

Scottish Older People's Assembly, Oban

Oban was part of a series of meetings for older people and their groups around Scotland between January and November 2015. The format was arranged in partnership with Argyle and Bute Council and included a welcome by Marri Malloy, Oban Community Council and introductory remarks by Councillor Roddy McCuish, Depute Policy Lead for Strategic Housing, Gaelic, Community and Culture of Argyll and Bute Council. This was followed with a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy, on the national Assembly held at the Scottish Parliament in October and SOPA's recent reception in the House of Commons. Approximately 50 participants considered the issues from SOPA's Action Plan and identified their own concerns. While most of the attendees were from Oban, there were representatives from list Mull, Coll and Tiree. SOPA's Communication Adviser, raised awareness of events in the local press and media, and publicised them afterwards on SOPA's Facebook site - <https://www.facebook.com/scotopa>

RESULTS FROM GROUP DISCUSSION

Transport, Travel and Environment

- ✓ Severe lack of public transport and bus stops even in the main towns; timetables should be written in larger letters
- ✓ Public transport is hard to access for frail elderly people; high cost of taxis; lack of transport and taxis for wheelchair users
- ✓ Lack and cost of community transport
- ✓ Non co-ordinated transport service between train, ferry, bus, parking for cars etc.; lack of shelter at Kerrera ferry point (bus and ferry don't connect and there's no shelter there and no shops)
- ✓ Area is diverse: difficulties in accessing facilities and support. Hard to generalise when creating services
- ✓ Problems arising if transport is inadequate for people who are housebound or have depression and other problems: people can't get to social events and appointments; voluntary groups fold; aggravates disability issues already present
- ✓ Loneliness, isolation, especially newly bereaved people – slip into illness, poor diet, depression, accidents, being taken advantage of etc. Social clubs exist but problems of transport and carers or helpers to accompany very frail people
- ✓ We need volunteer car scheme; survey of need (though lots have been done, to no result, but local voluntary groups and churches are aware of need); co-ordination of voluntary groups to work on the issue; funding opportunities
- ✓ Lack of ramps to shops and hotels and areas with no pavements (Longsdale, Oban). Access is an issue and safety needs priority, especially in autumn when the leaves can be lethal (slippy)
- ✓ Designated areas for pedestrians in built up areas where there are NO pavements
- ✓ Lack of public toilets; we need signs and easy access
- ✓ Blue badge and dementia - the criteria for use of the Blue Badge should be changed to include people with dementia. This would be very helpful to carers who are accompanying people with dementia.

Housing and Community Safety

- ✓ Delays in housing adaptations implementation
- ✓ More police presence in town, in residential and outlying areas e.g. Nant Drive, Soroba
- ✓ Suitable, affordable housing for older people in a safe environment with access to community shops

Health and Social Care

- ✓ Who do we get information from on Health and Social Care; integration of health care and social care with appropriate training for community carers, particularly in understanding dementia and communication needs, a workable rota and better paid hours for care workers
- ✓ Lack of time given to carers to do their duties; they need more time with patients, not allocated time for travelling between clients
- ✓ End of life care – palliative care – lack of hospice care in this area i.e. designated building
- ✓ Health appointments don't take geography into account; implications for attending appointments in Glasgow and issue of travel arrangements to hospital appointments; keeping hospital and outpatients clinics when we don't have to travel to cities

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- ✓ We easily set up a group of people with dementia in rural area of north-east Argyll because there is a volunteer car scheme, but have struggled to keep a group going in Oban because no car scheme exists, we may not survive, despite the need for the group.

Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters

- ✓ Funeral costs too high
- ✓ Pensions: can you choose how to get your pension?

Communication and Information

- ✓ Digital inclusion; simplify the jargon for using computers; computer classes to help pensioners especially when hospitals use e-mail for appointments
- ✓ Use the loop systems: they are available but not on
- ✓ Advice services for older people too frail to go to an advice service; can be delivered via clubs, but only if you can get there
- ✓ Nuisance calls and scams are confusing and frustrating for the elder people.

Comments on the meeting

42 (84%) participants completed an evaluation form and of this number:

- over 65% valued the meeting as useful and extremely useful
- one respondent rated the meeting even higher with a six

The comments were on the whole very positive and the opportunity to meet and hear the concerns of other older people was particularly appreciated. A representative sample of the comments about what was most liked about the meeting included:

"The open discussion was very helpful and we need more of it!"

"Voicing your requirements and being listened to!"

"Honesty about what's needed and real situations, what SOPA does, what Argyll has to do to make savings."

"Knowing we are not alone!"

"Views of other people – speeches from the older guy with the beard (Tom Berney) – good to speak to others and listen to what they had to say."

"Hearing the concerns of other older people and finding that, on the whole, we suffer the same problems as others. Interesting to hear that some parts of the mainland have problems with transport as we do in the islands. I like to see the wide scope of items on offer today at this assembly and I commend you for it."

Four people were concerned about temperature of the hall and some people said they had difficulty hearing. It was also felt by 3 people that the SOPA responses and commentaries during the discussions were over long and that this precluded wider discussion.

Judging by the feedback the general response appears to have been enthusiastic, in some cases very enthusiastic, and there seems to be a widespread appetite for further meetings and action



Oban meeting on 13 November 2015

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The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a 'voice' for older people.

Visit the SOPA website for up-to-date information about events and activities: www.scotopa.org.uk