Alcohol use/abuse: On Islay we are so aware of the huge percentage of people with alcohol addiction and the many and varied problems it has on the people themselves along with their families/work colleagues, family and friendships. On Islay we need to have a base/café/centre where there is always a cup of tea/coffee on the go; newspapers and magazines to read; pool, darts, cards; watch TV especially sports events; someone who can "counsel" informally or if needs be formally in a private room; no alcohol whatsoever within premises. This would be open for anyone, for any age group and could also have monthly speakers on a variety of subjects. It would be a social hub.

Transport: We have no public transport after 5pm and none on a Sunday. This must be changed ASAP as it is actively excluding those who no not have the means to own a car and those who live in remote areas to enjoy socialising through clubs and activities. We are fortunate to have the Screenmachine visit regularly however there is no public travel available to match up with evening performances. Church on a Sunday - again no buses. Gaelic classes and all evening classes at High School again there can be no correlation with non existent public transport.

Middle age group: During the Islay meeting much was talked about old and young. On Islay we have another socially isolated and vulnerable group. That is the 25 years+ - 45 years where they are in a relationship, often with little ones, full time job very often striving to make ends meet one mortgage month to next. So many couples I know on Islay are lonely for company. Could a young parents group be formed whereby they could organise social evenings perhaps along the lines of supper dance, cheese and wine social, "safari dinner" or "Come dine with me" nights. Organised/rotational babysitting service another option. Many problems other than loneliness would be naturally addressed with meeting up with friends old and new.

Bullying: Islay High School has a bullying problem which is NOT being sufficiently addressed to eliminate this practice. We cannot wait for a child to become so dis-spirited and feel so bullied that they might choose suicide over putting up with every day intimidation, assault and harassment. Bullying is against our human rights, it is illegal and must be stopped at source. There is no half way with bullying; it is against the human right act to allow children to feel threatened whilst attending school. When teachers are seen to openly chastise/make fun of the victim and perpetrators feel inflated and are then ready to follow through with more intimidation.

Rachel Whyte
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