

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2023-28

Enabling a thriving and socially connected community through high quality local services, housing and amenities, making use of our natural and human assets to sustain our economic, social, cultural, and natural environment.



# MULL & IONA COMMUNITY TRUST

# URRAS COIMHEARSNACHD MHUILE AGUS IDHE

REVIEWED FEBRUARY 2025

## CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About Us</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strategic Priorities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Lack of Housing and Other Facilities &amp; Services</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Lack of Childcare and Sustainability of Our Schools</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Barriers to Year Round Employment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sustainability &amp; Governance of MICT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Responding to New Challenges &amp; Opportunities</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Enjoyment, Sustainability &amp; Preservation of the Natural Environment</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Where to Now?</b>	<b>18</b>

## WELCOME

Welcome to Mull and Iona Community Trust's (MICT) Five Year Strategy covering 2023- 2028. It presents a set of guiding principles that, when communicated and adopted throughout MICT, will inform our decision making and create a bridge to communicate with stakeholders, our local community, and enthuse new supporters and partners. It's a clear roadmap, comprising operating principles that define the actions we should take (and not take), and the things we should prioritise (and not prioritise) to achieve our desired goals.

These priorities have been identified by island residents through community consultation, surveys, attendance at local events, approaches from community members and informed by the islands' socio-economic data.

The strategy will guide us in allocating resources and building alliances to accomplish our key objectives. Since we started in 1997, we have worked hard to embed ourselves in the communities of Mull and Iona, and associated islands. Island communities are resilient and forward-looking, and can take full advantage of opportunities with appropriate support and encouragement at critical points. As an established and trusted organisation MICT provides that support when it is needed, and takes a lead in providing such opportunities. Examples of standalone community owned assets that we provide with support include village halls, smaller development trusts and Tobermory Fishermen's Pier.

This Strategic Plan is an expression of the challenges we face, and our ambition and purpose in tackling them.



# ABOUT US: OUR MISSION, VALUES AND VISION

## Who We Are

Mull and Iona Community Trust is a dedicated and passionate locally based organisation committed to improving the quality of life for the residents of Mull, Iona, and the associated islands. We have a long track record of delivering successful community projects.

We are guided by our **Mission**, which is to enable thriving and socially connected communities through high quality local services, housing and amenities, making use of our natural and human assets to sustain our economic, cultural and natural environment.

We are guided by our **Values**:

**1. We are community led and driven:** It matters that our work is valued by the community and seen as benefitting the islands, with board members from all parts of the island seeking a range of views on the challenges we face.

**2. We are fair, ethical and transparent:** We employ our staff on terms that match best practice regarding wage levels, pensions and flexible working. We treat our volunteers with the same respect and appreciation.

**3. We are environmentally sensitive and conscious:** All our activities strive to follow best practice to protect the natural environment. We promote emerging solutions and technologies to help others pursue environmentally sustainable economic development.

**4. We respect and preserve the cultures and heritage of our islands:** We value diversity and our development activities preserve local culture and natural heritage.

**5. We are collaborative and supportive:** Nurturing relationships with partners on and off our islands, pursuing opportunities to work together for the benefit of everyone. We use our experience, skills and expertise to support others with their activities.

Finally, we are guided by our **Vision**: An inspiring picture of what our communities will look and feel like: Children have full access to high quality education; Their younger siblings have access to childcare allowing their parents to work full time; Their parents, older brothers and sisters enjoying real and worthwhile career opportunities; Families able to live in homes they can afford, with full access to essential services and infrastructure; Older people able to spend their later years properly cared for on the islands, with dignity and respect.

MICT is one of over 350 Development Trusts across Scotland: community-led organisations using enterprise, philanthropy, and creativity to drive local action. We share many common approaches and experiences.

**But together, our mission, values, vision, and strategy define the specific and unique direction of MICT's work.** They provide the what, who, why, and how that will get us to where we need to be, and enable us to define and help build the places in which we want to live.

# THE LONG VIEW: OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OTHER FACILITIES & SERVICES

LACK OF CHILDCARE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EDUCATION

BARRIERS TO YEAR ROUND EMPLOYMENT

SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNANCE OF MICT

RESPONDING TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

ENJOYMENT, SUSTAINABILITY & PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

## Taking a Long View

We now manage assets of c£9 million on behalf of the community.

Our ambition for the next five years is to continue to identify and meet the mounting economic and social challenges that face our communities.

The effects of the cost of living and energy crises are compounded by the additional costs of living on an island.

Access to quality, affordable long-term rental and owner-occupied housing is a greater challenge than ever, as is access to childcare and locally delivered education and social care for older people and those with particular needs.

We need a flexible strategic plan that will continue to identify needs and solutions, and to deliver community support where, and in which ways, it is needed.

Achieving sustainable development is an ambitious and long term challenge. It requires ongoing consultation within and with our different communities to understand their problems and constraints. It requires balancing ambition and resources. Above all it requires us to take the long view to ensure our sustainability, as well as that of our communities, giving consideration to the declared climate and biodiversity crises.

# LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OTHER FACILITIES & SERVICES

Delivering and supporting affordable housing, across all tenures and affecting people of all ages, remains a key priority for MICT in the short and medium term. We will continue to explore the potential for affordable housing activity, either directly or indirectly, throughout Mull and Iona. We will also work with key stakeholders to support this housing delivery and advocate for residents on the many issues affecting them, such as the appropriate balance between holiday accommodation and homes for islanders.

Housing accessibility affects everything. The lack of affordable local housing, particularly for families with young children, is a critical barrier to maintaining local schools. If key workers cannot find places to live, health and social care, other public sector services and private businesses suffer.

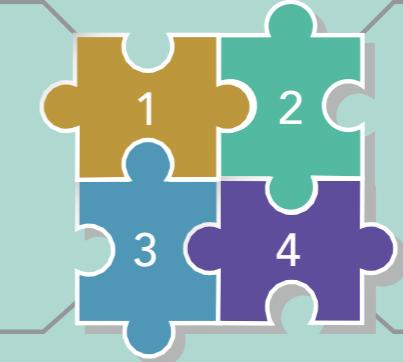


## Building Houses

We have directly built 6 houses at Ulva Ferry.

## Buying Houses

We have purchased housing to safeguard it in the islands' affordable housing stock. We will look for others.



## Helping to Fund Builds

We have assisted both private and social housing providers to fund affordable housing.

## Sustaining Rental Infrastructure

Ensuring connectivity, transport, services and maintenance, supporting landlords with delivery plans.

## HOUSING

Argyll and Bute Council was the first local authority in Scotland to declare a housing emergency, in part as a result of the efforts of our staff team. MICT is working very closely with the Council to tackle the Housing Emergency on Mull and Iona.

MICT has played a vital role in providing 26 permanent homes across Mull to date: Two award-winning 'passive houses' at Ulva Ferry; Four modular family homes in the same area: Buying a former schoolhouse in Pennyghael making it available for local rent; Assisting West Highland Housing Association to secure funding for 14 new homes in Lochdon.

Whilst we continue to make new homes available, a central objective is to provide advice to holiday rental businesses, house and landowners, to facilitate the expansion of the permanent housing market.

We now employ a facilities manager to oversee the maintenance of all our housing and other buildings.

MICT will strive to encourage higher energy performance standards for existing and new builds across the islands to help

address both fuel poverty and climate change. An example our commitment is the two Passiv House standard houses at Ulva Ferry and the Ulva Ferry Shore Facilities Building which is the first Carbon Net Zero community building in Mull.

## ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES & SERVICES

There is a clear link between housing affordability and access to high quality local services. Without essential and accessible services, it is difficult to sustain our island community. We will continue to campaign for locally available and quality services.

We will work with others to support our communities through the cost of living crisis. We will work with health and social care providers so that they understand our communities and deliver investment and services responsive to the specific needs of our different communities.

We are operating a Helipad at Mull & Iona Community Hospital with the assistance of the local community.

## INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

Creating affordable homes in the village of Dervaig, in response to concerns about an ageing population and a falling school roll.

Deliver 6 new homes at Fishnish for long term, affordable rent.

Continue to work with our council to deliver worker accommodation initially in Tobermory, with a view to be able to provide further facilities across Mull & Iona.

Working with Scottish Government and Argyll & Bute Council on the link between housing availability and new crofts.

To campaign and influence, respond to and create opportunities with partners and stakeholders, to provide further housing and accessible facilities and services to ensure the sustainability of our communities.

# LACK OF CHILDCARE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR SCHOOLS

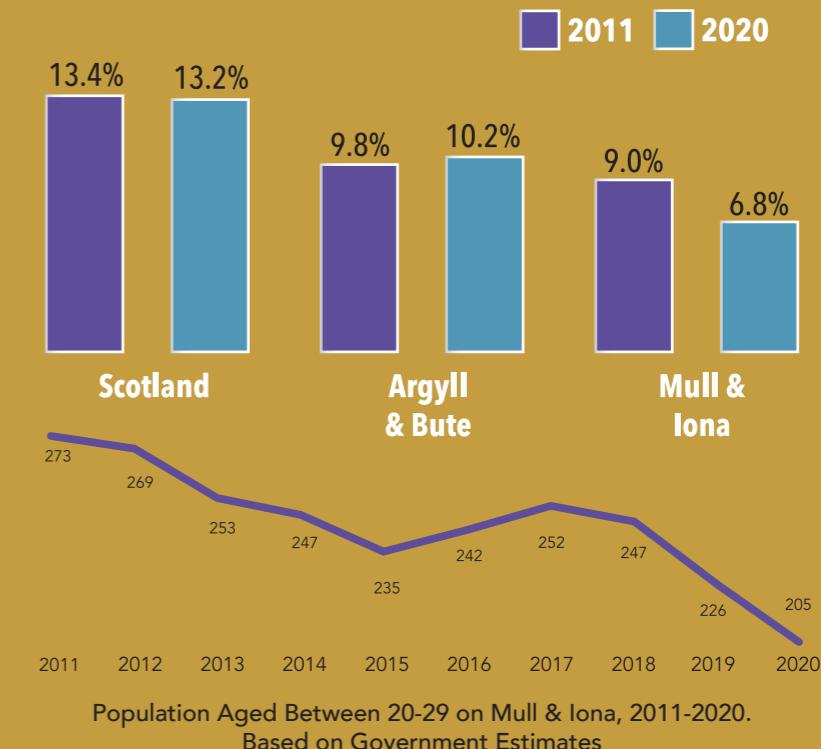
There is a chronic lack of childcare provision for working age residents with children. This affects children aged 0-2, and three years and above.

The lack of reliable childcare creates barriers to employment for families wishing to remain living on the island or wishing to move to the island.

Threatened closure of primary schools and access to high school education on the island impacts the number of families and economically active adults who can stay living on the islands, or who are attracted to move from elsewhere. This particularly affects the demographic of the Ross of Mull.



People Aged 20-29 as a Percentage of Total Population for Mull & Iona, Argyll & Bute and Scotland for 2011 and 2020



## PROVIDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

We will endeavour to address the different education and childcare issues that we face through demonstration projects and enhanced direct local provision. This will involve collaborative partnership working with statutory and other providers.

A holistic approach between ourselves and other local agencies has already proved successful in not only preventing further primary school closures but has directly led to an increase in provision.

MICT's affordable housing interventions have already positively impacted two local primary schools' rolls. We will continue to work proactively to support local communities in this way. Despite delivering several time limited, grant funded childcare pilot projects, lack of childcare remains one of the greatest threats to community sustainability and therefore finding childcare solutions remains one of MICT's highest priorities.

## INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

We are committed to working with our community to ensure this generation of island children, and the next, have access to high quality educational facilities and opportunities.

Further support for young families will reverse the demographic trend towards an ageing population. Living on the islands not only becomes attractive and possible for young people, but it keeps multi-generational families together and makes living in remote communities possible for older people too.

Further explore ways to work in partnership with the local authority and other private sector providers to make use of the school estate to provide summer holiday clubs, breakfast clubs and after school care.

Explore the options identified in the feasibility study for a nursery in Craignure with stakeholders, local businesses and the community.

MICT will work with partners and stakeholders to remove legislative barriers to provision of childcare.

Monitor the demand for childcare away from the larger centres of population, particularly the south of Mull and Iona.

Explore the options for enabling the establishment of a childcare agency that can deliver specific support to families/parents in flexible ways.

## ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS TO YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT

Access to well-paid year-round employment is the foundation stone of a sustainable population represented by all age groups.

Despite previous successful activities, the islands still suffer a lack of suitable business premises, poor digital communications, and problems with ferry and other public transport access for people needing to commute within the islands or to the mainland. Public and ferry transport is either heavily booked in the summer, or unavailable during the winter.

### IMPACT

MICT is itself one of the largest year-round employers on the islands and we will continue to invest in our own services.

Completion of shore and pontoon facilities at Ulva Ferry now provides direct access to services on the west side of the island, creating a new community and economic hub. Ulva Ferry pontoon and shore facilities building directly supports part-time employment and indirectly supports hospitality businesses in the area. Ulva Ferry Shore Facilities Building offers toilets, showers, laundry, drying room and a multi-purpose community space. The building incorporates solar PV, battery storage and 2 EV charging points for Ulva Ferry Community Transport vehicles.

Ulva Ferry Community Transport service offers sustainable transport to and from the area via two all-

### INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

electric minibuses both of which are wheelchair accessible. Scheduled services tie in with public transport services. The service enables people with no or limited private transport a way of accessing essential services and supporting local businesses.

MICT continues to support Green Energy Mull and The Waterfall Fund which were set up to produce and distribute profits to the local community, including business startup grants.

Nonhebel Park phase 2 is now completed and all four business units fully occupied, demonstrating unfulfilled demand. The site boasts ten business units, eight lockup units, eight fenced compounds and twenty storage containers. The site now supports twenty-three businesses and, in turn, up to thirty-six existing and thirteen new jobs.

MICT will work in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council to explore solutions to operate the new worker accommodation in Tobermory, which will support existing and new jobs.

We will continue to develop solutions directly or in partnership with others that support new business start-ups, and offer routes to growth for existing businesses.

Continuing to explore childcare solutions to remove one of the main barriers to year round employment.

Explore the option to develop the final plot at Nonhebel Park to provide more business premises.



## RAISING RESOURCES

Grant funding is critical, particularly for delivering services and projects which can never be fully self-financing. We will use earned income from our business activities to complement and add value to other funding sources. Grant funding often only covers the delivery of the project itself. It doesn't include the years of community consultation, planning and due diligence work needed to ensure community needs are met and our activities are investment ready. Nor does it include ongoing management or support costs that are required for longer-term sustainability.

We will proactively seek new opportunities and partnerships for different finance/resource models, which align with our charitable and community development objectives and support stronger, financial sustainability. Expanding our income in this way will enable us to take a planned approach to investment and project funding, supporting future activities that deliver community benefit over the long term.

## GOVERNANCE

We will review and, if necessary, change our organisational structure to effectively deliver this strategy.

MICT's growth in recent years has added to the complexity of running the organisation.

The Directors are committed to responsible decision making about the allocation of resources, both financial and of our staff and volunteers.

We will take a longer term view to allow time for review and seeking investment. We are proud of our engagement with people across our islands. But we can improve.

We will support our Directors to ensure that the Board and steering group volunteers can be representative of all sections of our community, regardless of age and background.

We are committed to the Scottish Government's Fair Work policy.

## INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

We will increase individual donations and membership through improved communications and engagement.

We will continue to review this strategy and our governance as legislation changes and the needs of the organisation develop to meet the needs of the community.

We will develop enterprise activities which deliver community benefits and also generate surpluses to help sustain the organisation.

Our fundraising strategy will focus on Growth, Capacity Building, Involvement, Increased Communications and Visibility to support both support current services as well as new ideas and development initiatives.

Full Cost Recovery will be vital in covering our support and management costs as well as project expenditure.

## ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY & PROPER GOVERNANCE OF MICT

Ensuring the sustainability and proper governance of MICT anchors everything we do. Over the next five years we are committed to making best use of the financial and human resources we have available to sustain existing services in light of ever-worsening public sector finances, invest in new work, and pilot new ideas.

Much of what we do requires many years of commitment. We recognise the importance of working within the limitation of our capacity and this sometimes means we cannot take on every project.

### EXPENDITURE

Mortgage Repayments  
Support Costs  
Overheads  
Insurance  
Accounts & Audit  
Utilities  
Maintenance

### SURPLUS

Ulva Ferry Community  
Transport  
Ranger Service  
Providing Support to  
Other Groups

### INCOME FROM

Ardura Forest  
Domestic & Commercial Rent  
Recycling  
Charity Shops



## MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND TO NEW CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Unforeseen opportunities will arise either from new challenges created by outside influences or government policy changes. These opportunities will not be reflected as priorities in our strategy or the community development plans linked to it.

Our Board and Senior Management Team will continue to monitor change, and when appropriate will allocate resources to respond to opportunities and challenges which are not in our strategy.



### ARDURA COMMUNITY FOREST

Our ownership of Ardura Community Forest is an excellent demonstration of how trusting and investing in new opportunities yields many returns.

During 2022 we harvested 70 hectares of mainly Sitka spruce trees. This produced significant financial resources for future investment in community programmes and the stability of MICT itself. A further 40 hectares is currently being harvested.

But rather than simply replace the spruce with a similar stand of one species, we restocked the area with a range of native species that will restore the biodiversity of the forest.

Further local collaboration has also enabled the creation of a community tree nursery to provide tens of thousands of seedlings.

### INVEST IN IDEAS

MICT tries to succeed in everything it does, but you can often learn more from your failures than you are able to from your successes.

Being open to experimentation requires local awareness, a solid financial and governance base, and preparedness to invest in new approaches.

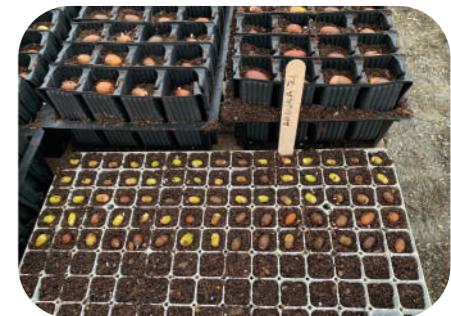
We continually aim to better understand the long-term effects of social, economic and environmental changes beyond our control, and the needs of all our residents. Better understanding of the problem enables better decision making about solutions.

Our resources now allow us to gather the evidence required to investigate new projects whilst seeking longer term funding and inward investment to fully deliver projects.

### INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

To become proactive in working with landowners to explore the creation of new bare land and woodland crofts. This would promote repopulation, help rebalance an increasing elderly population, and offer opportunities for further environmental projects.

The impact of the twin climate change and biodiversity crises will doubtless present new problems and opportunities. We will prepare to respond if and when these unforeseen challenges arise as well as those from the wider political and economic situation.



**“MICT tries to succeed in everything it does, but you can often learn more from your failures than your successes”**

# ENABLING THE ENJOYMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

MESS is one of our longest running environmental projects and has long advocated and created the circular economy across Mull and Iona.

Increased national and international publicity, particularly with respect to environmental tourism, has attracted large numbers of visitors, benefitting the economy, but placing great demands on island infrastructure and posing a threat to the environment that people are attracted by. The numbers have presented both a challenge and a number of positive opportunities.

Managed access to the environment not only protects often fragile areas, but also enhances educational and recreational benefits to locals and visitors. Sensitive management of natural resources, for example woodlands, provides commercial opportunities for MICT and other local organisations.



## IMPACT

Ardura Community Forest came under the ownership of MICT in 2019. We are delivering the Biodiversity Action Plan for Ardura helping to restore the unique environment of the area. This work has been recognised by the Forestry Stewardship Council which accredited our plans for Ardura Community Forest as the first case of FSC verified impacts in the UK."

As one of the first community-led ranger services in Scotland, the Mull and Iona Ranger Service provides support to landowners and visitors on issues of access, runs a range of events and activities for locals and visiting volunteers on topics including wildlife, conservation and heritage, outdoor wellbeing and works with local children and visiting schools from the mainland.

Mull and Iona Environmentally Sensitive Solutions (MESS) provides local solutions to the waste and environmental issues that affect local communities. Its three charity shops on Mull recycle clothes, furniture and other items, and provide income to MICT and grants to local groups.

## A POLICY DRIVEN APPROACH

MICT adopted an Environmental Sustainability Policy in 2019, which is reviewed annually. The core components of our Policy are:

1. To encourage, facilitate, or undertake research and development concerned with local environmental well-being.
2. Environmental data collection and monitoring of local trends affecting Mull and Iona, and the dissemination of focused and authoritative interpretation of local environmental information
3. Training activity relating to protection or conservation of the environment, including initiatives involving MICT personnel, local schools, businesses, the wider community and visitors to the islands.

Increasingly aware of the climate and biodiversity crises facing the world we will strive to incorporate mitigation measures into all our projects.

## INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

We will work closely with local people, the tourism industry, and other businesses and suppliers to promote and enable low-carbon initiatives and practices.

We are monitoring the introduction of the Circular Economy and Waste Route Map and seek opportunities from it to further develop the Circular Economy in the Mull archipelago.

We will extend activities within, and associated with, Ardura Forest, including: a long-distance path; new accessible woodland paths; wildlife viewing hides, outdoor educational and ecological monitoring activities.

Through the Ranger Service, provide better support for, and joint working with, Friends of Calgary Bay and its activities and service needs locally.

The exploration of benefits of renewable energy projects.

## HOW WE WORK

Projects may be long or short-term. They may also test ways of working or delivering services that will later be delivered by others.



Co-ordination and liaison with public, private and third sector organisations. Close ties with local groups and partnership organisations. This ensures that other organisations understand and respond sensitively to the needs of our local communities.

MICT's experience and skills are combined with others to expand the range of expertise available and increase financial and human resources.

## WHERE TO NOW?

Our strategy for promoting and achieving sustainable development in the Mull Archipelago is an ambitious and long-term challenge. It requires an understanding of the problems, opportunities, and constraints experienced by our different communities. It requires on-going consultation with and within those communities. It requires balancing ambition with available resources for piloting new approaches. Above all, it requires building and maintaining relationships with people, and public, private, and third sector organisations that are better placed than us to deliver solutions.

If you share the fire, enthusiasm and occasional frustrations we have in respecting our community's past, understanding its present, and embarking on a voyage to reach its future, we want to hear from you. Whether it's to share your experience or you want to work with us on practical solutions to issues outlined in this strategy document, or you want to back us with donations or other resources...

*With thanks to all the funders who provide capital and revenue grants to support our work.*

*Scan QR code to view*



## PLEASE SPEAK TO US

### Contact:

**Moray Finch, General Manager**

**Mull and Iona Community Trust**  
**An Roth Community Enterprise Centre**  
**Craignure**  
**Isle of Mull**  
**PA65 6AY**

**01680 812900**

**e-mail: [enquiries@mict.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@mict.co.uk)**

**website: [www.mict.co.uk](http://www.mict.co.uk)**

