Establishing a Community Research Network in the Isles of Scilly:

The community view

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I think a lot of people here care about the islands. And they want to see us succeed and be successful and stay beautiful. You know, there's a lot of passion for place. (R23)

I just think everybody would like a better system. And people would be really keen to help out to make that happen, because it would benefit everybody. (R19)

Report summary

Community Research Networks are designed to allow communities to determine their own priorities for research and related innovation.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has supported 25 groups to explore the further development of their Community Research Network with the potential to bid for further funding to establish a longer term project. Applications are due in late 2023 with expectations that up to five will be funded.

The Isles of Scilly has one of these pilots. The project is led by a team of representatives from the Isles of Scilly Community Venture, the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and the Isles of Scilly Museum. The team worked with Professor Jane Wills and a group of undergraduate students based at the University of Exeter to conduct interviews with 26 residents in May 2023.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, anonymised and analysed to produce this report.

The interviews explored three key questions: (1) **Issues**: What are the major challenges facing people in the Isles of Scilly? Could a Community Research Network assist in addressing local challenges? (2) **Interest in engagement**: Would people in the Isles of Scilly be interested in engaging in the work of a Community Research Network? (3) **Implementation**: How could a Community Research Network operate? What would success look like?

Respondents identified significant and inter-related challenges in relation to the seasonality, reliability and cost of transport; the lack of housing; the ageing population; and sea level rise (outlined in Table 2 with further information in the Appendix). They also identified a series of partially-related but more modest challenges that might be investigated by a Community Research Network, should it be established (summarised in Table 3).

Most importantly, many of the interviewees described their frustration with well-intentioned but misguided projects led by 'outsiders' who failed to work with the grain of local knowledge, with related deficits in communication and consultation, as well as poor impact assessment, legacy planning and maintenance. Examples included the installation of an electricity connection from the mainland; the Smart Islands renewable energy project; and the construction of sea defences.

The research highlighted a significant gap between local and expert and/or 'outsider' knowledge in what mattered and how things should be done. However, while there was enthusiasm for the local determination of priorities and ideas, there was also some recognition of the benefits of learning from other places and accessing external ideas and resources as appropriate to local needs.

In addition, respondents recognised the need to clarify the role of a Community Research Network in relation to the other organisations that are already playing a significant role in the development of community life such as the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the Duchy of Cornwall Estates, the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company and the Tresco Estate.

Answering the questions about engaging in any new Community Research Network were challenging without clarity about who would lead it and how it would operate. However, most people were interested in finding out more and it is significant that many respondents highlighted the importance of engaging young people, long-standing residents, off-islanders and seasonal workers.

A number of respondents highlighted the heightened need for social discretion in the operation of any Community Research Network, providing concrete examples of the need to maintain good working relationships in such a small and relatively isolated community.

In this regard, respondents advocated careful thought about the leadership and operation of the Community Research Network. They argued it would need to be about listening and reaching out to people to see what they think. Some advocated linking up with the school to develop local capacity for research.

Some of the interviewees also emphasised that a Community Research Network needed to be about effective active so that it was 'more than a talking shop' while managing expectations about achieving significant change.

This research is now being shared with the local leadership of the Isles of Scilly Community Research Network, the 26 interviewees as well as researchers at the University of Exeter, to inform any decisions to be made about the next steps and applying for additional funds.

Establishing a Community Research Network in the Isles of Scilly: Insight into the community view

1. Background to the development of Community Research Networks

The Government of the United Kingdom (UK) channels most of its funding for research and innovation activity to universities, research organisations and businesses via a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) called UKRI (United Kingdom Research and Innovation). In 2022, its overall budget was just short of £8 billion, with plans for this to increase. In 2023, UKRI launched a new Public Engagement Strategy with a three-fold ambition to: (1) build a sense of shared endeavour by making research and innovation relevant and accessible to all; (2) ensure the benefits of research and innovation are shared widely by supporting collaboration and valuing diverse forms of knowledge; and (3) create new opportunities for all by inspiring and engaging the next generation. As part of this endeavour, UKRI want to support culture change in universities and research organisations to ensure that they better engage the public in research and innovation activity, but also, to ensure that the public are equipped, able and willing to engage. To this end, they are encouraging the creation and strengthening of partnerships that enable long-term, reciprocal collaborations between researchers and the public.

This focus on public engagement is further reflected in the demand to ensure that university-led research work has 'impact' that is now regularly assessed across the sector [1]. There have been long-standing efforts to develop community-university partnerships [2] and there is strong momentum to develop 'civic universities' in the UK [3]. These initiatives have been associated with innovation in research methods that is also designed to better engage the public, as demonstrated by citizen science, participative action research, place-based public engagement and research co-design (Bonney et al, 2009; Glass and Newman, 2015; Kindon et al, 2007; Rowe and Frewer, 2000). However, these approaches are largely embedded in research agendas that are driven by the research organisations or government rather than the public. This can mean that the public are co-opted to serve other people's agendas and consulted in projects once all the critical decisions are made (Bhakuni and Abimbola 2021; Harney et al, 2016). There is a risk that this alienates the public from the processes of research and innovation, and it can unintentionally deepen epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007).

A more radical approach would involve reversing established power relations such that the public are able to set the agenda, determining their own objectives and questions, with support as needed for collecting and processing any data required. In a UKRI-commissioned investigation into how public engagement in research could be more equitable, The Institute for Community Studies (ICS, Morrison, 2022) highlighted the unequal power relations embedded in much research. Adequately addressing 'knowledge injustice' was argued to require recognition of diverse forms of knowledge and the need to widen access to the resources that would allow communities to develop and determine their own priorities for research. As they suggested: "It is crucial to invest in (hard and social) infrastructure to produce, share and scale these [local] forms of knowledge … [for] an expanded system of knowledge creation that includes community-led and community-decided knowledge assets and greater local research capacity" (Morrison, 2022, 7). While the ICS acknowledged the complexities of developing this community-based research infrastructure, not least because any place-based community comprises a wide range of diverse interests, and uneven degrees of organisation and institutionalisation, they called for experiments in making a power shift in research. This ambition is about "seeding power to communities to own, share, and use the

knowledge and information they create and need – as equal organisations within an expanded Research and Innovation (R&I) system" (Morrison, 2022, 10),

Reflecting this ambition, UKRI have provided funding for a range of experimental activities including a Community Knowledge Fund that has supported 24 communities to develop knowledge that was important to them; a Community-led Research Pilot based in Reading and Slough; and the Community Research Partnerships Learning Programme that is led by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement.[4] UKRI are further investing £3.6 million in Community Research Networks that aim to support and sustain community-led research activity. As outlined in the announcement of the 25 successful phase one applications: *"Too many communities across the UK feel that research is done to them, and not with or for them. Through this programme, communities will come together to identify and undertake research that matters to them, in ways that ensure the benefits remain with the community. This way of working recognises and values the knowledge that communities hold about the issues they face and the solutions required. Through the networks, this knowledge and expertise will combine with and complement academic knowledge to create thriving local research ecosystems."*[5]

The phase one funding (of up to £25,000 each) allows the 25 projects to further develop their ideas about the purpose, operation and impact of their Community Research Network, with the option to bid for additional, longer-term funding for up to five of the projects from early 2024. The Isles of Scilly was the location for one of these 25 pilots and the team have subsequently been canvassing local opinion about the idea, its operation and focus. They have also started to discuss how the University of Exeter could act as a research partner to the emerging Community Research Network, unlocking additional research resources to support the agenda developed in Scilly.

2. The Isles of Scilly Community Research Network and research design

The funding to explore setting up a Community Research Network for the Isles of Scilly was secured following an application led by the Isles of Scilly Community Venture with support from the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and the Isles of Scilly Museum. The application made a strong case for Scilly as a place of extremes, particularly in relation to the contrast between its environmental riches and acute social challenges, evident in the lack of housing, pressures on labour supply and skills, as well as its vulnerable and expensive infrastructure including energy, water and transport. In addition, Scilly lacks post-16 education provision, meaning that young people have to leave for study and there is a case for the Community Research Network to provide locally-based opportunities for education and development. In the past, research and innovation activity has often been driven by external actors who lack local knowledge and may not even share the findings back with the community. The phase one application highlighted the legacy of *"research organisations setting research questions, and only allowing limited or token participation from the local community"*. Furthermore, the application highlighted the negative ideological and physical impact of a number of 'white elephant projects' that were determined and driven from outside without due attention to the long-term viability and sustainability of the decisions being made. Thus the Community Research Network was pitched as a way to erode long-established cynicism about research and innovation activity, to build on local knowledge and find paths to a more socially and environmentally sustainable and resilient future.

Since securing phase one funding, the Scilly team have been having informal conversations with local people to see what they think about the idea and how best to organise an effective Community Research Network. In preparation for an application for phase two funding, they have also had to confirm an exclusive research partnership with one university. The team already had long-standing ad-hoc relationships with a number of individual university researchers, particularly from regionally-located universities in Falmouth, Plymouth and Exeter. These will obviously continue, but the step-

change in research and innovation activity proposed in any phase two application is to be supported by the University of Exeter, from its campus in Cornwall. An informal group of academics with a wide variety of research interests have been identified to support this activity, including experts in marine science and conservation, climate change and adaptation, renewable energy, circular economy and community resilience.

In May 2023, a group of undergraduate students reading Geography, Environmental Science and Marine Science conducted interviews to further investigate local opinion as part of their training. A research protocol was agreed with the local leadership team and submitted to the university's ethics committee. The research respondents were identified and approached by the local leadership team and the students were assigned to undertake the interviews, which were recorded, transcribed and anonymised before being shared for writing up. The original recordings and transcriptions were subsequently deleted from student phones and field-based computers, with a master copy being held on a password protected university computer server, overseen by the academic in charge.

The students asked respondents questions about: their role and life in Scilly; the challenges they faced in living in Scilly; their reaction to the idea of a Community Research Network; the ways in which it could engage the community; their willingness (or otherwise) to engage; and ideas about its purpose and operation. These interviews lasted up to an hour and provided a wonderful opportunity to meet residents while developing their research skills. The activity also provided an insight into how the University of Exeter might support a Community Research Network in future, sharing its resources for mutual benefit. The broad aim was to develop a rich body of qualitative research material to help the local leadership team develop their ideas about the potential development of the Community Research Network that could also underpin a strong application to the phase two call.

In what follows, we have anonymised the transcribed material and organised the findings to answer three broad research questions:

1. **Issues**: What are the major challenges facing people in the Isles of Scilly? Could a Community Research Network assist in addressing local challenges?

2. **Interest in engagement**: Would people in the Isles of Scilly be interested in engaging in the work of a Community Research Network?

3. **Implementation**: How could a Community Research Network operate? What would success look like?

We interviewed respondents in a number of different roles including local businesses, council officers and elected councillors, and those providing important services and community activities. In presenting the findings, we have used a simple numbering system to reflect the diversity of voices while preserving anonymity.

In relation to the overall demographic profile of the respondents: we interviewed eight men and 18 women; six who lived off-island and 20 who lived on St Mary's; 10 who were born in Scilly and 16 who had moved there at some stage later in life. In this regard, half the group had lived in Scilly for more than 20 years (13) with the remainder being evenly split between those arriving in the last 5 years (6) and those being there for between 5 and 20 years (7).

The age profile of respondents is shown in Table 1, indicating the need for further engagement with young people, although also highlighting the relative demographic deficit of younger people in Scilly compared to the UK as a whole. Young people go to the mainland for study when they are 16 and

many of them remain for higher education and then struggle to return. There is further evidence of the ageing population in Scilly which is now one of the most demographically imbalanced communities in the UK. Although our research was not designed to be fully representative of the whole population in Scilly, the relatively small size of the resident population (2100 people) makes it feasible to improve representation in any future research activity.

Table 1: The age profile of research respondents with background data on the whole population

Age category	number	%	Isles of Scilly population (%)	UK population (%)
<30	1	4	26	35
30-49	9	34	24	26
50-64	10	38	22	20
>65	6	23	28	18
	26		Total 2,100	

Source: 2021 Census data [6]

3. Research findings

In this section, the research findings are presented including some anonymised quotations to illuminate and clarify the points being made.

3.1 Issues: What are the major challenges facing people in the Isles of Scilly?

As might be expected, the interviews revealed a significant number of challenges faced by people living in Scilly (see Table 2). Almost all mentioned **the seasonality, reliability and cost of transport** services. There were further problems associated with freight deliveries and delays, as well as the additional costs incurred in moving things on and off the islands and having to store items in case of delays. A number of people also highlighted the shortage of food over the winter when freight services were unable to leave Penzance. Transport caused major difficulties in relation to responding to medical emergencies, accessing specialist care and attending important events on the mainland. We heard concerns about the costs of transport and there were further concerns that charges might increase in order to pay for the new boats that are planned. A number of respondents also raised concerns about traffic congestion on St Mary's, and as a man in his nineties put it: "*The only the only thing that really changed here is there's too many cars. … [and] there's got to be at least 75% of the cars here are not used.*" (R9)

Housing was the other issue that was raised by almost all the interviewees. The acute lack of housing, and particularly affordable housing, was reported to be having very serious impacts on the ability of firms to recruit and retain staff and for young people to return home. The knock-on effects of the crisis were felt in every area of society, threatening the viability of community life. The housing crisis is more serious in Scilly than anywhere else in the country and the additional costs and complications of building new homes was widely recognised. It is perhaps not surprising that a number of people raised concerns about the number of second homes and the knock-on effect this has on community viability including labour supply, school rolls and viability, and sustaining local shops with affordable prices, particularly on the off-islands.

Respondents raised concerns about the **ageing population** and the challenges of supporting people without the services and taxation provided by younger people providing services. The costs of going to the mainland for medical services was raised by a number of interviewees, including heart-breaking reports of long separations and financial penalties associated with long term treatments such as chemotherapy. Furthermore, there are obvious additional costs involved in filling temporary

labour gaps and providing training to upskill local residents that would not be incurred on the mainland.

A number of respondents highlighted the need to **retain the tourist trade** by looking after existing customers as well as attracting new people who might visit for the first time. The costs of transport and accommodation was argued to be an issue here too, as it was often cheaper for people to travel abroad.

The final set of concerns related to **sea level rise, water supplies and the impact of climate change on fishing species and stocks**. A number of people commented on their experiences of coastal erosion and water shortages, and highlighted the need to adapt. People were cognisant of the threats to boreholes that provide freshwater supplies on the off-islands as well as the increasing reliance on desalination on St Mary's. One respondent highlighted the need to prepare for changes in fish species as climate change took hold, as well as reflecting on the need for collaboration in management practices to ensure that stocks are maintained for the future.

Table 2: The challenges identified by the respondents

Challenge	Sub-themes	Example quotations
Transport	*Seasonality and reliability*	I would say the transport issues are a real challenge. Weather can cause a lot of disruptions with getting on and off the island. Whether you're flying or board the boats, if you've got a storm or something like that, then they may not run. If it's foggy, then flights may not go. That can be a real challenge. (R13)
	Impacts on supplies	Sometimes if it's very stormy in the winter, you know, it's a bit of a challenge, the Co-op's provisions don't come through and we have two or three days without any fresh produce. In January this year it was particularly difficult. (R25)
	Implications for attending important appointments	When people are going away for medical appointments, fog or other issues can cause delays to them getting away. Then their appointments can end up being cancelled or postponed until a later date, which obviously can have health impacts. (R23)
	Costs in money and time	I just booked my daughter to come across with her three kids and because all of them are over twelve, it's going to cost over £1300 for the five of them to fly to and from Land's End. Plus they are bringing a dog which is £95. It is crazy. (R24)
	Concerns about planned new boats	I'm quite pleased that the Steamship Company have said we will make this happen. But I know there's other views that are worried about well, will it become too expensive? (R11)
	Concerns about the Steamship Company	The steamship company used to be a local company, all the directors were on the island. I think there are now only two … [and] I'm not sure they have votes. It's all run from the mainland now. I don't think they make the right decisions when it comes to fares and everything going to Land's End, because Land's End is quite vulnerable in terms of visibility. (R24)
	Calls for more support	In Scotland, the islands are very much part of their cultural identity. Therefore the transport services is basically nationalised, it's all they provided by a special service …They have a public service commitment so they have to provide a certain level of service. (R24)
	Congestion	There's far too many cars [on St Mary's]. (R1)
Housing	*Shortage*	There's nowhere to live at all. (R10)

	Cost	We've got house prices [like] London on the islands and [the] wages of Cornwall. You know, we've got the worst of both worlds … when you look at buying a two-bed flat, that's over half a million pounds. It is out of the reach of anyone here on the local salary. (R23)
	Losing young people	We lose our youngsters, because they can't come back and share their talent because they are not going to have anywhere to live. (R7)
	Implications for labour supplies	There is a teacher here. Now you would think teachers were pretty important, wouldn't you? This person has come to teach. And her husband and family have come with her. There's nowhere for her to live. They've been living in holiday lets and she's been moving here, there and everywhere. By Easter, she said if she didn't have anywhere, then she would have to leave. And if she leaves what a pressure that puts on the school. (R21)
	Increased costs of temporary labour	When we're short staffed, if we haven't got any people to fill shifts, we have to get people out from the mainland. So the cost of accommodation for them and flights over … [and] if it's foggy, they don't get over … If we're short staffed in the summer months, trying to find accommodation for people just to come over to work two or three days, or two or three nights [and] sometimes the island is full and you can't find accommodation for them. So accommodation is a real, real battle. (R7)
	Building costs	The council desperately wants to build social housing. But it's extremely rare we'll get funding for it because we've got a 50% uplift in build costs. Now if you're if the [Government Department] … they think well okay, we can build 10 houses over there for this amount of money or we could build 40 houses somewhere else with this amount of money, and they need the houses just as much. (R18)
	The need for solutions	Affordable housing is 80% of the market rate, but 80% of the market rate here is still too high for people, and it's extremely difficult to resolve. […] Since I've got on the council, and we've been going on about housing all the time, […] we haven't built anything. [The] council has not built a single unit, which is crazy. We're trying, but it's extremely difficult. (R18)
	Concerns about second homes	On my island, we've only got 80 people … five or six of those houses are second homes, then those people aren't buying from the shop. So then the shops' prices have to rise because their costs will rise. So it has a knock-on effect, you know, on everybody. (R5)
Ageing population	*The need for local labour and services*	I think […] in 2030 we're going to have about 50% of the population [that is] retired. Well, then you get a community that becomes increasingly dysfunctional, and it will all fall over. So, we have to do something to enable young people to stay here. (R18)
	The costs of accessing treatment	Accessing mainland medical care is a challenge for a lot of people and more so if you live on one of the smaller islands where I used to live, you've got an additional boat journey on top of the flight problems. (R25)
Skills shortages and mis-matches	*Filling gaps*	It is very difficult [to attract] staff and the care home has lots of problems … with retention … however, what you do on the mainland is you bring agency staff in, and they get agency staff in [here] but it's very limited because you [must] have somewhere to house them. And so, we had a situation in February, it was not too far off having to close because we just couldn't get the staff. (R18)
	Training courses and costs	If you've got a business that needs to do some training, or you've got a business that wants to take on an apprentice, and that apprentice needs to go away and attend college, maybe once a week, or even once a month, or

		go into a block release, or whatever it might be, that is expensive to pay for someone to go back and forth. (R13)
	And not using skills	When you are here, you tend to just kind of slot into a job that you wouldn't necessarily choose to do if you were living on the mainland, and you had more opportunities … there aren't necessarily the jobs here where you can use your qualifications that you've achieved (R13)
Retaining the tourist trade		I think it's really important that as a business, we don't forget to keep advertising and keep trying to attract the new people in so that we don't end up with people dying off… we've tried … [to appeal] to the younger person coming in as well. They're your customers for the next potentially 40 years. (R4)
Sea level rise and adaptation		The sea level is rising. You see it all the time. I think extreme weather is increasing. I think we see it on Scilly in a way that we just did not have when I was younger, and the effect that I see with our farm, because we're right on the coast, every time there's a storm, I see it shrinking, I see the path comes right along the coast, and it's getting closer and closer. And at some point, soon, we're going to have to re-divert the path all the way through the farm because it's just falling into the sea. (R5)
Water supplies		On St. Agnes, we have a network of boreholes or wells that provide the water and if there's any overtopping down on the low lying parts of the island, then that is immediately noticed in sodium spikes within the water. So, you know, with sea level rise and coastal erosion, we're looking at potentially devastating consequences for the community here. And similarly on St. Mary's, you know, their freshwater supply … is incredibly low lying and vulnerable to changes in sea level. (R23)
Changes in fishing, species and stocks		You depend on management and the sustainability of breeding stock elsewhere. So, we don't exist in isolation … [there is a] need for regional cooperation in management and the need to recognise that management needs to be put in place before it's too late. So, we want to avoid a boom and bust. (R22)

A number of respondents highlighted the work already being done by the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company, South West Water, the National Health Service and the main landlord, the Duchy of Cornwall, to try and tackle these problems. These bodies have a business or statutory duty to attend to the social and physical infrastructure of the islands and a successful Community Research Network would have to develop a good working relationship with them in identifying problems and scoping solutions that could then be delivered, as is discussed more fully below.

3.2 Could a Community Research Network assist in addressing local challenges?

Respondents were extremely positive about ensuring that local people drove any research agenda that was to be developed in Scilly. There was a strong commitment to the idea of local knowledge being the foundation for moving forward and as one respondent explained:

I think as a community, if we want to improve on anything … you've got to do a bit of research, and it's way better that it's done locally, with people that can do things here rather than a team coming from the mainland that don't understand …the way Scilly is [and] they don't understand the human aspect of it [which is] so important…I think anything that can be done in a more localised fashion is good. (R6)

In this regard, many respondents were able to reflect on their negative experiences of projects 'led by people on the mainland.' A number of well-intentioned interventions were perceived to have been misguided, poorly executed or even counter-productive in their effects. Interviewees provided examples in relation to the installation of electricity from the mainland, the smart islands renewable energy project and the construction of sea-defences. One respondent also remembered being consulted as part of a research project during the 1980s, having to assist when the outsiders got things wrong:

In the 1980s, there was a firm that came over, that did a report on Scilly and it … turned into a really interesting piece of research, actually. But some of it was so wrong. And then you have to rewrite it. You're not paid to rewrite it. All the people sitting around the table have been paid and you're the one giving your time. And you're the one saying 'Well hang on a minute, it doesn't work like that. You haven't quite got the right slant on this'. And so … in the end, you become a little bit resentful of people coming from the outside … telling you what you should do because they're official, and we're not. And then you get a bit chippy, which is not a good thing to be … you start resenting everybody who comes in, because you think automatically, they're going to tell you what to do, or do this or do that. [Later adding] The perception is sometimes that you will be stopped or you will be bossed about [by outsiders]. (R21)

The example of work to install new sea defences came up a number of times, probably reflecting the fact that it was ongoing at the time of the interviews. For one respondent living on an off-island, the changes had proved very controversial as people felt ill prepared for the scale and timetable of the work being proposed:

The community don't feel that proper consultation happened … somebody came up here … [but] he wasn't even there for half the meeting … there were drawings that meant nothing to us. [No one] really talked about why, what was happening, for what benefit … you know, the big numbers get thrown around, all this is going to save the island for 30 years … this is the area that will get flooded … but [not] good communication ... We were told [that] all the works were going to start in two months' time, just as we're going into the summer. Huge works … this is big … disruption, big diggers on the beaches, massive piles … hundreds and hundreds of tonnes of rock, and rocks being broken up. So everybody sort of panicked and … now especially, there's such a feeling of mistrust and … anti-sea defences, that potentially we could lose the opportunity to defend where we need to. (R4)

As this indicates, the research picked up a strong concern about experts coming to tell local people what needed to be done, without the community being in control of the demand for, or detail of, the work involved. For one respondent, this exposed the disconnection between two different kinds of knowledge: local and expert. And as he eloquently put it in relation to the sea defence debate:

[There are] people with lots of local knowledge, you know, people who go back generations here, and have seen four or five rounds of sea defence work in their lifetimes here, and they've seen what's happened. They've seen what was supposed to happen and seen the difference [in practice]. … I hear a lot of opinions … [such as] they're putting the rock armour in the wrong place … if you put it there, it's just going to scour out the dunes there, and then you're going to have a problem there and make the erosion worse. The local knowledge is very valuable … But it's how you integrate that with expert knowledge as well. (R14)

As a number of respondents further explained, these differences were partly due to inadequate and rushed communication as local people didn't feel that they understood what was going to happen and why. As the respondent quoted earlier explained: "*none of us are experts in sea defence [and] having the researchers come in and talk properly … [having] properly explained over several different*

meetings for the year to beforehand, would have been much better, and probably would have saved all this." (R4)

However, the research also identified problems in the way such plans were formulated in the first place. While people might recognise the need to address the infrastructural issues clearly impacting local life, such as sea level rise, the need to reduce energy imports, marine conservation management, and so on, there was a tendency to bring in experts who came up with plans that were not easily implemented with unpredictable outcomes in practice. This was further illustrated in regard to the Smart Islands project that had been designed to make a step-change in renewable energy systems in Scilly. [7] The control and design of the project was not in local hands and even though huge amounts of money were invested, it was widely perceived to be a poor and ineffective use of funds that could have been better invested in other projects in Scilly. We were told that the project had 'over-promised and under-delivered'. Scillonians had been promised "*an amazing system that would bring everyone's electricity bills down by 50% and take care of us all for renewable energy and so on … [and] what they actually delivered is … 1% of that*" (R14). While acknowledging that some council tenants had new solar panels and St Mary's had new infrastructure to support electric vehicles, the project was over-sold, thereby increasing local cynicism about such projects in future.

In this regard, a number of respondents argued that the Community Research Network could play an important role in improving communication so that people were involved in identifying local problems, researching what could be done, and ensuring that the community were fully informed about any changes being proposed. The Network would thus broker research and innovation activities in Scilly, providing the means to realise greater local control and improved public engagement. Reflecting on their experiences of the Smart Islands project, for example, one respondent suggested that "*the research group would be able to formulate the best way to share information with people and tailor it to … different types of people and how they understand things.*" (R7)

Having a Research Network was seen as a way to mediate change, ensuring more appropriate interventions, improved communication and better outcomes for the community. This was argued to allow the community more space to innovate, coming up solutions that worked with the grain of local society and conditions. Furthermore, the idea to work with university academics on projects that were identified and led by the community was welcomed, as indicated by one respondent who was already involved in related research:

My understanding is that … traditionally, research projects are formed and developed within universities and through academics as well as potentially answering government needs, as opposed to research being seeded and generated locally, which means that … there's little buy into research and what it can do and how it can benefit and impact locally. So when I heard this idea, I thought it was inspired, transformational. And I think that it's a really important thing to do. It's a really important thing to shift the … emphasis, the genesis of research towards local communities. I think it's great. (R22)

Another respondent also highlighted the benefits of getting a broader perspective on a local problem to learn from solutions elsewhere. As she explained:

I feel like living on an island makes you a bit stubborn and independent because you have to be. But it's [important to try] *not to let that stubbornness and independence make you insular. I think that's a real challenge.* [Later adding] *Living on an island makes you think … I'll just have to do that, you know, get on and do it yourself. And it sort of makes you a little bit sort of not pig-headed about stuff but you don't have a choice but to be quite blunt about things and resilient I suppose. But it's really*

hard then to not let that become … an entrenched isolationism … That's when it becomes a problem. You've got to still be open to the outside world. (R4)

The ability to access academic research capacity and associated resources was seen as a way to tap into a wider pool of knowledge and experience that could potentially help local problem solving, without the community losing control. For one respondent, the Community Research Network was "*not just about telling the academics that we've got local knowledge, it's about getting the two to work together and learn from each other. So it's bringing …* [the] *priorities from the community, and that enthusiasm … together with people who've got a global perspective. That's what it's meant to achieve. It's meant to connect two very disparate worlds and get them working together and learning from each other, not just one way. It's not a one way flow of learning.* [Later adding that] *the idea is that the two together can do something better.*" (R14)

This approach might also provide a mechanism for Scilly to secure additional funds to complete research and identify useful solutions and as one respondent suggested: "*If the big academic institutions are able to access funds … but the ultimate outcome is that it benefits small communities … it's a way of devolving funding in some ways, isn't it? It's … a backdoor route to accessing funding that otherwise community groups* [can't get]." (R26)

3.3 Interest in engagement: Would people in the Isles of Scilly be interested in engaging in the work of a Community Research Network?

As might be expected, many respondents were unsure about their willingness to engage in a Community Research Network, should it later be developed. They needed to know more about the leadership, goals and governance of the initiative before committing themselves and as one respondent suggested it: "*Depends who led it. Depends who's on the committee and how it was constituted. Depends how much power they had. So … I suppose I can't answer because it would all depend on how I would perceive them … whether they would fulfil that role, or whether there would be just one more tier of paid bureaucracy doing very little*". (R21)

Interestingly, one respondent highlighted the self-reliance that is associated with living in Scilly and drew on her own experience to say "*the best initiatives are nearly always somebody taking the bull by the horns themselves and doing it themselves*" (R2). Rather than spend time engaging with the proposed Community Research Network, this person might just try to find a solution themselves.

A number of others further highlighted a perceived reluctance to change and an acceptance of the status quo, with one saying: "*It's very hard to implement … a change of things over here, because people were doing it for so long. And they're kind of very stuck in their ways. And they've done it this way for like, you know, 500 years, whatever it is. So it is quite difficult to enact change, whereas on the mainland … you can get a community doing something quite different, quite quickly and … it's fairly easy*". (R10)

However, it was interesting to find that a number of respondents argued the Network might be something for the younger people to do:

I think that one thing we could do actually … [is] *trying to get young people more engaged in these things. Because I think that's an issue everywhere,* [but] *you generally get people* [in their] *50s onwards going to these things and the younger people tend not to be* [there]. (R18)

I don't know whether there's still a student council at school … I think they might have a role to play to be inclusive and for them to feel their input is [significant] *… they will have different ideas … I think it would be interesting to have young people's perspective*. (R25)

There was also a recognition that newer residents might want to take a back seat in determining the agenda for any Network, should it take off: *"The thing is that people like me, who have moved here to work, and I've only been here for three years, we're not the people that should be saying what the issues and things are."* (R26)

As might be expected, people were very concerned about having the time to engage in anything new. People working in the tourist industry were recognised to be working "*like a maniac, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, for six months*" (R14). There were also a number of comments about the extent to which people were doing "*multiple jobs, you know, just to earn a living over here*" (R20). Others were already heavily involved in community projects: *"I already have about five hats on* [so] *I don't think so, technically I'm retired right now!"* (R2). And others argued that even in the winter, it would be difficult to find time to do anything more: "[The season] *starts off mid-March, and then we finish at the beginning of November. So it's a long season. And you're working constantly …* [and] *you think oh, the winter is going to be a little bit, you know, easy and you'll have more time. But actually, in the winter you're planning for the next … season you're getting all those maintenance jobs done and you're still working."* (R16)

This was not a universal response, however, and a number of other respondents felt that the Community Research Network could operate on a seasonal cycle, exploring experiences and ideas during the winter months when there was less to do and it was harder to get outside after work. As one person suggested: *"In the winter months, we've got nothing to do other than sit around and talk to each other. And maybe that's good. It would be a community project where, you know, if there's a table booked in the Atlantic, and every so often … people get together and discuss things. There's no harm in that whatsoever, I would say."* (R26)

Despite general support, there were concerns about the extent to which the people would be willing and able to spend time researching a problem and finding solutions. As one person put it: *"I think you'll get a lot of people that will want to give you a problem, and then expect you go away and solve it. But that's not what it's about. It's about working together to go forward, and it's people's time. And that that will be a challenge to them, for them to have time to try and* [make it] *work."* (R15)

In addition, there was a recognition that the people who have questions for the Network might not necessarily have time to focus on finding solutions and somehow, the Community Research Network would need to be structured to allow both groups to engage. As one member of the community reflected: "*I think the vast majority of people have questions, but don't actually have the capacity to do anything about them. So I think that's going to be an interesting challenge. Because you don't necessarily want to exclude people just because they haven't got time,* [and] *actually, the people with good, interesting questions that they really care about* [need to be included]." (R14)

In this regard, another respondent highlighted the need to ensure people were paid for their contributions, so you had the right people involved in the work. As she explained: "*What I always worry about with things like this is the capacity of the people who would be able to do the job well and if they've got time to do it. And is it paid? You know, a lot of these things are voluntary, and people are busy already. So it depends on the structure as to how it would work."* (R1)

These questions exposed perceptions about the kinds of people who would or wouldn't engage in the project. People highlighted the reliance on "*older, mostly retired [people] … because young people will be doing three jobs. And if you want to make a living, you've got to work."* (R2) And such differences were argued to be overlaid with differences in education and income such that: "*Local, younger and uneducated* [people] *… would almost definitely be against it*." (R2)

These questions prompted further concerns about getting involved with projects that might involve

expressing sharp differences of opinion with the potential to fall out with other people. Respondents were very aware of the need to maintain good relationships with other people living in Scilly and as one long-standing resident explained:

I think there's a certain amount of [not wanting to] *fall out with too many people too much of the time because you might need them. You know, you might not need a plumber today but if you punch him on the nose today, you might need him in two weeks' time. And he might say well, you punched me on the nose last fortnight so I'm not coming.* [Later adding] *There are fallings in and fallings out, of course, inevitably there are, but there is a … certain amount of social restraint. I think there's a lot of long memories. So people remember … so and so's Dad or family or whatever did this in the war or did that or something else. But equally …you've got to live with each other, a bit like a family I suppose. And on St. Mary's … it's bigger so it's not quite so obvious. But certainly it is an obvious thing and on the off islands, it is* [very important]*. I think you're always quite restrained. You're … aware of situations where, you know, you'll need everybody, at some time or other.* (R21)

The 'social restraint' that helps the community to function is something that people have to learn if they are to survive in Scilly for the long term, and as a newer arrival explained:

I would be less gung ho about saying yes [to engaging now]*, just because of the resistance we've had in the past, and actually, that becomes quite personal. Personally, it's a difficult thing to be on an island when, you know, people are dead against what something you feel really passionate about. And … you can't get off the rock! So personally, I would be a lot more cautious about going yes, I'm going to get involved in this, because it becomes too divisive and too difficult to live in that place.* (R4)

These concerns highlight the need to be very clear about the purpose and operation of any Community Research Network, determining clear rules about how issues will be prioritised, and how the research will be organised and advanced. The extent to which "*disagreements are hard to manage in a small island community*" (R26) means that questions of governance become much more important than might be case in other parts of the country.

Furthermore, such processes will require guarantees about anonymity and the careful protection of rights to free speech. As one respondent suggested: "*It would be good to have a safe space to voice a concern that might get taken seriously and not be trolled on Facebook*" (R10). She followed this up more fully by highlighting the importance of "*having people listened to and being able to voice concerns without, you know, a pitchfork mob following them would be a comforting thought to quite a few people I imagine. Definitely.* [It needs to be] *an anonymous thing, because over here again, you could ask the wrong person and then, before you know it, your whole the world and their wife know that you're looking for this or you thought that, and so to have that sort of safe space to air a grievance would be great.*" (R10)

This was echoed by another respondent who told us that her daughter needed to be reminded that "*eyes and ears are watching you on this island and whatever you do, if you do anything wrong, someone will be watching … you can't get away with anything*" (R20).

One respondent took this a stage further to say she wouldn't want to engage because of the need to keep herself slightly removed from the community because of her work: "*I don't feel free to be me. I'm … constantly living above the shop where I can't really get away from the work because … it's not a nine to five job, it carries on through the weekend … I tend to keep myself to myself a bit really without imposing my personal opinions, because there's more enough to cope with my work*" (R11).

3.4 Implementation: How could a Community Research Network operate?

Many respondents were positive about the idea of a Community Research Network for the Isles of Scilly but as indicated above, they had obvious concerns about how it would operate in practice.

There was a strong sentiment that any new organisation should be as inclusive as possible, particularly when it came to including the off-islanders who often had a different experience to the majority population living on St Mary's. As one respondent explained:

I don't know if you've picked up on this theme in any of your interviews so far, but you will find amongst many off-island residents, a feeling that they often get forgotten, left out of things. And, you know, that feeling is broadly justified, because it is easy to forget about the off-islands, you know, 80% of the population is on St. Mary's, the remaining 20% is spread across those islands. So there are a lot less people there. And in the winter, it's basically impossible for us to get to them, you know, they have a shopping boat once a week to St. Mary's, but there's not really anything the other way. So there's six months of the year where they might as well not exist as far as St. Mary's residents are concerned. (R14)

This was echoed by a number of other respondents who recognised that "*each island has a very different story to tell*" (R20). People argued that particular attention needed to paid to the way that the off-islanders are represented in any new Community Research Network, with one respondent saying:

There's a big resistance to everything being St Mary's centric. Because every off-Island has its unique characteristics and challenges and what works for one won't work for another perhaps, even though they share similarities. So I think you would have to, look at each island as a separate community, as well as under the whole of Scilly. (R4)

In this regard, there might need to be representatives recruited from each of the islands to ensure that their voices are properly heard.

There were further issues raised in relation to the seasonal workers who arrive to cover the season but leave in the winter, with one respondent saying:

 I suppose [you need to] *try to get a wide range of people. Like we've got people who are seasonal workers, so they're only going to be here a few months and then there's people who might be here a few years. You've also got people like me that have been born here. But then the people who have been here from generation after generation. It's almost like a different class system here that it's not necessarily about how much money you've got. It would be probably how long you've been here.* (R5)

In addition to these internal 'class' differences, there were challenges raised in relation to the visitor population, many of whom arrive every year and pass on the tradition to the next generation. A number of respondents thought it would be useful to include their perspective both because of their role in securing the economic sustainability of the community as well as the additional skills they could bring. As one respondent reflected:

It's amazing the people who come on holiday to stay, and you never know who you might find. So, someone who used to come and stay on St Agnes was the head scientist at the Met Office. And she obviously knows a lot about the broader scale of impacts of climate change. So, she was involved with … the climate change risk assessment, which was published last year. There's someone who else stays on St Agnes who works for the Environment Agency and was … helping with the funding that we got for the sea defence projects. So, you never know who you might get if you ask tourists, and they've obviously they've got an interest in the islands. (R23)

When asked about how they might best reach the local population to invite their engagement,

respondents highlighted a number of methods including the residents' Facebook page, online surveys and more informal conversations with particular groups. Although they acknowledged the limits of the Facebook page, particular in regard to reaching older people, it was seen as a way to reach almost everyone living in Scilly, as these comments suggest:

I'm reluctant to say Facebook, but that's what everybody looks at - the residents' notice board on Facebook, which has about 2000 members … that does actually reach a lot of people. Obviously, not everybody's on Facebook. But if something comes up on there that people are talking about, people hear about it. So honestly, that's probably one of the best way to get getting in touch with people. (R1)

Facebook is probably used here on the island so much more than on the mainland. Facebook's old school … [but] *on the residents' notice board people will write does anyone know when the post office is open? Or we should have a street party and celebrate the King? Or, I've had my water bill, and it's too high. And so all sorts of things get posted on there. And then there's the sort of keyboard warriors …* [and] *there's a whole host of issues on there that are sort of unmediated. What your Community Research Network could do … would be a more formal way of targeting the key issues, rather than when someone's had a couple of drinks and feels a bit vocal and puts it on Facebook. So actually, that's a good benefit of this … the Community Research Network can really channel those energies into proper actions, rather than people's opinions.* (R11)

Another respondent thought you could develop something creative to put "*on Facebook, put in a bit of time and make it a bit amusing with a cartoon or something that catches the eye and gives it a bit fun.*" (R2)

Although there were some respondents who suggested using online surveys to reach people, most advocated more in-depth and personalised discussions. As one person put it: "*I think it's about meeting people where they're at. So you know, if you want to catch a certain demographic, you go to a certain pub, at the same time on a certain evening, you want to go to get another demographic you go to where they're at golf club or wherever.*" This respondent further advocated holding focus groups with "*different parts of the community at different ages … go to Park House, talk to the frail elderly…* [then go have] *focus groups in the Scillonian club or the pubs. Go to the pub on a quiz night and you see a different set of people than you do on a pool night … the islands are very good at collecting their own sets of tribes and they all congregate at different places at different times. And then you get these little Venn diagrams of people who are in one tribe and not another tribe.*" (R8)

In this regard, it was interesting that a number of people asked to be heard, hopeful that the Community Research Network could be a vehicle to listen rather than preach. As one respondent suggested: "*In Scilly, a lot of the time, you're cut off from everyone. You're so unheard all the time. So, people are really looking for is others to listen to them rather than necessarily to go this is what should happen. It's to listen to them and ask them what they should think should happen and … that doesn't happen that often*" (R5). Another respondent highlighted the importance of "*diplomacy, understanding how small communities work, understanding how things can't happen, necessarily when you plan them, and not getting upset about them. Diplomacy - linked with … finding out who's related to whom, because that can have a bearing on questions that you wouldn't even think about!*" (R21) This emphasis on personal relationships and diplomacy was echoed in comments about the importance of listening, empathy and inclusion, and including "*the quieter voices*" (R3) in ongoing work.

In this context, people were wary of public meetings, arguing that they might be counter-productive in terms of attendance, inclusivity and the quality of debate. People suggested they would need thoughtful planning such that: "*you would need to be very careful how you promoted it, and … you*

need to pick up on something that everyone feels very strongly about for the first meeting … and make that first one work … then they might go come to it again." (R2)

It was argued that the Community Research Network would need to develop a structure and process to ensure it reached the whole community while also being able to narrow down the focus on a small number of priorities for research and practical problem solving at any one time. One respondent had considerable experience of doing similar work in another context and he advocated the adoption of a three-stage process:

You've got stage one, which is generation of ideas, stage two, which is feedback from the community in terms of how they see priorities and threats, which gives you a sort of … ranking of those research issues. And then there's a third stage, I think, which is around the prioritisation and …sort of sense checking. For example, is this research being done? … Do we have the money to do it? Do we have the resources? And I think it's through that … three-stage formulation, [you get] *to a point where … you haven't … opened Pandora's box and had so many ideas that you can't do anything with* [them]*, or had something which is initially too restrictive.* (R22)

Each of these stages would be associated with different research methods, conducted at different scales, in order to garner: (1) ideas for things that need to be tackled; (2) more information about what is already known and needs to be known about each of these ideas; and (3) priorities for further research and action. As this respondent continued:

Stage one is more targeted, it's more developing ideas and meetings and … sort of sense checking and just seeing what is generated. And then stage two, which is the … community outreach, [you'll be] *using social media, … you'll be wanting to make presentations, town hall style, get people sat around tables, and discussing and talking and really engaging in … those ideas and what they think about them … Then from that, you've got a sort of report about what the community thinks … and you send that out again, and ask people for their responses. And to my mind … this is the kind of thing which is so important, because it's not a sort of a two-stage process … of people developing ideas, and then going to consultation. Consultation is such … a flawed process in terms of ideas, they are already very well formulated. And people feel … a little bit disenfranchised because they're looking at ideas which are really well developed, you know? So, I would really hope that you could avoid some … of those mistakes. I think that … three stage process and using different techniques in each one is much better.* (R22)

There would be scope to engage the Five Islands' School students in helping to research the ideas raised at stage one, before they were put to wider debate in stage two. Those taking GCSEs in History and Geography have to learn and practice research skills and one respondent thought there was scope for the school to contribute in relation to gathering evidence from published and other sources, as part of this work. This would have the further advantage of exposing school pupils to the research process as well as the academics involved in the Community Research Network, widening their insight into options for life after school.

A number of respondents were very clear that the Community Research Network needed to be "*more than a talking shop*" (R26) with "*evidence of benefit*" (R11). Furthermore, a number of respondents advised a low key approach, ensuring the right processes were put in place, and delivery was possible, before people got disillusioned about the idea. Building on his previous experience one respondent highlighted the need to "*under promise and over deliver*" in order to keep local people on board (R14).

Others highlighted the need to clarify the role of the network when operating alongside the Council and other statutory service providers. As one person asked: "*How does it sit alongside the council?*

Because it cannot do the job that the council is currently doing. … How many times will things be raised when people say, well, actually, that's the council's job. We need to be open to the fact that in this sort of organisation, these topics have come up … [but they] *are over to you*" (R26). Similar overlaps would occur with the Duchy of Cornwall Estate, the Steamship Company and public services like the National Health Service. The Community Research Network would have to work closely with these organisation while clarifying the kinds of issues that can and can't be taken up for further research.

In addition, a number of people highlighted the particular qualities required of its leadership, advocating local knowledge and working in sympathy with island life, as key characteristics:

[The leadership needs to] *know the islands... to know what it's like really, not to come in with preconceived views about how things should be*. (R25)

I think you just need to be sympathetic to the islands and the islands' community … whoever is doing it should not assume that they know Scilly or how it works. It is different, it is unique here. Until you actually live here for a period of time, you can't really understand that. So, I think that would be important. (R13)

 I think at the top of the list [in relation to leadership] *would be knowledge of the islands, it's really difficult to do anything on the islands if you don't have an understanding of how they work, and the difficulties and the advantages ...* (R16)

In this regard, one respondent provided the example of another organisation whose leadership was now developing a more positive approach to community relations than had been the case in the past:

In its recent … history [a local organisation has] *had a really negative relationship with the community as an agency that's come in and told people they can can't do this and we've got to do that, and not really worked with the community. And then there was a new CEO brought in, who had experience of working* [elsewhere but] *… he has built up a really good relationship. Now, you're never going to win everybody over, but he's building a much, much stronger relationship between the community and* [the organisation]. *And he's done that, by not coming in and going, this is what I want to do. He's balanced in his views. It's important for the researchers and organisations to hear out the locals first.* (R4)

Respondents also highlighted the need for an approachable style. As one person explained: "*it makes such a difference whether you can … talk to people like talking to someone in the pub …* [if] *you can engage and get people on board that way, I think that does make such a difference … from experience … just by picking up the phone and having a chat with people … rather than sending them a lengthy email,* [it] *just makes such a difference, such a difference*" (R6).

3.5 Issues that could be addressed by a Community Research Network in Scilly

The interviewees highlighted a number of issues that they thought a Community Research Network might be well-placed to address (see Table 3). As indicated, these questions exposed an interest in information and data sharing in relation to a wide range of topics including tourism, freight, post-16 education, skills and biodiversity. In addition, the social and environmental (un)sustainability of life in Scilly was argued to require new information gathering in relation to housing solutions, renewable energy, waste and water management. One respondent called for the Network to be creatively "*left field*", looking at ideas that are out of the ordinary such as using "*natural products for farm pharmaceuticals*" (R22).

Should it be developed, a Community Research Network would need to complete a more rigorous process of community engagement in order to identify and prioritise the issues to be addressed, but this list may be useful in thinking about the next stage of the project. The issues reflect local experience and creativity, with scope to find out more about each of these problems and how it could be tackled in future.

Table 3: Ideas for the Community Research Network to tackle

Issues	Sub-themes	Example quotations
Developing and sharing information and data	*In tourism*	One of the questions we get all the time from travel operators is that they would, in an ideal world, like to know exactly how many available bed spaces are available on any given night, like to be able to know that there are 68 rooms available on Tuesday, the 12th of June … things are booked, sold, cancelled all the time. (R10)
	In relation to freight	I'm really stuck on freight because it just affects everyday life and everyone struggles with it and even on St Marys there's been weeks with no fresh food over winter so if there was somewhere you could go to report these issues [it would be good] because at the moment no one knows how individuals are being affected … It would be good if you could report it, not because you want [anyone] to sort it out but so that they can build a bigger picture of the lives of people living here. (R17)
	In post-16 outcomes and options	[We need a study of] post 16 outcomes and destinations. And return rates for people, because all our kids go to the mainland for sixth form. There's very few 16 to 18-year-olds around. And [we need to know about] the barriers for them coming back to us to use their A levels and degrees meaningfully in their community. And also [we need to know] what they end up doing. That's a longitudinal study of destinations and outcomes for 16 to 30-year-old [say]? (R8)
	In apprenticeships	Some stay and do some form of apprenticeship. But the challenge for that is if it's a technical apprenticeship like [you know] vehicle engineering or whatever actually accessing the kit. So, you might have a workplace here but you then still have the issue of being supported with a trip to Truro to access College to access kit or a trip to Penryn. So, apprenticeships [need looking at], they work, but they're not without challenges. (R8)
	In biodiversity	[We need] a biodiversity audit for the example, to find out exactly what's here and what state it's all in. (R1)
Community provision	*For food supplies in winter*	Someone was talking about a community fridge freezer, which was a really good idea. Because that's, that's an achievable one … If we don't get food coming over for sometimes weeks, the co-op can be absolutely bare. And people just go "Don't worry, just stock it the freezer." Great, if you've got a freezer, but if all your freezer is a box at the top of your fridge, where do you go? So if you've got community freezer somewhere, it doesn't have to be in town. It can be uptown where there's more space. That would be a great start with this, to just make sure you've got enough reserves. Make sure people who don't have space can actually access food. (R3)
Housing	*Understanding the problem*	It would be really interesting to actually do a proper in-depth study of housing on Scilly and what the situation is with where people live because nobody's ever really done that. But to look at how many

		people are actually homeless because … in the winter, they'll live in a holiday cottage that isn't filled and in the summer, they'll either be in staff accommodation or like sleeping on somebody's floor I mean, it's crazy. (R5)
	Finding solutions	It's a balance between keeping Scilly special and providing accommodation for those who need it. So that's a difficult one, where it may be useful for an outside agency with multi various skills to have a look at. (R12) You could almost do the container type living where you can bring in some containers, put them in place and have the workmen live within those whilst building the sites. And then those could then become seasonal worker accommodation. [Later adding] I don't want people to think of containers just like containers. They can be clad, they can be interlocked, and that can be like quite fantastic. (R3)
Sustainability	*Zero carbon technology and being sustainable*	I think as an island, which is extraordinarily vulnerable to climate change, you would want to see a community which is fully embracing low or zero carbon technology. (R22) Another main thing is sustainability. I really think that we as an island, whatever we do, whatever we build, whatever we design and plans in the future. I always think we've got to ask ourselves, now is it sustainable? (R7)
	In energy	I think we should expand more on the solar we've got on the islands, I think we should have some wind turbines, whether they're out at sea or on the island … We should really work towards enhancing what we've got here. And, you know, protecting it, by making sure that we make use of the fact that it's windy over here, and it's sunnier than … most places over here. (R7) I think expanding renewable energy over here has potential to have a really big impact. So we have the highest electricity bills of any area in the entire country, because there's no gas here. And if you want to use oil, or wood or whatever, that's being shipped in 250 pounds a tonne from the mainland. So it costs a fortune. So basically, we all rely on electricity for everything. You've probably noticed looking around, the quality of housing here is pretty bad. You know, these are not buildings that are easy to heat, they're really inefficient and a lot of them are either very old or very badly built. So we have a real problem with electricity bills over here, they are huge. We also have loads of sun, like the sunniest place in the country, and we have loads of wind. We don't have any wind turbines … [and] in the short term, solar is an easy win. Because everyone's happy with that. (R14)
	The electrification of boating	I guess something that that I'm keen on … is electrifying boating. Even those small boats that people have as pleasure crafts. How can we electrify them? Because they aren't necessarily going far, only a couple of miles between these islands. How can we enable that … [when] there isn't a marina, there isn't somewhere where you can lay alongside for a long period …How can we electrify boating on Scilly and reduce carbon emissions? We know in the grand scheme of things it is pretty tiny and insignificant, but on the islands, that's going to be a key source of carbon and fossil fuel usage. There's so many areas that could be researched on the islands. Sitting down and

		thinking about that question. I'm sure there's a whole host of things that will come to mind. (R23).
	Water	We're flushing three litres of pristine drinking water down the toilet. Every time we go for a wee. (R6)
	Waste and circularity	As a community ... waste is the biggest thing … that needs to be researched … [There are talks about] composting and things like that but I think we should be really looking at … how can we buy less in and get less out. [Later adding] I think Scilly … could be so exciting and really lead the way in … a more circular economy … I think as an island, we need to work out what we're consuming and what our wastage is (R6).
	Food waste	We're picking up food waste as part of the co-mingled non-recyclable waste. The next step would be to think about separating out food waste and having separate collection. What we're not sure about is what the quantities and quality of that waste would be. And what the seasonality in that food waste would be, and also how we'd actually process the waste once we had it. At the moment it's mixed in with the black bag waste, and it goes to the mainland. So that's the question then, the research network [could] provide the resources to help find the solution to that. (R8)
	Compost	We're shipping loads of potting compost for growing plants from the mainland. There's no production of anything like that on the island. But we have amazing resources. In the winter, these beaches are a metre deep in seaweed which is an absolutely fantastic natural fertiliser. You know, I'm looking at turning food waste into compost. I'd like to dig in with someone who's an expert [to help think about] … how can we build a local potting compost so that the garden centre can sell that produce locally instead of shipping it in at great expense and terrible environmental consequence. (R14)
Dealing with dogs and cats and their impact on birds		The other one I would love to do more on is potentially dogs and disturbance. It's a really sensitive issue because everybody loves their dogs … [and] we've marketed the island as a dog friendly place … but that's not good because we have 7000 pairs of breeding seabirds. We're special for those. We have a really high density of song thrushes on the island, at least five or six times what it is on the mainland, and a lot of that is because we don't have the intensive agriculture. We've got lots of little stone walls and there isn't the fertiliser on the fields. There are a lot of invertebrates, a lot of snails and stuff for them to eat. But you know, cats are still eating them. It's a really sensitive issue, how you control people's dogs without using the word control, but you know it's really important not to disturb the breeding birds. I chatted to a lady just recently about dog control … [and] most dog owners would be devastated if they realised they were really impacting the breeding success. So it's how you communicate the information to work with people rather than just … telling them they can do something or they can't do something. It's about getting the message right. So you bring people on board rather than alienate people and make them feel bad for their dogs. (R1)

4 Conclusions

This research report summarises conversations with 26 residents in the Isles of Scilly. Our work was designed to explore reactions to the idea of a Community Research Network, people's willingness (or otherwise) to engage, and their ideas about its possible purpose and operation. We also asked some initial questions about the challenges people faced in working and living in Scilly with a view to providing important context to this report.

The research exposed the extent to which the lack and unaffordability of housing has negative implications for the demographic balance of the community, labour supplies and service provision. These challenges are worsened by the additional costs of living and working in Scilly caused mainly by the cost of transportation and associated premium on supplies and specialist labour. The viability of the community is further threatened by sea level rise and the insecurity of water supplies. As such, and for all the wrong reasons, Scilly provides an exemplification of the sustainability challenges that are rising up the political and policy agenda in and beyond the UK. There is an urgent need to identify successful solutions to these challenges, and the Community Research Network could be positioned as a mechanism for doing this at least some of this work. If successful, it could be a trail-blazer for solutions that are transferred elsewhere. Respondents highlighted such possibilities in relation to managing waste, producing compost, generating renewable energy, electrifying boating and innovating in housing provision.

The research also exposed deeply-felt and wholly-negative experiences of outsider-led projects that failed to work with the grain of community life. There was widespread support for building on local knowledge in order to develop a better understanding of local problems and develop solutions by working in partnership with a range of actors including local people, school students, academic researchers and statutory bodies. The Community Research Network could ensure what one respondent called the 'local genesis' of the research and innovation agenda so that changes were determined and driven by and for local people.

Research respondents highlighted the need for such a Community Research Network to be carefully led by people who were fully cognisant of the particularities of life in Scilly and the diversity of different interest groups who visit and live on the islands. People discussed the challenges of engaging young people, off-island residents, seasonal workers and visitors. There were also concerns raised about the social sensitivities of living in a small community. Perhaps more than any other location in England, Scilly's geography means that people depend on each other and can't afford to fall out. There is a premium on sensitivity and diplomacy in inter-personal relationships and without it, there is a risk of increasing tensions between people and groups, and failing to get anything done.

There are further risks that the Network could raise expectations that cannot be met. In this regard, a number of respondents highlighted the need to clarify the role of the Community Research Network in relation to other organisations operating in Scilly (and the Council, Duchy, Tresco Estate, NHS and Steamship Company were mentioned a number of times). Respondents advocated the establishment of complementary working relationships with them from the start of the process. Having clear terms of reference and transparent operating processes were seen as critical to the success of the work. This would help to identify the purposes of the Community Research Network and avoid stepping on organisational toes while taking care to complement rather than replicate any work already being done.

There is scope to further canvass opinion about different operating models for a Community Research Network and to learn from other examples (see for example Rawlings et al, 2021). Successful change will be difficult to achieve and for one respondent, it was important to counter existing cynicism by 'under-promising and over-delivering' rather than the other way round. This

'quiet' approach would involve building momentum by demonstrating impact rather than over-promising change that could not be achieved.

In sum, the Isles of Scilly Community Research Network could provide a mechanism to: (1) develop a local research agenda; (2) build local research capacity and new insight by working in reciprocal relationship with academic researchers from the University of Exeter; (3) create potential solutions that could be tested through practice; and (4) write these up to share with other locations. This research has been conducted to help identify how best to deliver this promise.

End notes
[1] https://www.ukri.org/about-us/research-england/research-excellence/ref-impact/
[2] https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/nccpe-projects/community-university-partnership-initiative; See also Harney and Wills (2017) Community University Partnerships report: https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/qmul/media/downloads/899_17-MEI-A5-brochure-(web)-V1.pdf
[3] https://civicuniversitynetwork.co.uk/
[4] For more information, see: https://www.youngfoundation.org/community-knowledge-fund/; https://www.britishscienceassociation.org/community-led-research-pilot; https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/community-research-partnerships-learning-programme
[5] https://www.ukri.org/news/networks-to-strengthen-publics-role-in-research-and-innovation/
[6] https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000053/
[7] https://www.scilly.gov.uk/business-licensing/smart-islands; https://social-innovation.hitachi/en-eu/case_studies/smart-energy-islands-isles-of-scilly/

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Appendix: The key personal and organisational challenges identified in the research

1. Transport

Seasonality and reliability

The challenge we face on the island is always the transport. You know, if you get fog like we had last week or … particularly in wintertime when the Scillonian doesn't sail and there is bad weather. And … different things are in short supply, of course, and people get cut off. It's as simple as that. (R9)

I would say the transport issues are a real challenge. Weather can cause a lot of disruptions with getting on and off the island. Whether you're flying or board the boats, if you've got a storm or something like that, then they may not run. If it's foggy, then flights may not go. That can be a real challenge. (R13)

So there's four months of the year where the only way to get to or from here as a person is by plane. And that is difficult because the planes probably fly, in the winter, maybe 50% of the time. The other 50% are cancelled because of the weather, because it's either too windy, too foggy, too something-or-other. So particularly in the winter, logistics is really hard. (R14)

While we have the Scillonian in the summer, well March to November, we all benefit from the reliability and the cost of the Scillonian. And then once we get to winter, transport is very, very limited … it used to run three times a week [in winter]. And now it doesn't. You know, she goes into dry dock, and she sits there all winter, and of course, has repairs. (R26)

The travel over here is just so difficult. And, you know, quite often … [even] in the summer, if you want to get off the island or get to the island, you can't because everything's blocked. So, I think the whole the whole travel infrastructure just means it's so difficult. (R19)

Supplies of food, medicines and important materials

Sometimes when the ship will break down, and we can't get anything stocked, in the 21st century we're rationing our food, it's that basic. (R12)

Sometimes if it's very stormy in the winter, you know, it's a bit of a challenge, the Co-op's provisions don't come through and we have two or three days without any fresh produce. In January this year it was particularly difficult. (R25)

There are times when I feel removed from the mainland support. So if I've got a pump breakdown, and I ring for a spare pump, it could be two weeks before it gets here. And of course, that's a critical piece of equipment that I need. So we have to make sure we have enough critical spares here. And we have to foresee all those sort of what if scenarios. [Adding later on that] We have to plan, we have to do contingency plans, we have to have risk assessments, and we have to have inventory of stores. We need to be organised! (R11)

The main challenge we face is with freight and getting things to the islands, it's got increasingly worse since I've been here. And … the time it takes to find freight when it's gone missing. So that is by far our biggest challenge. (R17)

You might hear lots of frustrations about DPD, saying they've delivered your product, and it's just got to Penzance and no further and you wait for weeks and months for things to get here. (R3)

So a very practical challenge is logistics. We are a long way from anywhere, and the boats we use to get stuff here are not very reliable, not very big, and very expensive. So if you want to build something here … half the problem is getting the kit here and getting it here on time, because … you've got your contractors booked on the plane to come over, and then on the week of the work, it's blowing a force 10 gale. No boats, no planes, nobody's here. Or the worst one is the boat gets cancelled, your kit doesn't turn up and the contractors all arrive and there's nothing for them to do because the plane was fine. (R14)

Access to medical appointments and attending important family events

If you want to go away, you always … plan to go a couple of days beforehand. If it's important like the hospital or something like that, because you've got to be there. So … the day before you're always watching the weather forecast. And you're always be alert to what … can happen in terms of transport, whether you get back. I didn't go to an Aunt's funeral, which I'm really sorry about because she was my favourite Auntie, but I wasn't sure I could get there. And even if I got there, it was middle of flower season, so I didn't want to be away from the farm too long. (R21)

When people are going away for medical appointments, fog or other issues can cause delays to them getting away. Then their appointments can end up being cancelled or postponed until a later date, which obviously can have health impacts. If you're going to have something chemo treatment regularly, then you know that can add significant days on to your journey, so you need to make sure you get there in time. And obviously, that's at a time when you're particularly vulnerable as well. (R23)

Costs

I just booked my daughter to come across with her three kids and because all of them are over twelve, it's going to cost over £1300 for the five of them to fly to and from Land's End. Plus they are bringing a dog which is £95. It is crazy. And it sort of drives people away (R24)

If I order something from a courier, from a company that is going to use a courier, I'm going to pay them one price for them to bring it from Penzance to St. Mary's, and … another price for it to come from St. Mary's over to [off-island] where I live. (R5)

Even the boat isn't very convenient because it leaves here at the end of the day at 4:30pm which means you get into Penzance at 7:30pm. And apart from the sleeper there isn't any trains that get you very far in the country after that. So you'll always end up with an overnight in Penzance and the same on the way back … You've got to be on board by 8:45am … so again, you've got to travel the day before. So if you're travelling from anywhere apart from sort of immediate Cornwall, you're stuck for that. So that's difficult … transport on and off is expensive and inconvenient. (R1)

Commissioning new boats

I think there is a hope that if we ever have new ferries, that there will be a winter ferry service, which we always used to have … And then if there is a winter ferry service, you have the a better chance because you're not going to be dominated by fog and visibility issues. (R25)

I'm quite pleased that the Steamship Company have said we will make this happen. But I know there's other views that are worried about well, will it become too expensive? (R11)

All I can say is that we definitely need new vessels. I would say that you need to make travel to or from Scilly more affordable for locals particularly. And for the prices for visitors not to get out of

hand, because they just won't come and it's 98% of our economy. But how that happens? I don't have the answers to that. But I think it's crucial. (R13)

Concerns about the Steamship Company

The steamship company used to be a local company, all the directors were on the island. I think there are now only two … [and] I'm not sure they have votes. It's all run from the mainland now. I don't think they make the right decisions when it comes to fares and everything going to Land's End, because Land's End is quite vulnerable in terms of visibility. (R24)

And calls for more support

In Scotland, the islands are very much part of their cultural identity. Therefore the transport services is basically nationalised, it's all provided by a special service …They have a public service commitment so they have to provide a certain level of service. (R24)

Congestion on St Mary's

The only the only thing that really changed here is there's too many cars. … I should imagine having a guess there's got to be at least 75% of the cars here are not used. (R9)

There's far too many cars. (R1)

I think a lot of tourists come here and they're shocked by how many cars there are … [it is] difficult driving a big ambulance around here because there's so many cars. … Sometimes we can't get the ambulance out because there's a traffic jam around here. So I hope we don't have the traffic we have here in 50 years. (R7)

I feel like transport on the island is something that that there could be more support for, whether it's just covered bike racks ... I buy a bike every couple of years, it lives outside, it gets salty and rusty, and I buy a second hand one … at the moment I don't have a bike and so I'm pretty stuck with that. And if I had somewhere to cover the bike it wouldn't get rusty but because I don't … have any yard space , if there was a couple of covered bike racks say in the centre of town … that could be helpful, because people don't have garden space. (R1)

2. Housing

Lack of housing

There's nowhere to live at all. (R10)

Housing is the top priority here, the lack of it … [housing is] all Duchy rented or council housing. And people can't really come here to work without accommodation … You can get a winter let, but by time March, April comes then then the holiday lets are all let out. (R11)

There's a huge housing crisis … I've got a friend she's got a young family, and they've moved 13 times in the last two months. So literally from holiday let to holiday let because they're effectively homeless, but she works in a key role. So, she's got to stay here. (R5)

And the costs are more out of line with wages than anywhere else in the UK

We've got house prices [like] London on the islands and [the] wages of Cornwall. You know, we've got the worst of both worlds … when you look at buying a two-bed flat, that's over half a million pounds. It is out of the reach of anyone here on the local salary. (R23)

Losing young people and important labour and talent

People who are young leave the islands because they can't get accommodation. (R12)

We lose our youngsters, because they can't come back and share their talent because they are not going to have anywhere to live. (R7)

I had no expectation to stay in here when I finished school, and I did go away. I mean, that's what happens to most people [and] some of them come back. But the issue now [is] it's harder to come back because houses, housing is so expensive and so awkward. And unless you've got parents who've got somewhere […] you can't really come back … now it's impossible. I mean, an average house price is […] 575,000 quid. Now, if you've got a medium income of 22,000, there's, there's no way you can… (R18)

I think a lot of people who leave don't leave because it's their first choice, they leave because they can't see any hope of ever having anywhere to live here. Because it's too expensive to buy, and it's impossible to rent, you know, that's why they leave not because they don't like the place. So we … have to face up to the fact that many of my business challenges and sustainability challenges end up back at housing, and I don't have the solutions. (R14)

Impacts on the labour market and volunteering

We're short-staffed, and … there's no housing for the staff. (R5)

You can't get the staff because there is nowhere for them to live. (R7)

I found really good candidates on the mainland, gave them the job. Two weeks later, they ring me and say [NAME] we can't take the job because we can't find anywhere to live in. And so that's a whole waste of time. That was the first year … [in my] second year I've only interviewed and only offered a job to people on the island – who are already living here and so what I'm finding is I then have to train those people myself. (R11)

Last winter, we had a guy who came over, who loved it here and was brilliant. We didn't want to lose him, but he didn't have anywhere to live. So, he moved back to the mainland. (R13)

There is a teacher here. Now you would think teachers were pretty important, wouldn't you? This person has come to teach. And her husband and family have come with her. There's nowhere for her to live. They've been living in holiday lets and she's been moving here, there and everywhere. By Easter, she said if she didn't have anywhere, then she would have to leave. And if she leaves what a pressure that puts on the school. (R21)

So we are finding it very hard to get a permanent children's social worker, which is a statutory requirement for our service to have a social worker, and that's around the lack of housing on the islands … [the successful candidate is] having to debate do I give up the life on the mainland with a property .. and live in a bed sit when actually, I'm a professional with a good income coming in but that's all that they can manage to find for me so that's a massive factor for us. (R20)

We've employed two field assistants to help with the seabird surveys this year and they're camping for three months. And you know, we're out in the field every day. I'm sure they would like a nice bed. We bought them nice tents and good sleeping mats but that's all we can do. (R1)

The additional costs of temporarily filling labour shortages

When we're short staffed, if we haven't got any people to fill shifts, we have to get people out from the mainland. So the cost of accommodation for them and flights over … [and] if it's foggy, they don't get over … If we're short staffed in the summer months, trying to find accommodation for people just to come over to work two or three days, or two or three nights [and] sometimes the island is full and you can't find accommodation for them. So accommodation is a real, real battle. (R7)

And building costs are higher

The council desperately wants to build social housing. But it's extremely rare we'll get funding for it because we got a 50% uplift in build costs. Now if you're if the [Government Department] … they think well okay, we can build 10 houses over there for this amount of money or we could build 40 houses somewhere else with this amount of money, and they need the houses just as much. So obviously from their perspective, you allocate this on the basis of value for money, and we can't demonstrate that. (R18)

A desperate need for housing solutions that work for Scilly

Affordable housing is 80% of the market rate, but 80% of the market rate here is still too high for people, and it's extremely difficult to resolve. […] Since I've got on the council, and we've been going on about housing all the time, […] we haven't built anything. [The] council has not built a single unit, which is crazy. We're trying, but it's extremely difficult. (R18)

Attitudes towards second home owners

People buy second homes … out here, and they are empty for most of the time. (R19)

There is a resentment of second homeowners because there are a lot of people that will come, and they will buy a house and then maybe come here for like two weeks a year. And those houses then are sitting empty. (R5)

Quite understandably, there's a view [that] the second home owners are not liked. Because the Scillonians, the locals, haven't got housing … [people] will have strong opinions about it, because it's, you know, to them, it's not fair, that their offspring and their siblings, family can't return to Scilly because there's no housing. (R11)

You can't have an island without somebody who's going to go around and get the freight off the quay. Nobody with a second home is going to have a forklift and come down to the launch every day and get the freight. (R4)

On my island, we've only got 80 people … it's like five or six of those houses are second homes, then those people aren't buying from the shop. So then the shops' prices have to rise because their costs will rise. So it has a knock-on effect, you know, on everybody. (R5)

I think there are there are second homeowners that are aware of the bad feeling and don't understand it. And their mind-set is very different. They don't understand why it's not a good idea, to walk up to a tiny community that has no housing … and try and pretend they're friends with

everybody, because the people that are living there, do not feel the same … why would people do it? (R4)

3. The ageing population

The need for local labour and services

I think […] in 2030 we're going to have about 50% of the population [that is] retired. Well, then you get a community that becomes increasingly dysfunctional, and it will all fall over. So, we have to do something to enable young people to stay here, and that's principally housing. (R18)

We need to enable young people to stay here. And we need some way that they can earn a reasonable living and want to stay here, because…we need to infill the young people who are either disappearing or getting older. (R18)

The costs of accessing treatment on the mainland

Accessing mainland medical care is a challenge for a lot of people and more so if you live on one of the smaller islands where I used to live, you've got an additional boat journey on top of the flight problems. (R25)

A friend of ours, for example, her husband was diagnosed with cancer. And she could never get him back [to Scilly], because he was always in between chemo and all those other things. So they couldn't come back. So she was the best part of six months living out of a suitcase, on the mainland, trying to find friends who had a sofa she could stay on and hiring holiday lets … It's so expensive, and it's so horrible. And if you're dealing with emotional things, to then have to think, well, where am I going to stay next week! (R21)

We've got this massive fundraising project at the minute to try desperately to build a property, near Treliske hospital [Truro], because when people are going over constantly, maybe for cancer treatment, or if someone's about to have a baby, sometimes they have to go two, three weeks before and they have to find their own accommodation and it's costing people the absolute earth. We've got this huge fundraising project going on across the islands called the Island Haven … and there's very much a feeling, when will we ever get there? Because every day building materials are going up and up. I don't know if they've even bought the land to build this on yet and then you've got the time building it and I just don't know how realistic this plan is. So I guess it's about how realistic this community venture is. (R20)

4. Skill shortages and labour supply

Filling gaps

We've got really, really small teams. And so, if one person goes on sick, then there's not necessarily any one to cover that. So, I think that that's a real challenge in the area that I work in, because it's public facing, it's customer facing. And so, we deliver services to the customer … [and] if someone sitting on reception is poorly, then we haven't got a big team who can just be pulled in to cover them. I think that's probably the main challenge. (R13)

It is very difficult [to attract] staff and the care home has lots of problems … with retention … however, what you do on the mainland is you bring agency staff in, and they get agency staff in [here] but it's very limited because you [must] have somewhere to house them. And so, we had a situation in February, it was not too far off having to close because we just couldn't get the staff.

Anyway, that was resolved, at least partially, so […] that's another issue. Staffing and recruitment is a terrible problem here. And that's the same for hotels and things like that. (R18)

At the bakery, we're really lucky we've got a brilliant team but if someone leaves we have no accommodation for staff and there's only a limited population of people who are working. (R17)

The challenges of accessing and paying for training

If you've got a business that needs to do some training, or you've got a business that wants to take on an apprentice, and that apprentice needs to go away and attend college, maybe once a week, or even once a month, or go into a block release, or whatever it might be. That is expensive to pay for someone to go back and forth … because if you were on the mainland, you would just go into college for the day. If you were here, you'd probably have to leave here the day before, you'd have to stay the night, so that you could be at college first thing in the morning. And then you potentially might have to stay that night as well. And it is unlikely, especially in the winter, that you'd be able to do that on day trips and [there is the cost of] time away from the businesses as well. So that's a big challenge for apprentices, but just in general, anybody wanting to kind of do any training, or upskilling that involves either them going to the mainland to attend something on the mainland. For example, this week we've got someone who's coming from mainland; he's come here, and he's teaching forklift truck driving. You have to have a license to drive the forklift truck. So, he's come over here [and] obviously, we've had to pay him to come over, we've had to take the accommodation, all of those kinds of things. So that's costly. (R13)

And losing the opportunity to use skills

When you are here, you tend to just kind of slot into a job that you wouldn't necessarily choose to do if you were living on the mainland, and you had more opportunities. So, you might go away to university and study at college or whatever, or do whatever training on the mainland, and then come back to Scilly. And there aren't necessarily the jobs here where you can use your qualifications that you've achieved. So sometimes I think people probably end up doing jobs that they wouldn't necessarily do if they lived on the mainland. They might not necessarily enjoy or get as much satisfaction from them, but they do them because they want to live here. (R13)

5. Retaining the tourist trade

Appealing to a new market

There is a bit of a saying; it's newly-weds and nearly-deads on Scilly. And apart from that summer holiday bit in the middle where you will get big families …. Multi-generational holidays … it's pretty much young families and older retiring people. [Later adding] It's good, you know, people who have got disposable income and are retiring, spend well, they're reliable customers for us, we get a lot of returning guests, so they just keep booking year-on-year. They know Scilly and, you know, we build up quite close relationship with some of our guests. But I think it's really important that as a business, we don't forget to keep advertising and keep trying to attract the new people in so that we don't end up with people dying off. So I think for Scilly … we've tried to sort of put in things that are appealing to the younger person coming in as well. They're your customers for the next potentially 40 years. (R4)

And looking after existing customers

The harbour's … disability access [is poor]. Things like that need to be sorted out because … [many visitors are] in their 80s now. They started coming over on their honeymoon, and they brought

families, etc., over here, and now they can't go to Tresco anymore, because they can't get on the boats. (R18)

I think there is a huge need for a wet weather facility here. And as I said, we've had the museum and if this space is ever developed as a cultural centre, which is to be hoped, and the grant funding comes in, then you know that there is space for more, but I think we need something for the holiday makers. (R25)

6. Sea level rise and adaptation

The sea level is rising. You see it all the time. I think extreme weather is increasing. I think we see it on Scilly in a way that we just did not have when I was younger, and the effect that I see with our farm, because we're right on the coast, every time there's a storm, I see it shrinking, I see the path comes right along the coast, and it's getting closer and closer. And at some point, soon, we're going to have to re-divert the path all the way through the farm because it's just falling into the sea. (R5)

I would say the main challenge facing us really is climate adaptation. So we are really restricted on water usage on [of-island], and the logistics of getting feed and things like that for the cattle, you know, the cost is just too much. So we have to produce everything on-island for the cattle. So we have to sort of try and adapt how many, you know, how the farm is run to work within what the climate will allow us to do. So the last few years, we've had lots of drought in the summer. So we've had to sort of change what we're doing on the farm to sort of work with that. (R4)

Scilly is vulnerable. […] it's been estimated that probably a large part of St Mary's particularly will be submerged over time. So, I think the idea of environmental change, environmental protection, and environmental planning will be part of this I imagine. [Later adding] There's work taking place currently, storm defences, because the storms are pretty bad, but they won't hold back nature forever. And in fact, you see, in Hugh Town, there it can't be protected really, it's so low lying. So over time, things will have to change, so preparedness for it, as opposed to panicking would be the thing. (R12)

The equivalent of our central business district is only three feet above sea level. And sea level rise is happening and will happen. Where is the conversation about where that goes to? Do we run for the hills? Which hills? Do we run for one of our big hills? It's got an airport on it. So, can we build on the flanks of those hills? [Later adding] I think maintaining a conversation about climate change is the hard bit and people don't necessarily see what can they do to have an impact and how we … have an impact locally, [especially] when it's China's fault, or Russia's fault, America's fault, or India's fault, you know … all we can do is mitigate against climate changes by protecting our freshwater supplies and protecting our major infrastructure, which is why there's big fields of boulders around the islands. (R8)

7. Water supplies

I do wonder about water and the future of water here. And the tradition of saving water is not so widespread as it always used to be. (R21)

It's a really big problem. So we have so much rain in the winter … but that all falls generally in like four or five months of the year. It's weird. If you're used to Cornwall, you think it actually rains all year round in Cornwall quite a lot. It doesn't do that here. You might get a shower, but it's never actually enough to wet the ground. I think it's some geographical reason that it doesn't [maybe] there's not enough land to stimulate precipitation. So we get fog and it blows straight through and doesn't rain till it hits Cornwall. (R14)

On St. Agnes, we have a network of boreholes or wells that provide the water and if there's any overtopping down on the low lying parts of the island, then that is immediately noticed in sodium spikes within the water. So, you know, with sea level rise and coastal erosion, we're looking at potentially devastating consequences for the community here. And similarly on St. Mary's, you know, their freshwater supply … is incredibly low lying and vulnerable to changes in sea level. (R23)

You can imagine that the use of water over the holiday season is astronomical, and on some of the off-islands they don't have the water supply that we have because we've got a desalination plant on St Mary's … I know that they're able to artificially ensure that there's always enough to meet demand, but on the off-islands there isn't that option. (R26)

8. Changes in fishing, species and stocks

The main challenges are around adaption post Brexit … [and] access to markets, it's getting a reliable price on the shellfish which is sold. All the time that you know there's fishing is in a bit of a knife edge in terms of the costs involved, like the cost of fuel, and the cost of maintaining the boat, the cost of the equipment that's being used, and the challenges of working on Scilly with weather. But I think longer term, the additional challenges are with climate change and new species coming and species going. So, we've already seen that, and this is anecdotal, but often we notice, or fishermen have noticed species such as mackerel, which are moving away … they weren't a huge commercially important species here, but they are changing. But then likewise, there's other species coming in, such as octopus and crawfish. So, it's adapting to those changes and, you know, the question in my mind is whether you can predict those kinds of changes. Because another example is the bluefin tuna coming in, you know, they've always been around, but they're coming in greater numbers and greater frequency now. And that's something that no one would have predicted. And I think the other thing is that we are a bit of an oasis here, in terms of the numbers of fishermen, and the quality of the marine environment is anecdotally and arguably better than anywhere else in England or the UK. But for many of those species, we know, you depend on management and the sustainability of breeding stock elsewhere. So, we don't exist in isolation. So, the crab, for example, move in from the south and east. And if they're being overfished in the channel, then there's nothing that that we can do, or fishermen can do locally. And likewise, with the crawfish we depend … on the health of stocks around Spain and France. If they were looked after, then we get the benefits here. So, I think the final point is around the need for regional cooperation in management and the need to recognise that management needs to be put in place before it's too late. So, we want to avoid a boom and bust… Broadly, the fishing industry, I think here is healthy, but in a fairly kind of low-key kind of way that there's not any kind of in a really big fishing businesses here. It's all relatively small. (R22)