



Research Manifesto

22nd April 2024

version 3

Context

Since early 2023 the Isles of Scilly Community Venture, Wildlife Trust & Museum Association have together been exploring the concept of a Community Research Network for the Isles of Scilly, supported by a grant from UKRI and with assistance from Exeter University.

Community Research Networks are intended to invert the normal research hierarchy by facilitating Community Driven Research. In traditional research, universities decide research topics and then going out into the field to conduct them with minimal engagement at a grass roots level. Community Driven Research has the agenda and research topics set by the members of a local community, who then collaborate with researchers from academia to investigate those topics.

UKRI wishes to explore Community Research Networks that relate to a community which can be defined in terms of a specific geographical area. In the case of Scilly, this aspect of the CRN definition is simple: it is defined by the geographical isolation of the Isles.

Our CRN also needs to define a guiding theme to tie together the different research questions that it will facilitate and to determine which research questions it can support. We have approached this by engaging widely with the Isles of Scilly Community to build a broad picture of the various topics people on Scilly have an interest in researching.

Theme

The proposed theme for the Isles of Scilly Community Research Network is: *the viability and sustainability of remote island communities.*

During our extensive conversations within the Scilly community, issues of viability and sustainability were universally at the forefront of people's minds when discussing the challenges and areas of opportunity facing our community, to which they would like to see research activities targeted. This seems to reflect the precarious nature of our small, remote community and the constant reminder of our collective vulnerability that comes from our geographical isolation.

However, our chosen theme goes beyond the existential threats to provide a positive opportunity for a wide range of other research as well. The viability and long-term sustainability of our island community relies on a thriving business, recreational and public service ecosystem, and the chosen theme provides plenty scope for research questions which help to support these in both generalised and highly specific ways.

The Isles of Scilly Community Research Network is an open and formally defined partnership of key organisations and individuals with a commitment to driving community-led research and innovation for the Isles of Scilly.

The IoS CRN is led by Isles of Scilly Community Venture CIC, registered company number: 10836250.
Registered office: Porthmellon Enterprise Centre, Porthmellon, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 OJY.



Guiding Principles

Our conversations so far have also identified a number of principles which we should adopt in how we approach research questions.

1. Research is for everyone. It is about discovery and knowledge-creation, not secrets and selective advantage. All research carried out through the CRN should be conducted in an open and transparent way, with the findings shared publicly for the collective good of our whole community and beyond.
2. Research shouldn't be used to stoke controversy and fuel division. Tackling difficult issues should involve the support and cooperation of all those affected, even more so in a small, insular community.
3. Research should be built open a mutual respect between academic and community collaborators. The goal is to bridge the gap between the "local knowledge" embedded in our community and the "outside expertise" embodied by academia. Neither party is the sole expert here – the goal is to combine these two distinct forms of knowledge to create something that is more than the sum of its parts.
4. Research should deliver a useful contribution to the academic and non-academic literature. Research projects are not complete until their results have been communicated – both through traditional academic channels and through generally accessible media.

Detailed Topic List

Below is a list of all the potential research themes that have been raised by members of the Isles of Scilly community during our CRN engagement activities so far, grouped by theme.

Sustainability:

- Transport:
 - o cars (congestion)
 - o Decarbonisation (electric) private/small boats
- Sea level rise / adaptation
 - o How do we handle this?
 - o Erosion destroying coastal paths
- Water supplies
 - o Ground water saline ingress
 - o Desalination
 - o Water storage/collection of rainwater needs to be expanded/updated
- Fishing
 - o Stocks management/conservation
 - o Adapting to changing species
 - o Pollock fishing ban
- Farming & Land management
 - o Sustainable agricultural practices, e.g. in relation to bulb farming
 - o Better management of topsoil for long term sustainability
 - o Using our natural resources to reduce extent of importing materials

The Isles of Scilly Community Research Network is an open and formally defined partnership of key organisations and individuals with a commitment to driving community-led research and innovation for the Isles of Scilly.

The IoS CRN is led by Isles of Scilly Community Venture CIC, registered company number: 10836250.
Registered office: Porthmellon Enterprise Centre, Porthmellon, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 OJY.



Isles of Scilly Community Research Network

- Economic challenges
- Circularity/self-sufficiency
 - Using local resources instead of mainland imports (those visiting do not buy local and instead book mainland shopping deliveries)
 - What materials are most sustainable/eco-friendly for an island to buy in?
- Decarbonisation
 - Energy supplies
 - Solar
 - Energy bills / heat
- Tourism
 - Becoming an eco-tourism destination
 - Are cruise ships bad for our environment?
- Nature / natural environment
 - Understanding and protecting marine environments
 - Sea health
 - Species recovery initiatives
 - Understanding what is here better
 - Engaging people with nature
- Waste
 - Recycling / reusing on island more
 - Reducing waste production
 - Economics of waste – disposal is extremely expensive
 - Need waste audit or overview of current system
 - Potential to produce energy off waste?

Viability:

- Transport
 - Reliability/seasonality
 - Goods/supplies reliability
 - Medical appointments
 - Costs
 - Governance
 - Can we find a sustainable model for a year-round bus service?
 - Unreliable freight particularly for off islands
 - Lack of travel opportunities contributes to less of a 'community' in winter
 - Lack of opportunities to visit the mainland because of cost (island children missing out on certain experiences)
- Housing
 - Lack of availability
 - Cost
 - Loss of young people
 - Labour market impact
 - High building costs
 - Attitudes towards second home owners

The Isles of Scilly Community Research Network is an open and formally defined partnership of key organisations and individuals with a commitment to driving community-led research and innovation for the Isles of Scilly.

The IoS CRN is led by Isles of Scilly Community Venture CIC, registered company number: 10836250.
Registered office: Porthmellon Enterprise Centre, Porthmellon, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 OJY.



Isles of Scilly Community Research Network

- Seasonal workers vital but can't remain on islands
- Houses tied to jobs means nowhere to retire to
- Empty houses not being utilised
- Ageing population
 - Labour market impact
 - Costs of medical access
 - Park House has limited beds forcing elderly residents to remain in hospital or forced to move to mainland
- Skills shortage / labour supply
 - Hard to fill gaps
 - Access to / cost of training
 - Losing opportunity to use skills
 - Traditional skills
 - Future for local children
 - What skills are desirable/environmentally beneficial
 - Need to develop a way of sharing expertise/knowledge/skills formally
- History
 - How can we learn from the existing pool of local knowledge?
 - How do we retain local knowledge and local history on the islands?
- Tourist Trade
 - Appealing to new market
 - Looking after existing customers
- Economy
 - Impact of boating schedules on individual islands
 - Overall deeper understanding of Scilly's economy
 - Off-island specific challenges
 - Pros and cons of Extending the Season
- Circularity/Self-Sufficiency
 - Harnessing traditional culture of self-reliance
 - Making local production economically competitive
 - Protection against a future where investment in small island communities isn't available – not being dependent on government support.
 - Off-island shops are vital to each island's self-sufficiency

The Isles of Scilly Community Research Network is an open and formally defined partnership of key organisations and individuals with a commitment to driving community-led research and innovation for the Isles of Scilly.

The IoS CRN is led by Isles of Scilly Community Venture CIC, registered company number: 10836250.
Registered office: Porthmellon Enterprise Centre, Porthmellon, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 OJY.