

# THE IRISH SCOTTISH FORUM FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

“SUSTAINING SMALL ISLAND COMMUNITIES”

The Council Chamber  
Queen’s University Belfast  
Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013



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#### Foreword

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The small off-shore islands of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland offer a rich heritage drawn from a complex blending of history, culture and landscape. These are places which can fire the imagination towards the idea of the rural idyll. They are also places which represent many of the challenges connected to contemporary rural development. This conference, convened under the auspices of the Irish Scottish Forum for Spatial Planning, brings together insights from the three jurisdictions that address the theme of sustaining small island communities and which in turn are set within a wider international context. Key considerations revolve around the interdependence of public policy and local action in harnessing potential, sustaining community viability, and enhancing accessibility.

The Irish Scottish Forum for Spatial Planning currently draws on the interests of Planners within the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering at Queen’s University Belfast, the School of Geosciences at the University of Aberdeen, and the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy at University College Dublin. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> conference to be convened by the Forum following its inception in 2009. Previous events have dealt with Strategic Spatial Planning and Cultural Identities, Rural Development White Papers, Cross-Border Planning and Development, and Titanic Heritage.



## Programme

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9.30am Welcome and conference introduction  
*Dr Michael Murray, Queen's University Belfast*

### SESSION 1: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

10.00am **Keynote paper:**  
"Resilient small island communities – the international context."  
*Professor Stephen Royle, Queen's University Belfast*

11.00am Coffee in The Canada Room

### SESSION 2: LINKING POLICY AND PRACTICE (Chair: *Dr Berna Grist, University College Dublin*)

11.30am "Planning and development policy in Northern Ireland: the case of Rathlin Island."  
*Tom Reid, Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland*

12noon "Facilitating community-led development on Scottish islands."  
*Neil Ross, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland*

12.30pm "Policy and practice perspectives on Ireland's small island communities."  
*Bertie Ó hAinmhire, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland*

1.00pm Buffet lunch in The Canada Room

### SESSION 3: LIVING AND WORKING ON SMALL ISLANDS (Chair: *Professor William J V Neill, University of Aberdeen*)

2.00pm "The Rathlin Island living and working experience."  
*Michael Cecil & David Quinney Mee, Rathlin Development & Community Association*

2.30pm "Transforming natural resources through the use of digital technologies into business opportunities on the Scottish small isles."  
*Dr Rachel Shanks, University of Aberdeen*

3.00pm "Older people and connectivity in Irish small island communities."  
*Professor Vanessa Burholt, Swansea University*

### SESSION 4: SHARED INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS (Chair: *Dr Michael Murray*)

3.30pm Open discussion and conference close at 4pm



## Speaker Profiles

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**Vanessa Burholt** is Professor of Gerontology and Director of the Centre for Innovative Ageing (CIA) in the College of Human and Health Sciences at Swansea University. She holds a public appointment as the research member on the National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales. Over the last five years, she has worked on and led research projects worth approximately €8M. Her research interests include rurality, loneliness, support networks, intergenerational relationships, migration of older people and attachment to place, and she has published over 40 papers and book chapters on these topics. Recent research on rurality includes *Grey and Pleasant Land? An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Connectivity of Older People in Rural Civic Society* (ESRC) and *Maintaining function and well-being in later life: A longitudinal cohort study* which will provide robust comparisons between the experiences of older people in rural and urban areas of Wales.

**Michael Cecil** is Chair of Rathlin Development and Community Association. He resides on Rathlin and is from a traditional Island family. Michael works for the Rathlin Island Ferry Ltd (RIFL) and NI Electricity and previously managed the Post Office on Rathlin. He is one of the island's volunteer fire crew. He has a particular interest in renewable energy and the development of a wind turbine project on the island.

**David Quinney Mee** is Community Development Worker with Rathlin Development and Community Association. He lives in Ballycastle, commuting daily to Rathlin, where he works in community development, supporting residents as they endeavour to strengthen their social and economic viability in an area of intense environmental value and growing tourism. Working previously in Central America, he witnessed the effects of local and international politics that cause deep human poverty and environmental disaster and believes that sustainable community development models, global and local, are imperative.

**Bertie Ó hAinmhire** is a Principal Officer in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with responsibility for the Gaeltacht and the Offshore Islands. He attended University College Dublin and the National University of Ireland, Galway and holds a MSc (Masters of Science in Innovation Management) from the University of Ulster. He lives in the Connemara Gaeltacht. He formerly worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

**Tom Reid** is Director of Transport Policy, Strategy and Legislation in the Department for Regional Development (DRD). The Division is responsible for the Department's legislative programme and taking forward policy on sustainable transport, public transport, policy and legislation in relation to Northern Ireland's air and sea ports and the European Union. Tom is also responsible for the development and implementation of the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Transportation Strategy. In this role Tom has responsibility for coordinating delivery of the Executive's policy on Rathlin Island. The Rathlin Island Policy was introduced by the Executive in 2010 and is coordinated by DRD. The purpose of the Rathlin Policy is to develop a vibrant healthy Rathlin community and increase the involvement of islanders in the development of policies and projects which improve conditions for all of the people of the island while protecting its environment. Previously Tom was Director of Transportation Policy Division within DRD; prior to this he was Head of the Policy Innovation Unit and Programme for Government Unit in OFMDFM.

**Neil Ross** is Head of Community Growth Team, Strengthening Communities, in Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Inverness.

**Stephen Royle** is Professor of Island Geography at Queen's University Belfast. A graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, he took his PhD at the University of Leicester and moved to Queen's in 1976 as a geography lecturer. The two main themes of his research career are the historical geography of Belfast and the study of small islands. He is an inveterate traveller to islands and has visited 765 different islands. He edits the book reviews for *Island Studies Journal* and is treasurer of the International Small Island Studies Association. Stephen Royle is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy.

**Dr Rachel Shanks** currently works at the University of Aberdeen's School of Education. The focus of her research is professional learning and community learning and development in isolated communities. She has recently been working in the Small Isles of Scotland researching the use of digital technologies to enhance social and economic sustainability. She teaches research methods, community learning and development and education law. She was previously a law lecturer and has worked for the Trades Union Congress and Citizens Advice. She is originally from Lisburn, County Antrim.

## Conference Registration

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Attendance at this conference is free of charge but advance registration is necessary. Please e-mail Mrs Roslyn Barnes ([r.barnes@qub.ac.uk](mailto:r.barnes@qub.ac.uk)) at the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering Research Support Office, Queen's University Belfast, to confirm your interest in attending.