

Folketingets Økontaktudvalg
ØKU alm. del - Bilag 23
Offentligt

Sammenslutningen

Til Folketingets Ø-kontaktudvalg

af Danske Småøer

Strynø d. 15. august

Ø-konference, 20. – 22. november, 2006, på den skotske ø Islay

Kære medlemmer af Folketingets Ø-kontaktudvalg

I 2001 blev der etableret et samarbejde mellem småø - foreninger i Finland, Sverige, Skotland, Irland, Frankrig og Danmark, European Small Islands Federation, i daglig tale, ESIN.

I 2004 søgte vi og fik bevilget midler fra EU's Interreg-program til et fælles projekt **Inter – Island Exchange Project**.

Formål: At udvikle mere samarbejde mellem landenes øer.

At udveksle erfaringer til bæredygtig udvikling.

At informere nationale politikere og EU-parlamentarikere samt embedsmænd om ø-forhold.

Der blev udvalgt 18 ø-relevante emner (cases) som skulle beskrives. (Marine Development, Housing, Agriculture and Nature Preservation, Energy, Transports, mv.)

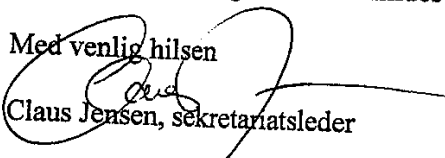
Hvert lands ø-forening fik 3 emner at beskrive, hvoraf de 2 skulle beskrives på baggrund af afholdte seminarer, hvor repræsentanter fra alle landes ø-foreninger deltog.

De erfaringer og forslag, som er opnået gennem projektet, vil vi præsentere og debattere på ovennævnte konference.

Så snart en uddybende dagsorden for konferencen foreligger, så vil den blive videresendt! Men se også vedlagte engelske invitation.

Vi håber emnet vil have udvalgets interesse, og at der kan findes plads i kalenderen til at deltage.

Med venlig hilsen


Claus Jensen, sekretariatsleder

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ESIN Inter Island Exchange Programme Conference

What Future for the Small Islands of Europe?

Bowmore, Island of Islay, Scotland
21/22 November 2006

Europe is a continent fringed by small islands. Many of us look to these islands for leisure and recreation, a peaceful environment away from the bustle of modern day life, where traditional life is preserved. But what of the people who live there all year round? How, in this world of information technology, i-pods and internet do our small European islands fit in?

Funded by the European Commission's INTERREG Programme, the European Small Islands Network have been examining, over the past 2 years, the challenges faced by small islands: from transportation to wind turbines, from island identity to innovation. This project has taken over 200 islanders from 6 member states on island exchange visits where they have experienced first hand examples of best practice in 18 different areas of activity on islands.

3 main areas of interest have guided these 18 areas of activity:

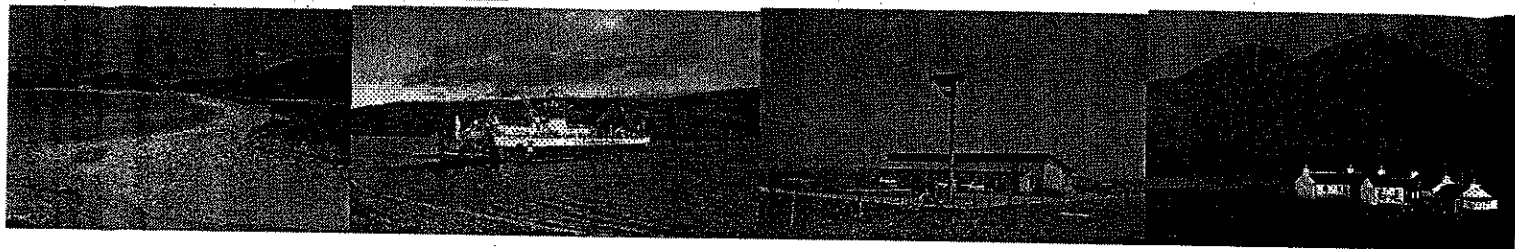
- **Island identity, culture and language, sense of place and community**
- **Ecologically sustainable island development**
- **Provision of essential public services and facilities**

Reports on these themes, the experiences of the islanders themselves and debates on the main issues will all be presented at the project's final conference on the Island of Islay, Scotland on 21/22 November 2006. This debate seeks to inform all levels of government on the needs of small islands in Europe as well as reaffirming the vital role that they play in contributing to a diverse and sustainable Europe.

www.europeansmallislands.net

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Tuesday 21st November

0930 Registration and Coffee

1000 Welcome to Islay

Councillor Ian Gillies, Chairman Scottish Islands Network, Islands Spokesperson Argyll and Bute Council

1005 Introduction from the Chair

Lesley Riddoch, Broadcaster

The Challenges facing Small Islands in Europe

1010 Inter Island Exchange Project: Setting the Scene – The Challenges Small Islands are Facing

Bengt Almkvist, Chair, European Small Islands Federation

1020 Leading the Way

Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, Lead Partner

1030 IIEP – Project Overview

Máire Uí Mhaoláin – IIEP Project Manager

1100 Islanders' Perspective

Participants in the IIEP Project

1120 Questions

1130 Coffee

**1200 Keynote Speech George Lyon, Depute Minister for Finance, Scottish Executive
Scotland's Small Islands in Europe**

1215 Question and Answer Session

1230 Lunch

1400 Workshop Sessions on Key Themes

Theme 1 – Island identity, culture and language, sense of place and community

IIEP Project Officers Ireland, Finland

Theme 2 - Devising an ecologically sustainable model for island development

IIEP Project Officers Scotland and Denmark

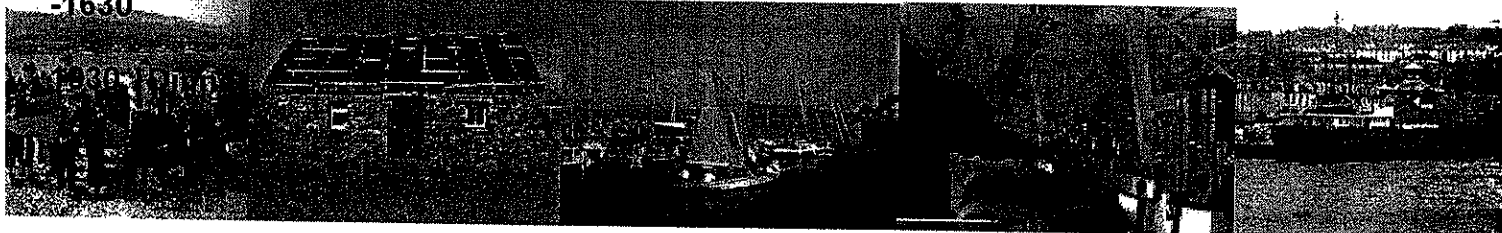
Theme 3 - Provision of essential public services and facilities on small islands

IIEP Project Officers Sweden and France

1500 Coffee

1530 Workshop Sessions on key themes

-1630





Wednesday 22nd November

0930 Welcome

Chair, Lesley Riddoch

Feedback from Workshop Sessions

Workshop Rapporteurs

Europe's Role in Assisting Small Islands

1000 Future Opportunities for Island Co-operation under Objective 3 2007-13

European Commission DG Regio

1020 The European Parliament and Islands

MEP representatives

1040 The Committee of the Regions and Islands

CoR Member

1100 Questions and Discussion

1130 Coffee

1200 Government Roles on Small Islands

Denmark, Ireland, France

1300 Lunch

The Future for Small Islands In Europe

1430 A Vision of European Islands in 2013

Island Representative

1440 Panel Discussion

6 Island representatives

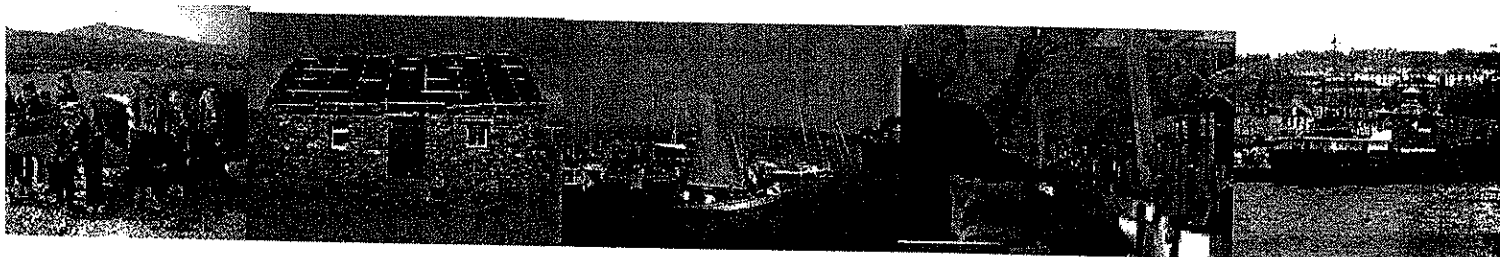
1540 Summing Up and Moving Forward.....

Chair, Lesley Riddoch and European Small Islands Federation

1600 Close

Monday 20th and Thursday 23rd November

Project visits around Islay (optional) community, transportation, training, energy



Scottish Islands Network

Islay Conference preliminary report

"Islands work," says Islay European Small Islands Conference, "but they need better representation at Government and European levels. "

"Islands Work"

"Islands work" was the overall message at the European Small Islands conference held in Islay on Tuesday and Wednesday 21 and 22 November 2006.

The conference brought to Islay 150 island delegates from 9 island regions in Europe together with 50 decision makers.

The Islay conference presented the results of twelve transnational exchanges involving 400 islanders from the island regions of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, France, Scotland and Ireland through the Inter Island Exchange Project financed by the European programme Interreg IIIC.

Amongst the government officials present at the conference, were George Lyon, MSP, Depute Finance Minister, Scottish Executive, Eamon O'Cuiv, the Irish Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Giuseppe Bertolucci, Minister for maritime affairs of the Tuscany Regional Council, Preben Rudiengaard, Danish MP and chairman of the Danish maritime commission with two colleagues from the Danish Parliament, Aimé Kergueris, French MP and President of the Maritime group at the French Parliament, Monica Green, Swedish MP, Neil Mitchison, European Commission representative in Scotland, and Jean-Didier Hache of the CPMR.

Conference Chair, Broadcaster Lesley Riddoch concluded: "this conference has shown how islands have the imagination and the will to create their own future."

Islands as transferable development models

The conference showed that the smaller islands of Europe, which are all too often ignored by the mainland and the larger islands, are leading the way with innovative solutions in the field of renewable energy, education, social provisions, and IT.

- The workshop on islands' sustainable development concluded that islands were ideally suited for pilot studies, since they can act as "transferable development models," particularly in the fields of renewable energy, social modelling and the environment.

- "It is their strong community spirit that binds islanders together and helps them find solutions to their own problems, islands can and must continue to work together, or they will become mere extensions of the mainland."
- This was very much insisted upon in the workshop on Island Identity, which stressed the difference between islanders and remote mainlanders, a difference that decision-makers do not always recognise.
- Islanders saw their identity as very much bound to their geographical situation, and that in many cases, they would prefer to retain their isolation rather than lose the qualities that make them different. They saw the sea barrier that defines islands as the positive factor in developing greater social cohesion, greater independence of spirit and determination to move forward, and in helping to maintain the community values which are under threat in an increasingly urbanized world. It was also acknowledged that islands could not be looked upon solely as museums of culture and language, but as living places, with new people and a tradition that evolves.
 - Retaining island populations was an important issue as islands tend to attract a high level of second homes. (up to 60% in Scottish islands). Taxes on second home, or tax incentives to encourage people to live on islands all year round were examples to consider. The provision of housing for renting and of opportunities for remote-working were seen as the way forward. The crofting system was also seen as a good model to help retain island populations. Making the most of island resources, in the context of a reduction in subsidies, and particularly developing local food production, was seen as an important factor.
 - The workshop on essential public services and facilities stressed that islanders should and must have the same rights as other citizens, and that their economic contribution had to be understood better, as islanders still had to fight the popular image of islands as financial burden. Yet, islanders paid the same level of taxes as everyone else, without the same level of services, whilst making a considerable contribution to the economy through tourism in particular. It was important to show that "islands are worth it," and deserve the same level of services as the mainland, especially in view of that contribution.
 - Sweden, where the Annual Road Tax goes to the upkeep of ferries as well as roads was identified as a model of good practice, as Sweden considers the ferry routes to be an extension of the road service.

Small Islands must have better representation

In Scotland, as well as in other island regions, the needs of smaller islands are not always understood nor represented as well as those of larger islands. Apart from Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles, many islands do not have their own regional administrative authorities.

George Lyon, MSP, Depute Finance Minister, Scottish Executive, keynote speaker on the first day of the conference, supported the European Small Islands' Network vision for a sustainable future, and agreed that "it was vitally important that the needs of islanders are understood," and that "affordability of transport [was] a key driver in improving the prospects of [Scottish] islands. He said that "islanders need to see a greater direct benefit from the £30million of subsidy per year for ferries and that the air discount scheme is a model which needs to be examined further in the context of ferry fares." He acknowledged the Scottish Islands Network's call for a minister with special responsibilities for islands and anticipated that this could be a topic for debate in the forthcoming parliamentary election.

Eamon O'Cuiv, the Irish Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, made the keynote speech on the second of the conference. He has direct responsibility for islands and has set up a special "island section" in his department. Mr O'Cuiv said that whilst most government worked in a vertical basis, his government also worked on a horizontal basis, and having a special responsibility for islands was crucial "because [he is] sitting at the table with the other 14 island ministers, [he] can push the issues, and [doesn't let them being pushed into the waste-paper basket." Mr O'Cuiv's view was that "islands were microcosms of what is happening in Rural Europe", and that providing incentives to islanders to start their own small enterprises and ensure broad range diversification was a key for future sustainability. "Islands should have more money because it costs more to do things in islands." The Irish government's policy was to continue to invest in the islands' infrastructure as a priority until the islands' transport deficit was addressed."

It was unanimously agreed that the Irish government provided an example of best practice, which ought to be emulated.

Cllr Gillies, the Scottish Islands Network's convener, proposed that "a Scottish Island federation on the model of the Danish organisation would be the way forward to represent the smaller Islands in Scotland. A minister for islands in the Scottish Executive is also required to give political support at regional/ National/ EU Government Level, to provide advocacy to small islands, to promote the Interests of all islands, and to help retain close links with EU Funding Streams such as INTERREG 3C."

Delegates from the Iles du Ponant in France and Elba in Italy agreed that they too could benefit from better representation at government and European level. At present they are obliged to lobby with Mountain groups within their own parliament to get any chance of being heard.

The role of ESIN

- ESIN could have an important lobbying role at government and European level to help decision makers better understand island issues, and small islands issues in particular. A new category of disadvantage describing the small island situation would facilitate government departments and agencies in providing the funds needed to address the infrastructural deficits and lack of service provision experienced by small islands.
- ESIN could also help by quantifying and measuring the islands' economic contribution.

Cllr Gillies, the Scottish Islands Network's convener, offered a vision of the future: "by 2013 every island is represented at national level by its own government minister, and each island group has its own properly funded islands federation. Through the European Small Islands Network (ESIN), the Small Islands begin to lobby effectively within the European parliament, and address environmental issues by creating their own environmental fund through tourism."

Further exchanges opportunities

The SISU and ISLA projects presented at the conference highlighted how islands could work together using other European funding streams.

Many of the delegates from island regions of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, France, Ireland who worked with Scotland on twelve transnational exchanges through the Inter Island Exchange Project financed by Interreg IIIC, have now come away with inspiration for new exchange projects.

Kees Van Der Vaart, the ISLA project worker from Holland, said: "I have one national and at least two transnational exchanges in the pipeline as a result of attending this conference." He also suggested that Knowledge Networks should be developed to facilitate the exchange of information accumulated through these European projects.

There was a strong interest to continue with the inter-island exchanges, particularly as the Interreg IV C programme running from 2007 to 2013 offered new funding possibilities. It was particularly important for the future to continue engaging young islanders in a Young People's network.

Future challenges

The transport issue remains a very important topic: Cllr Gillies concluded that "there has to be a commitment at regional and national level to island ferry and air travel as an extension of our national roads networks. We have examples of good practice with the Danish and Swedish models. What is required is a subtle shift in the way that taxation revenue is re-distributed nationally by government and the EU."

The role of fishing in island and coastal communities and the protection of their inshore waters was also highlighted by the French and Irish delegates as a crucial issue which would require strong strategic lobbying on the part of ESIN. Tuscany for example was pioneering an integrated "systeme de la Mer" as a pilot project which offered a model of cooperative governance and a better integration of services and development opportunities. The consultation about the Green Paper on European Maritime Policy which was published in June 2006 was seen as an opportunity for a concerted response and for sending a strong message at government and European level. *

In conclusion Bengt Almkvist, the Swedish chairman of the European Small Islands Federation (ESIN), said "We find ourselves united in defining our common goal: working together with one voice as the Small Islands of Europe to take our case to decision-makers at all levels, regional, national and European. "

* Responses to the consultation on the Green Paper in Scotland must be received by 20th December 2006. see parliament website