# RURAL GROWTH DEAL

## Progress Update March 2022

## Welcome to our update

Welcome to the first edition of Argyll and Bute Council's Rural Growth Deal quarterly update. Our £70 million Rural Growth Deal is about turning economic potential into a successful future for Argyll and Bute. It's about getting in in it with the area's resources and natural and business innovation into a thriving local economy.
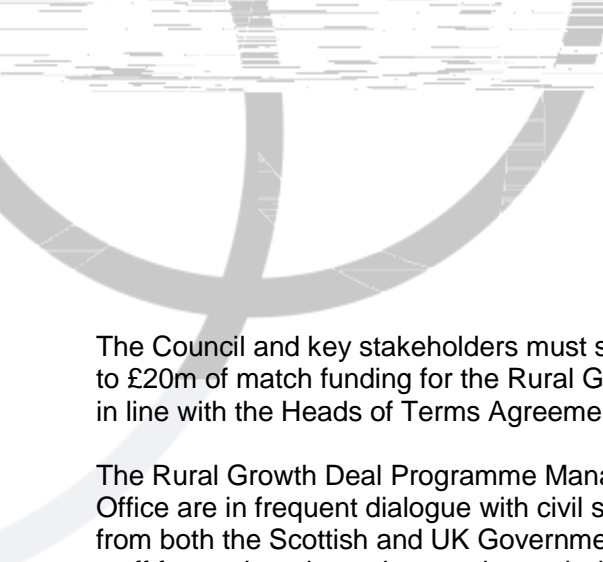
## Our Rural Growth Deal in brief

With input from local communities and partner organisations, and agreement with the Scottish and UK Governments, we have identified, and are developing, projects based on achieving three key themes:

- x Connecting : our high value business sectors with national and international business markets; our local economic successes with national strategic priorities
- x Attracting : additional skills, training and learning opportunities; new residents, visitors and businesses
- x Growing : doing more of what works; making more of our natural and built resources

## Progress to date

We agreed the Heads of Terms for the deal (the projects for investment) with the Scottish and UK Governments in February 2021. To lead on delivering a successful deal for the area, the Council is investing in a dedicated Programme Management Office. Recruitment to the Rural Growth Deal

Programme Management Office concluded in October 2021, with the following staff now in place:

- x Jonathan Welch - Programme Manager;
- x Aileen Semple - Project Officer;
- x Nicole Anderson - Administrative & Finance Assistant.

## Process and timescales

The next key milestone in the deal process will be the signing of the Full Deal which we are working to achieve during the 2022/23 financial year. In order to sign the Full Deal the Council and key stakeholders must draft Treasury 5 Business Cases for

The Council and key stakeholders must secure up to £20m of match funding for the Rural Growth Deal in line with the Heads of Terms Agreement.

The Rural Growth Deal Programme Management Office are in frequent dialogue with civil servants from both the Scottish and UK Governments and staff from other city regions and growth deal teams to share best practise and learn lessons from earlier deals.

## Individual project updates

x   *Marine Aquaculture Programme:*
o   Consists of 3 projects:
University of Highland and Islands (UHI) Argyll College Marine Industry Training Centre (MITC);
Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS International Seaweed and Shellfish Industry R&D Centre;
Stirling University Machrihanish Innovation Campus.
o   MITC is one of the most advanced projects in the Rural Growth Deal Programme and the draft Outline Business Case is nearing completion.
o   SAMS is undertaking options appraisal work and recently secured funding via the UK Governments Community Renewal Fund.

x   *Creating a World Class Visitor Destination:*
o   Steering Group established with strategic partners such as VisitScotland, Crown Estates and Historic Environment Scotland.
o   Funding bids being drafted for the Levelling Up Fund which have clear synergies with potential growth deal place based regeneration projects in Rothesay, Dunoon and Helensburgh.
o   Working closely with stakeholders such as Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) to align / support future tourism capital spending priorities.

x   *Islay Low Carbon Economy:*
o   Funding secured via the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) programme to procure the services of

Natural Power consultants to undertake an options appraisal for the Rural Growth Deal funding.
o   Steering Group established to lead the project including Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Scottish Government and Local Energy Scotland.
o   Monitoring opportunities with other national programmes such as the Scottish Government's CarbonNeutral Islands scheme.
o   Key focus is on the potential to use more renewable energy locally to address issues such as high levels of fuel poverty, reliance on imported fuel oil and unreliable grid connections.

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