 

**Tiree Community Council**

Convenor: Phyl Meyer

Representing the community on the island of Tiree

18 January 2023

Robert Miller

Customer Engagement and Transformation Manager

Dear Robert,

It is with deep, deep frustration that Tiree Community Council responds, yet again, to proposals to close the Tiree Customer Service Point (CSP).

This follows the deep cut in services in 2019, when the island’s CSP opening hours were reduced from 9-5 to 1.30-4.

Rona Campbell, who runs the CSP, has been in post for thirty years. A native islander, she knows everybody and everything about the island. This is irreplaceable local knowledge. She goes far beyond her formal job description to make sure that those who need help get it.

When lockdown started, it was Rona who volunteered to organise our community volunteers to deliver food and medicines, and a weekly phone call to isolated islanders. It was her position in the CSP that made her the ideal person to do this.

The withdrawal of this local office will affect the most isolated and vulnerable members of the most isolated and vulnerable community in Argyll and Bute. The digitally excluded – of which there are many on Tiree – will lose out on matters such as Blue Badge and Digital Passport Service applications, and enquiries about council tax and rubbish collection.

Office-based Registration for a sizeable community like Tiree is essential. There are no undertakers or refrigeration facilities on Tiree, and summer burials have to take place within 72 hours of death. Anything that slows down registration will make this race against time unmanageable. The administration of the graveyards would also be severely compromised by the closure of the Tiree CSP. Local records are kept in book form, and the assignation of lairs is complex and depends on a great deal of local knowledge.

Withdrawal of the service would also weaken the financial position of the Tiree Community Business.

Argyll and Bute Council should be channelling investment to the most remote and economically fragile communities, such as Tiree, where 45% of the housing stock is now second homes – not taking it away. Routing digital customer contacts away from the mainland centres of population, where there are many employment possibilities, to offices such as Tiree is exactly what Argyll and Bute Council should be doing.

All of these negative impacts would be brutally exposed in an Islands Community Impact Assessment, in which Tiree Community Council would play a robust part.

Tiree Community Council is resolutely against this proposal, which we hope will be rejected by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Many thanks,

Dr John Holliday, Secretary, Tiree Community Council

Balephuil

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