

Island of Lismore Scoping Study: Executive Summary

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This study set out to document and analyze the social and micro economic climate of the Isle of Lismore and identify factors that affect the possibilities for development on the Island over the next ten years. CADISPA carried out this study within its remit of seeking to help communities help themselves. CADISPA is concerned with sustainable development. This covers a wide range of areas, not just the environment, although the environment is still a key factor within the concept. Other issues included in its broad sweep are: political engagement, health, wealth creation and poverty alleviation, housing, jobs, local heritage, language and traditions and self-sufficiency and self-advocacy. In essence, sustainable development seeks to build the capacity to effect change through non-formal education, confidence building and environmental and business literacy.

The Development Agenda

Lismore must embrace the future and take itself forward. The Island must not become a static museum piece. The research showed that there are specific sectors within the community of Lismore that must be addressed for any development to take place:

- **Jobs**
This is an issue of primary concern, as the Island needs employment in order to prosper. This is a major factor in any sustainable development.
- **Transportation**
The ferry services to Oban and Port Appin, and how they (or one of them) can be improved, along with the road to and from Appin itself are a major concern of Islanders and a key factor in any development
- **The Need for Young Families**
Lismore needs a vibrancy in its population and this means that in order for the Island to prosper it must attract a wide cross section of ages perhaps emphasizing young families.
- **A Pub/Hotel**
A pub and/or guest house/hotel would provide both a social centre for islanders and encourage tourists to spend more time and money on the Island.

- **Further Education and Local Services**
A need for better access to further education and other local services is highlighted in the research, access to these mainland services are frequently curtailed due to the absence of evening ferry services.
- **Economic Regeneration**
Regeneration through diversification and the revitalization of existing industries such as agriculture and emerging industries like tourism, are essential for the sustainability of Lismore. Without economic sustainability, the Island will be reliant on a grant culture for its future.
- **The sharing of a common inclusive vision**
Coming through in some sections of the research were issues concerning incomers, houses being reserved and a particular nationality being positively attracted to Lismore to engage in the plans for its future. There is certainly a need for the Island to identify what kind of profile of new residents it needs to attract, to lend the Island a realistic chance of sustainability. However, care must be exercised that this selectivity does not become excluding and nationalistic.
- **Preservation and conservation**
Although Lismore needs to embrace change in order to prosper, the heritage, culture and environment of Lismore are some of its strongest assets. They can all be utilised to the Island's advantage, but must be preserved in order to maintain the uniqueness of this place.
- **Schooling**
Maintenance of Lismore's Primary school and its links to secondary education in Oban are vital to the long-term survival of Lismore's community. There is no doubt that 'going away' to Secondary school, then University and then to find work, although it has happened throughout recent history, is a factor in supporting the exodus of young people from the Island.
- **Sports Facilities**
The research showed that many islanders from all age ranges would like to see some sports and social facilities made available on Lismore.
- **Business Opportunities** Further diversification into areas such as Information Technology and home based arts and crafts are areas that could help to revitalise Lismore's economy without impacting on the environment. There is also a need for the tourists to contribute to the Island economy.
- **Incomers**
Without people being encouraged to come to, or return to, the Island the age profile will eventually dictate that the Island simply becomes a dormitory – this must be prevented. The issues for the Community Council will be the attraction of incomers of the profile needed and the preservation of both the ambiance and cultural traditions deemed as important. Dilution of these traditional values will occur unless they are identified and positively addressed.

- Housing
The research clearly showed that the issue of housing is strong on the Island. These concerns range over the lack of affordable housing for young families, to planning restrictions on the building of new homes and fears over what housing that is available being used as holiday homes.
- Tradition & Culture
Lismore's history, traditions and the Gaelic language are all positive aspects of the Island. The development of the Heritage Centre and the continuing provision of Gaelic language courses are positive ways of helping to ensure the survival of these important elements.

It was clear from the research that local people wanted to place a limitation on change. They wanted to engage and control the shape of development that might happen on the Island over the next ten years whilst recognizing that they need both the support and partnership of local agencies to effect development. They sought to place local control on damage to the environment, the protection of local culture, ambiance and business development.