on meeting one another and have to continue to co-exist in future.
- Be aware of the risk of 'over-consultation'. Too many projects that are not clearly connected, can lead to a reluctance among stakeholders to continue participation and cooperation. Stakeholders interviewed within the context of the ISLA-project (e.g. on Argyll and Bute) observed a lack of motivation of stakeholders to participate and 'say it again'. When involving stakeholders it is important to actually do something with their input and to make this progress visible. Collection of information acquired by stakeholder-consultation processes and sharing these information on a website can be a means to avoid over-consultation (ref: data-sharing on the Shetland-islands)



*Tiengemeten opening*

## **Box 7.2 Bere Island Conservation Plan**

### **Successful example of a communicative approach: the Bere Island Conservation Plan**

Lacking an integrated development plan, development on Bere Island has long been ad hoc and prompted by the stimulus of individual entrepreneurs or community initiatives. Within such a small community this circumstance has led to disputes in the past. Moreover, there has not been any island-based sectoral planning, for example for tourism, although a range of interest groups exist.

Bere Island Projects Group, the representative body on the island, therefore introduced the idea of a Conservation Plan. This met with a positive response and agreement was reached within the island community to pursue the project. A Conservation Plan for a whole community and island was novel, certainly in the Irish context, where such Plans are more usually carried out for specific historic sites or complexes on a much more limited scale. While the area for the Plan was neatly defined geographically, the need to reach consensus across an entire, diverse community posed a new and considerable challenge.

#### **The Planning process**

Funding for the Plan was provided by the Heritage Council and local Government (Cork County Council), with support forthcoming from other relevant government agencies. The necessary work to develop the Plan was commissioned and overseen by a partnership between the island community, the Heritage Council and Cork County Council, who jointly interviewed and subsequently appointed consultants to carry out the necessary work in 2002. The support of a number of other state bodies was important, sought and given at the inception of the project.

The appointed consultants conducted an independent audit of heritage on the Island and suggested policies and strategies to safeguard this heritage and to capitalise on it to the benefit of the island community. A questionnaire was distributed to all households asking residents about their vision for the island, issues that should be addressed, and so forth. In addition four Working Groups were set up, relating to different aspects of island life. These Groups undertook to collect information for the consultants and to meet with them in order to expedite more extensive research and active input by the islanders.

The extent of the negotiation over the content, and particularly the accommodation of the island community's concerns, resulted in a Conservation Plan that arguably resembles more of a development plan with strong emphasis on sustainability. After consideration of a Draft Plan by the community on the island, and negotiation of certain amendments, all three partners (island community, the Heritage Council and Cork County Council) signed off on the Plan in 2003. Ongoing attitudes to the Plan remain positive within all three.

#### **Communicative approach**

The approach to the development of the Bere Island Conservation Plan can be characterised as communicative. It has been driven by the Island community in appreciation of the opportunity to obtain benefits for the island (the better the Plan – the better the potential benefits in the longer term). This determined a somewhat unusual Conservation Plan outcome but one appropriate to the circumstances.

The process has been a bottom-up process, in which islanders effectively created a greater role for themselves. While some might feel that compromises were made in the conservation priorities, a rare level of awareness and information now exists within the community about its heritage, as does broad agreement concerning its protection. The island now has a framework through which to achieve a more planned and less incremental and ad hoc approach to heritage conservation.



### Box 7.3 Tiengemetten Experience

#### **An unusual though effective approach on stakeholder involvement: redevelopment of Tiengemetten**

Tiengemetten is a small island in the Dutch Haringvliet, close to Rotterdam. The island has a long history of agricultural use, with the farmers being tenants and not landowners. Until the 1940s, Tiengemetten long seemed to be a forgotten piece of the Netherlands. However, from the 1960s onwards, the plans to re-allocate the land followed each other in rapid succession. Tiengemetten was discussed, amongst others, as a location for a new bridge over the Haringvliet, a nuclear power plant, a bungalow park or later a storage depot for contaminated sludge.

In the 1990s, Tiengemetten was incorporated in the National Ecological Network (the National network of robust nature reserves and corridors), as it offered unique opportunities for the recovery of rare freshwater tidal flora and fauna. The island was bought by DLG from Fortis/AMEV (an investor) and consequently transferred to Natuurmonumenten, who initiated a planning process.

Involved parties Natuurmonumenten, the Province of Zuid-Holland, Rijkswaterstaat, DLG and the municipality of Korendijk decided to jointly coordinate this process. A steering committee was established. The idea of an island exclusively for nature was superseded. The parties involved acknowledged that at least some cultural heritage should be preserved and that a recreational function would demand some (modest) amenities. Inhabitants were deliberately not involved in the planning process, as it was clear from the beginning that all farmers (tenants of the farms) would have to leave the island. In the later stages of the process, inhabitants would be supplied with a proper alternative to Tiengemetten.

To improve the quality of the plan, sessions were organised with a large range of experts: in landscape architecture, recreation, nature development, and so on. Experts were invited personally, because of their expertise, and not as representatives of organisations. To gain a necessary 'distance', experts were selected on a national level. Involvement in the region was not a criterion for selection. In a two-day session, which was organised in bare circumstances on the island of Tiengemetten, experts discussed a range of options for the future of the island. The recommendations of the experts resulted in the composition of the vision "Wilderness (Wildernis), Wealth (Weelde) and Wistfulness (Weemoed)".

#### **Planning process: strategic and instrumental**

The planning process on the redevelopment of Tiengemetten is an example of a top-down approach. Goals were not commonly defined by all stakeholders, but were set in advance. Main aim was to create a new and attractive perspective for Tiengemetten. The approach can be characterised as strategic and instrumental, as two groups of actors were invited to join the planning process:

- Strategically: actors that should contribute to the realisation of the perspective by providing the necessary conditions (e.g. budget and adjustment of legal spatial plans): national government authorities and the Municipality of Korendijk
- Instrumentally: actors who were invited to contribute to the quality of the contents of the plan: experts

The consideration to leave inhabitants (farmers and residents) out of the planning process has been subject to discussion. However, considering the ambitions for the island, involving inhabitants was no option. Adequate alternatives have been offered to the tenants and these are satisfactory to almost all of them. The development of Tiengemetten is now generally considered successful.

## 8. *Ways Forward*

### 8.1 **Lessons Learned by Partners for the ISLA islands and other North West European Islands**

To recapitulate, the ISLA project deals with five islands or island–regions in Northwest Europe: Bere Island (Ireland), the Shetland Islands (UK), the Iroise Archipelago (France), Tiengemeten (The Netherlands) and the islands within Argyll & Bute council administration (UK). The ISLA partners themselves were a mixture of public and private organisations and voluntary community groups from the four countries.

As one can see therefore both the ISLA islands and the ISLA partners were so very disparate that it might be expected that establishing what lessons have been learned – and most importantly, what lessons are relevant for other island or island groups – would be a difficult task. In particular would the process provide clear answers?

Our conclusion is that, while the task itself has not always been easy, the results are clear and are worth recording and disseminating.

The process for establishing the lessons learned was essentially dependent on the partners themselves and in particular the facilitation of the lead partner. The meetings organised in Rotterdam in March 2007 (recorded in the “On my Island....2020” report), on Lismore in June 2007 and on Texel in October 2007 were the key, providing the essential basis for free and constructive discussion between representatives of all the partners. These meetings were supplemented by detailed written and tabular evaluation feedback from individuals from the partner islands – used internally for stimulating discussion and developing the lessons learned.

The real sense of collaboration and shared experience established between extremely disparate bodies and individuals during the project was coupled with a realisation on the part of the majority of individuals involved that they were not operating wholly in isolation. Numerous common issues, goals, objectives and indeed potential ways forward and solutions could be identified.

It is important to note at this point that the “lessons learned” which we describe are outward looking lessons, focussing on what can constructively be communicated both to the ISLA partners and to other islands and island groupings in North West Europe. They are not introspective conclusions on the structure or process of the project itself, valuable though those specific lessons may well be.

#### **Island Communities and their Dynamics**

As addressed earlier in this report, the islands and their communities of North West Europe have primarily been shaped by their location on the “edge of Europe”. Changes in economic activity have been substantial and the majority of islands are experiencing demographic changes, with an outflow of young people in particular and, in some cases, severe pressure on housing deriving from second home ownership. Traditional island qualities of self–reliance and community spirit, while a hugely positive factor, cannot on their own sustain, let alone transform, island economies and communities. Specific needs must be addressed and specific initiatives are required.

#### **Commonalities Outweigh the Disparities**

The disparate nature of the ISLA islands has shown that differences, whether of geography, approach (top–down vs. bottom–up), scale or location are less important than the common issues that islands both benefit from and struggle to overcome. Many of these issues are of course also shared by remote mainland communities but are crystallised in islands. Addressing the specific issues and needs of islands is a prime responsibility of governments at both national and regional/local level.

## Key Lessons Learned

- › Ensure there is a mover and shaker. Islands need leadership.
- › Selection of the right stakeholders. Carefully consider who to involve, how and at what point. Involving as many stakeholders as possible is not always the best strategy. Options for stakeholder involvement are discussed in Chapter 7 above.
- › Establish a vision and plan to achieve it. Closely linked to the need for leadership – although islands are of course fixed in their location they are subject to the winds and storms of economic and demographic change. Rudderless and without direction, they are liable to founder.
- › Identify and utilise USPs and specific assets. Each island has its own assets, whether of geography, topology, natural resources, heritage, its people or any combination of these. Identifying the Unique Selling Points of each island and establishing how to exploit them for common benefit is a must.
- › Focus on economic viability and environmental sustainability. In most cases environmental protection is quite strong in the legal sense but that is not the same as environmental sustainability, which in term is closely linked to economic viability. Identifying the barriers to achieving stable and successful island economies is critical to ensuring their environmental sustainability. The examples given in Chapter 4 – 6 above demonstrate a range of options for harnessing mainland techniques in an island setting.
- › Knowledge sharing. Hard-earned knowledge and experience, whether from within an individual island or as part of a transfer of skills, understanding or research from a mainland setting is critical. The advent of modern communications and in particular the Internet has revolutionised the way in which knowledge can be shared. Island must be a part of this process and in many cases they can exploit a USP to be a driver of knowledge and research, not just a recipient.
- › Using EU programmes to best advantage. A strong focus to projects appears to be highly desirable, enabling scarce human resources to be concentrated on concrete activity rather than dispersed across too wide a range of themes. Collaborative work sessions on joint or individual elements allow for good cross-reflection and synergies.



*Argyll & Bute Mull of Oa, ways forward*

## 8.2 Recommendations for a Sustainable Future

### Island Visions

At the Rotterdam ISLA Conference in March 2007 the partners were set the task of visioning their islands for the future. This was known as 'Dreams on my Island' and was in effect 'blue sky' thinking for each of the partners. A summary of the results is set in the text boxes below.

#### Box 8.1 Bere Island Dream

You will never get old on Bere Island. The inhabitants, the young people too, enjoy living on Bere and see prospects for the future.

Bere is:

- A 'must see' island
- A centre for overnighting in West Cork
- A paradise for walking, cycling, wildlife and water sports
- A great 'military history' island

Bere Island will be:

- A de-stress island
- A clean and sustainable island

Bere Island will be the Land of Tir na Nog

- the land of eternal youth!

#### Box 8.2 Shetland Dream

Tourism is a powerful driver for sustained economic growth and employment. Shetland is blessed with a number of key strengths, its people, its natural environment, and unspoilt landscape, and its cultural distinctiveness.

These strengths can be used in a positive way to stimulate economic growth through tourism in a sustainable way which will not damage the natural assets which make Shetland different.

Opportunities for the future will build on these strengths to further develop the Heritage Tourism product.

That is the challenge to maintain a viable community at a time when traditional industries are under threat.

#### Box 8.3 Iroise Archipelago Dream

How can the nightmare be prevented? Young people must stay on the islands and find jobs. We need an inter-related economy - small scale tourism combined with seaweed, fishery and sea and island farming.

Threats:

- A major change in the composition of the community
- Inertia among local inhabitants and local government

Opportunities:

- Internet service
- Parc naturel marin helping to maintain sea resources
- Older second home owners caring for each other
- Small scale tourism based on skills such as birdwatching, hiking and sailing

#### Box 8.4 Argyll & Bute Dream

In 2020 Argyll & Bute will be a Celtic Ring: with unique chains in the archipelago. The islands are a successful example of a balance between environment & economy.

Threats:

- Population change - older, second homes, retirement
- Seasonal & low paid work
- Narrow economic base

Opportunities:

- Heritage
- Lord of the Isles History
- Gateway to the islands - Oban
- Changing role of agriculture
- Layers of interest
- Follow up a successful start

A&B Council is a strong facilitator for co-operation with trusts and private. Challenge is to get things started & keep them going.

### Box 8.5 Tiengemeten Dream

There are three 'layers' to look at:

#### **1 Physical situation in 2020:**

Because of the reintroduction of tidal influence in the Haringvliet estuary Tiengemeten is in the transition zone of saline and fresh waters. The average astronomical tide is about 1 meter. Due to the natural dynamics of the tide the man-made character of the layout (2007) is disappearing. Tiengemeten is an international famous example of ecological restoration of natural habitats in estuaries. It is rich in biodiversity. Tiengemeten is an example of how a site manager can take into account the effects of climate change and sea level rise, since Tiengemeten is a vulnerable low-lying island.

#### **2 Occupation and country use in 2020:**

Tiengemeten forms part of the internationally renowned nature park Haringvliet. The most important land use is nature, recreation and culture landscape (lands and grass saltings, and historically interesting buildings). Nature and culture draw annually a large number of day-trippers to the island (40,000 persons). All buildings are well maintained. In the central nucleus of the island there are good catering facilities with meeting places and there are two museums and a visitor centre. All these facilities represent the cultural and nature values of the island in a coherent and renewing manner. The landscape of the island is an inextricable part of this presentation.

After the near depopulation around the year 2000 there are approximately 8 people living permanently on the island Tiengemeten in 2020, and about 50–100 persons temporarily. These temporary occupants are holiday makers, weekenders and occupants of the care farm.

#### **3 Infrastructure, networks in 2020:**

The island is self-supplying concerning energy usage and is well known for a number of innovations in the field of sustainability. The total island is cost-neutral exploited by 'Natuurmonumenten'. It has succeeded in maintaining a one-hour timetable for a ferry between Nieuwendijk and Tiengemeten. In the summer season Tiengemeten is a part of a network of bicycle- and camping routes with foot ferries. There are no cars on the island. For transport carriages on solar-energy are used.

While 'blue sky' thinking can provide dreams that may be unachievable – it can provide an insight into the real issues that concern communities in this case island communities with their unique perspectives and problems. The dreams presented in the text boxes above also reflect another difference – that of Bere Island comes from the community group itself while the remainder are by and large the work of officials rather than islanders. Perhaps that is why the Bere Island dream is a truly romantic dream and one which gives an insight into island life and islanders hopes and needs.

Island dreams are a tool or method to identify a common vision which will act as a starting point and reference for common actions and enabling the way forward. They are important as much for their contribution to process as for their eventual content.

#### **The Potential of Niche Markets**

Niche markets were considered by the partners to provide excellent opportunities for future growth and development of island economies. Niche markets are one of the key USPs of island economies which enable islanders to exploit specific assets – whether image, topography, traditional agriculture or island traditions.

There are examples included in the report but here we feature two cases as good examples of the potential of a niche to grow into a serious opportunity.

These are Texel Brewery at Box 8.6 and Shetland Crafts at Box 8.7.

### Box 8.6 Texel Brewery

#### Texel Brewery: success of a local beer

For numerous rural areas in Europe, the production and sale of regional products has become an important source of (extra income) with considerable employment effects.

Islands could have a specific advantage in these, as the production in such a specific and remote setting could provide an extra sense of exclusivity. Besides the development of discerning, good-quality products, the branding of these products is a process that deserves specific attention. Islands that succeed in the positioning of a successful island-brand could gain extra employment effects, as it will facilitate the entrance of new entrepreneurs to the market – given that they are providing interesting products that meet the quality standards.

A successful example of the development of an island related brand is Shetland Arts and Crafts. Shetland Arts and Crafts comprises a number of product categories: Knitwear and Textiles, Woodcraft, Home and Gifts, Jewellery. Full members of the Association 'must demonstrate an original approach to the styling of the artefact, a thorough understanding and mastery of the materials they are using, consideration to the presentation of the product to enhance and protect it, and must maintain consistency of quality throughout.' Members of the Association carry the Shetland Arts and Crafts logo and are annually assessed by the Shetland College, to ensure consistent quality.

On the Shetland Islands, production of regional crafts has long provided a second income to households. In recent times there has been a true revival with a start up of numerous young craft businesses. Joining the Shetland Arts and Crafts Association provides this entrepreneurs an easier access to the market. All products have a link with the Shetland Islands. The new designers share a respect for the original craft and skills of the knitwear and textile industry. 'A sense of reverence for age old techniques is carefully balanced with fresh styling and this unfolds into a collection of creativity and imagination'. Jewellery that incorporates traditional designs, the use of traditional techniques in the field of stained glass are just a few examples of this mixture of tradition and innovative styling.

### Box 8.7 Shetland Crafts

#### Summary

The objective of the ISLA project is to prevent the economic and social decline of NW Europe's peripheral islands via the protection and enhancement of their natural and cultural heritage. The project, which is being led by the Dutch Government Service for Sustainable Land and Water Management, aims to exploit these islands' unique cultural and natural landscape by fostering 'sustainable island tourism' as a niche market. The 6.432m euro project will also seek to identify ways that island governments can deliver services in more effective ways. The project will use five islands to deliver cost effective, island specific solutions in areas such as field and water management, energy, water supply and treatment and tourism management and experience will be shared. By working on a transnational basis, the ISLA partnership will offer solutions that would not be available to islands if they – true their insular definition – were acting in isolation. It will also enable these traditionally isolated communities to share expertise in tackling common problems. The project will produce guidance documents, governance models and case studies to show how development can be achieved on NW Europe's islands without jeopardising the quality of their natural and cultural environments.

#### Objectives

- To improve our understanding of and draw up lessons learnt from the facilitating role of governments in the implementation of European / national policies and the provision of services to islands and peripheral communities.
- To enhance the socio-economic situation on islands by fostering tourism development while offsetting any negative aspects attendant upon its introduction.
- To restore and maintain the unique cultural and natural landscape on islands as a northwest European common heritage.
- To ensure effective project management and coordination, dissemination of results and follow-up.
- To demonstrate and analyse best-practice solutions through local investment projects.

<http://sac.4ql.co.uk>

### 8.3 Opportunities for Future Projects & International Collaboration

The ISLA-project has created successful results. The restoration projects and other investments implemented within the ISLA-context would never have been possible without the financial support from the Interreg IIIB NWE programme. Moreover, the insights from the studies and the cross-reflection on the joint working conferences have been a great source of inspiration to the partners.

The partners are keen to continue cooperation in an international context, not necessarily between the partners in this specific project, but also beyond. Topics that several partners are interested in include:

- Re-use of redundant buildings for economic development
- Coastal and landscape (site) management
- Withstanding climate change
- Tourism: extending the season and improving quality of accommodation
- Linking tourism to services for local population and to the local economy
- Development and branding of island-related (food)products and enlargement of their meaning for local economic development
- Energy provision in remote areas
- Biodiversity/invasive species
- Transnational island cooperation
- Care for the elderly
- Island accessibility

Some of these topics are very specific for island settings and would require cooperation between islands. Others are interesting for different types of partners as well: remote rural areas and coastal areas, for example.



*Shetland Islands, Mousa Broch, future co-operation*

## **Box 8.8 Future Opportunities for Co-operation**

### **Opportunities for cooperation in European Structural Funds Programmes 2007–2013**

#### ***Interreg IVB North Sea***

Challenges of islands and small communities fit very well in the Interreg IVB North Sea programme. Objective 4.1 'Tackling the needs of areas in decline' refers to remote settlements. Within this objective, activities are supported – amongst others – on new approaches to service delivery and on sustainable tourism concepts to utilise cultural assets and the natural and built environment. The programme area is confined to the North Sea Coast in the North of Europe, which means that the West Coast of Scotland, Ireland and France are not included. However, there are some options for cooperation outside the eligible area which apply across all Interreg programmes.

#### ***Interreg IVB Northwest Europe***

The Interreg Northwest Europe programme, by which the current ISLA project is funded, also provides some opportunities. Taking into account the ambitions of the ISLA-partners, most relevant objectives for them may be 'managing resources and risks' (priority 2) and objective 4.2: "Improving environmental quality and attraction of towns and cities, including sustainable use of cultural heritage, tourism, creative economy and sustainable and innovative energy practices". The new programme asks for an innovative approach and the use of creative methods, techniques and ideas. New projects should not duplicate, but complement the Interreg IIIB experiences.

#### ***Interreg IVB Northern Periphery***

Targeting the distinct and unique area of northern Europe, the priorities of the Northern Periphery programme are to promote innovation and competitiveness and sustainable development of natural and community resources. Through supporting projects under these themes, the economic opportunities of the area can be enhanced and developed, creating sustainable and thriving communities in an area of Europe outwith the strong economic centre. The programme covers an area including parts of Finland, Sweden, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Greenland, Iceland, Norway and the Faroe Islands are also programme partners although they are not eligible for ERDF funding.

#### ***Interreg IVB Atlantic Area***

The Atlantic Area Interreg programme is aiming to create cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development of the Atlantic Area and its maritime heritage. The eligible geographic area includes the Bere Island, Argyll and Bute and Conservatoire Littoral ISLA partners.

Future cooperation will also take place through existing networks such as ESIN: the European Small Islands Network and the CMPR. In addition, partners are interested in the opportunities offered by the new European Structural Funds programmes. Textbox 8.8 above briefly highlights some options and themes.



## *Appendix: 1 Bibliography of ISLA Reports*

### **Transnational Working Group 1 – The Role of Government**

#### **Study 1 – The Role of Government on Island Issues –**

**Alterra Wageningen UR**  
Wageningen University & Research Centre  
Wageningen UR  
Postbus 9101  
6700 HB Wageningen  
The Netherlands  
[www.wur.nl](http://www.wur.nl)

#### **Study 2 – Stakeholder Participation in Island Settings –**

**BUITEN Consultancy**  
Achter Sint Peter 160  
3512 HT Utrecht  
The Netherlands  
[www.bureaubuiten.nl](http://www.bureaubuiten.nl)

### **Transnational Working Group 2 – Tourism**

#### **Study 1 – Partnerships**

#### **Study 2 – Carrying Capacity**

#### **Study 3 – Infrastructure**

#### **Study 4 – Visitor Management**

#### **Study 5 – Marketing**

#### **Study 6 – Regulation**

**TTC International Ltd**  
Enterprise House  
2–4 Balloo Avenue  
Bangor BT19 7QT  
Northern Ireland  
[www.ttcinternational.com](http://www.ttcinternational.com)

## *Appendix: 1 Bibliography of ISLA Reports*

### **Transnational Working Group 3 – Cultural & Natural Landscape**

#### **Study 1 Cultural & Natural Landscape Study –**

##### **Stephen Sage Consultancy**

Rathravane  
Ballydehob  
County Cork  
Ireland

#### **Study 2 Water & Land Use Management –**

##### **IronsideFarrar Environmental Consultants**

12 Gayfield Square  
EDINBURGH  
EH1 3NX United Kingdom  
[www.ironsidefarrar.com](http://www.ironsidefarrar.com)

##### **CLM Onderzoek en Advies**

Postbus 62  
4100 AB Culemborg  
The Netherlands  
[www.clm.nl](http://www.clm.nl)

#### **Study 3 Organic Farming & Marketing Study**

##### **CLM Onderzoek en Advies**

Postbus 62  
4100 AB Culemborg  
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##### **IronsideFarrar Environmental Consultants**

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[www.ironsidefarrar.com](http://www.ironsidefarrar.com)

##### **Agro Eco – Partners in Organic Growth**

P.O. Box 63  
6720 AB Bennekom  
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