

Council outlines harsh realities facing those on long waiting lists

Only large developments can solve acute housing shortage

Large-scale developments in Brodick and Lamash are the only way to solve Arran's housing problem according to North Ayrshire Council, despite objections from many islanders.

That was the general feeling at three meetings last Thursday to discuss the provision of housing on Arran by NAC.

The meetings, held in Kildonan Village Hall, Brodick Village Hall and Brodick Primary School, were organised to give islanders a chance to comment on the findings of the recent Craigforth report into affordable housing on the island.

At the meeting divisional manager Nicola Thom read from the report, officially the Executive Summary Isle of Arran: Affordable Housing, Opportunities and Constraints. According to the report, she said, NAC could build 500 new homes on Arran now but there was no land to build on. The council had no more land reserves.

However, NAC head of housing Olga Clayton did say they would be able to build 20-40 new houses over the next 18 months.

She said: 'If islanders want to solve the housing problem

then there is only one choice. We build larger-scale developments in Brodick and Lamash so people are housed within the near future. Small developments will take years to have any effect.'

The aim of the three meetings, according to Jim Nichols from Arran Council for Voluntary Service, was clear. He said: 'We need to discuss your ideas and priorities so that NAC doesn't waste money on developments that islanders don't want.'

There are currently 259 applicants on the Isle of Arran Homes (IOAH) housing list

with a turnover of only 20 lets per year.

Andrew Grazier, secretary of the Housing Initiative For Arran Residents (HIFAR), attended the Brodick Hall meeting. HIFAR favours small 'clachan' style developments in woodland.

Mr Grazier said: 'Most people oppose these large-scale developments because they are not sympathetic to the Arran landscape. Arran is different to the rest of North Ayrshire. It is a unique island.'

Many at the meeting said that planning restrictions had

prevented them from building a home.

Shonagh Murchie from Lamash has been on the IOAH housing list for five years but says she has no hope of getting her own home.

She said: 'I have lived here for 25 years but I still can't get a house. Because of planning restrictions I can't build a cottage on my family's land but yet they are allowed to build a cottage for holiday letting six months of the year. That's allowed but I can't build a home on our own land.'