



**RÀMH**  
**ISLANDS SURVEY**  
**REPORT - KEY FINDINGS**

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# 1. About the Survey

## **BACKGROUND**

In January 2023 CHARTS launched **Ràmh** /Ra : v/, a new project focused on island support and development in Argyll. Named after the Gaelic word for 'oar' and inspired by the Gaelic saying 'air an aon ràmh' which literally means 'on the same oar' the spirit of the phrase is about working together. 'Ràmh will support island practitioners and organisations to undertake new projects, promote existing successes and protect the remarkable heritage which underpins our work.

In the first half of the project, the staff team consulted widely throughout the islands with the aim of understanding how best the current and potential cultural activity in each community could be supported.

CHARTS has especially recruited an island's staff team, including a dedicated Island Culture Officer and complementary staff roles focused on Gaelic and young people. This aims to maximise engagement across demographics within our island communities. The objectives of the Ràmh programme were to:

- Ask island communities in Argyll who they are, what they need and what they want to achieve.
- Connect individuals and organisations through CHARTS' extensive network of partner organisations and funders.
- Create links where helpful between islands and support a self-sustaining, resilient community of culture, heritage, and arts practitioners.
- Bring the incredible work of islanders to a wider audience, considering how we can sensitively help improve local economies and the year-round socio-economic outcomes for island communities.

## **THE SURVEY**

This survey was developed for individuals and organisations working in and engaged with arts, creative industries and heritage on islands.

The information collected from this survey will help:

- Inform our Island's programme
- CHARTS Island's team to develop relevant services, as well as opportunities and events
- Monitor engagement and interactions with our services as an organisation

The survey was launched on 28th February 2023, in both English and Gaelic, with a deadline for responses running to 6th April 2023. During that period, 63 responses were received, with representation from all inhabited islands.

### **SURVEY REISSUE 3rd-14th August**

#### *Rationale for Reissue*

In the first deployment of the survey there were three groups from which we received a surprising or unexpectedly low response rate. These were:

- **Existing CHARTS members.** Only 35% of respondents were members at the time of completing the survey
- **People living and working in Islay.** Although not disproportionately low in relation to existing membership in Islay, to have received only 1 response from the island with a population of over 3000 was surprising.
- **Gaelic speakers.** Given that the islands tend to have higher rates of those with at least some knowledge of Gaelic language it was surprising that so few reported an influence of Gaelic on their work and only a small percentage speaking Gaelic to some extent.

#### *Process of Reissue*

The survey was edited, keeping the bulk of the content the same, but adding some additional questions and formatting that we felt would give a more illustrative response. Some questions, as noted above, should have originally been formatted to allow for multiple answers to multiple choice questions as original respondents found it hard to choose only one, e.g. when asking about what sectors respondents worked in.

Summary of changes:

Q.6 - ADDED a follow-up question to ask “*Are there any particular arrangements or requirements we should consider in the future in relation to working with people with disabilities?*” with an open response format

Q.15 - EDITED to allow for respondents to check multiple boxes regarding what areas of arts, culture and heritage they work in as original respondents stated that they often worked in a variety of sectors

Q.16 - ADDED “*How Do You Currently Access Markets And/Or Audiences?*”

Q.19 - EDITED to allow for respondents to check multiple boxes regarding what areas of CHARTS interested them

Q.28 - EDITED to allow for an open ‘other’ response to the question of how many hours respondents worked in arts, culture and heritage

Q.29 - ADDED “*What Is Your Arts/Heritage/Cultural Industry Employment or Employment Pattern?*”

Generally:

- Clear section breaks were added to break up the survey and for ease of use
- A section was added at the end to ask whether or not respondents gave consent for quotes from their long form answers to be used/published by CHARTS

The survey was reissued through the same channels (CHARTS website, social media, newsletter etc) but specific individuals, organisations and locations were targeted through Facebook noticeboards, community mailing lists and existing contacts. A total of 27 additional responses were received in the reissue.



**RESPONSES, OVER BOTH SURVEYS**

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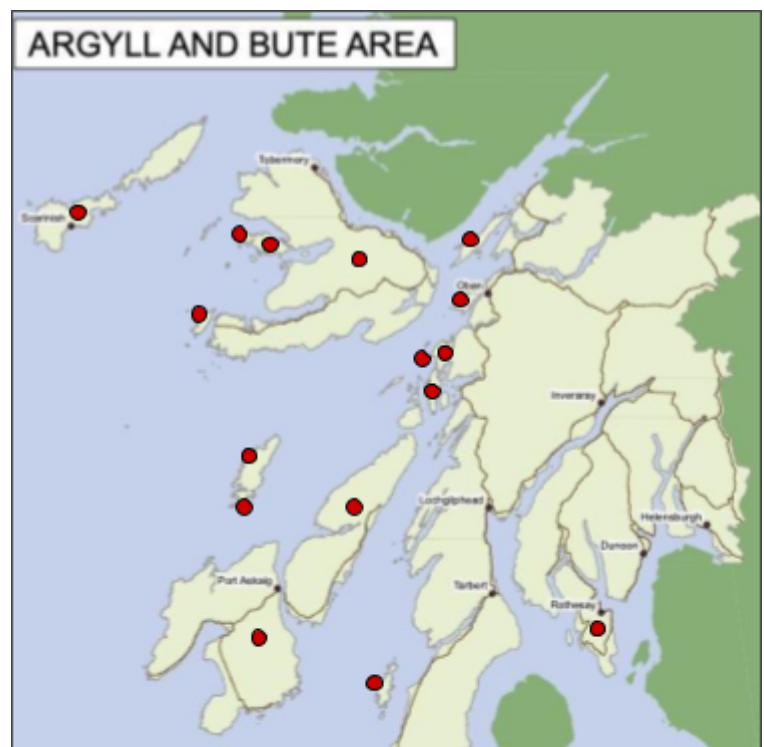
**RESPONSES FROM ISLANDS****MORE THAN**

40

**AREAS OF WORK IN ARTS, CULTURE  
AND HERITAGE REPRESENTED****2. Location**

Responses were received from the following islands:

Bute	16	Lismore	3
Colonsay	10	Luing	7
Easdale	6	Mull	17
Erraid	1	Oransay	1
Gometra	1	Seil	7
Iona	5	Tiree	15
Islay	7	Ulva	3
Jura	3	Gigha	2
Kerrera	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>



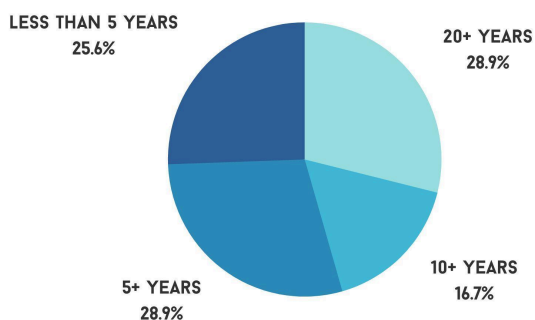
The levels of response from each island are generally proportional to population and existing rates of CHARTS membership. Higher response rates from smaller island populations (e.g. Colonsay) are likely down to the engagement from CHARTS staff with the communities they reside in.

A strong response from the Slate Islands (Seil, Luing, Easdale) correlates with a high level of engagement from these areas with other CHARTS projects and has perhaps been a result of the level of CHARTS recent investment and support in these islands. It is worth noting that in both survey deployments, zero responses were received from Coll.

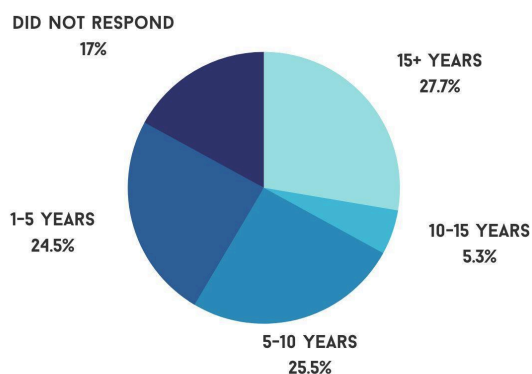
The points above are a good reminder of the importance of having someone on the ground who is affiliated (in some way - even just active members) with CHARTS in each island community. Colonsay and Coll have similar populations in both number and demographic but the effect of the Island Culture Officer being based in Colonsay meant that, where zero responses came back from Coll, 10 came back from Colonsay.

### **Further data related to geographic location**

#### **HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED ON AN ISLAND?**



#### **IF YOU ARE A CREATIVE PRACTITIONER, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN CREATING/MAKING ON AN ISLAND?**



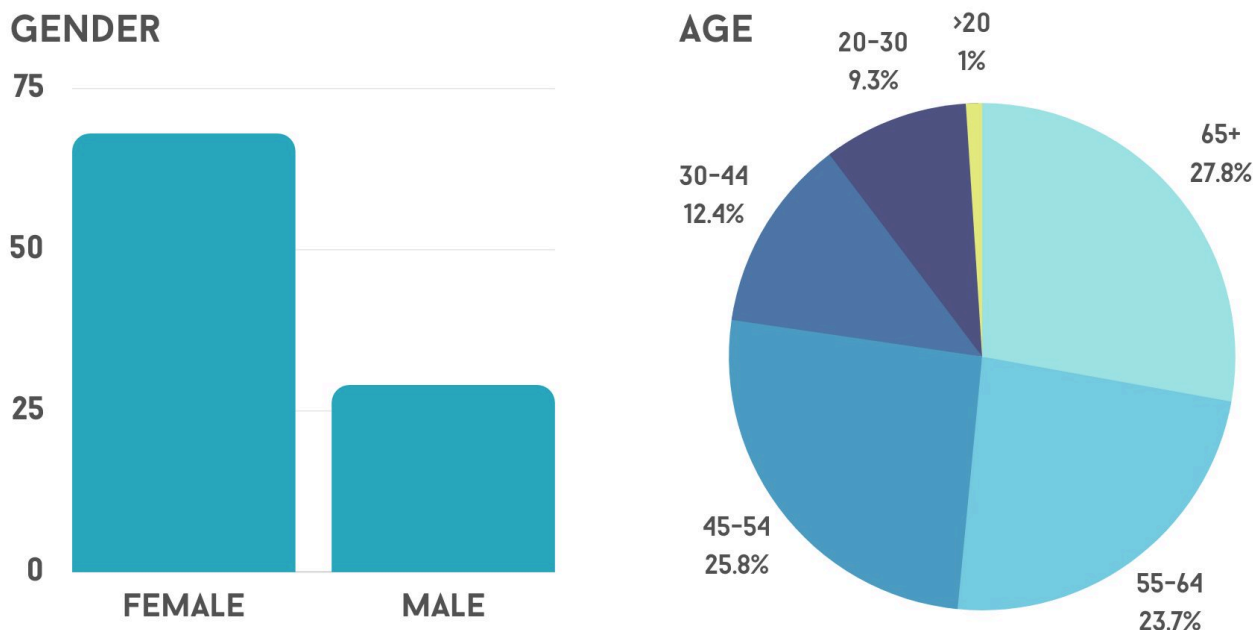
## **Inward migration?**

**The majority of respondents are relatively new to the islands, with 54.5% living there less than 10 years, and 28.9% for less than 5 years.**

These responses reflect a high number of more recently established arts practitioners on islands - (60%) have started their businesses in under 10 years, with nearly a quarter of those establishing their creative practice on the islands in just the last 5 years.

This could reflect an influx of new residents to the islands with creative practices.

### 3. Demographic



70% of respondents identify as female. The remaining 30% identified as male. There were options given for alternative gender identities as well as the option to choose “*prefer not to say*” but no one chose to respond in this way.

77% of respondents were over 45, with most in the over-65 age bracket. This reflects the latest census data, which shows that Argyll and Bute has the highest percentage of this age group nationwide (27.2% of the region’s population). We could see our results here as both a positive and a negative – positive in that over 65s are active in this sector, though as only 1% are under 20, this could be an issue for the long-term growth of the sector. The low response from the young demographic reflects wider population demographics for islands ([link to NRS data for Argyll & Bute Council](#)) but could also reflect a lack of engagement with the survey and CHARTS itself from this age group. There is also an understanding that new graduates/early career practitioners often gravitate to urban centres to establish careers and gain work experience.



## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO HAVE A DISABILITY?



A significant number (15%) of respondents said that they considered themselves to have a disability of some kind. When asked “*Are there any particular arrangements or requirements we should consider in the future in relation to working with people with disabilities?*” there were a number of comments:

**“...there are definitely physical accessibility challenges for some island venues. I also think sometimes artists and makers might lack confidence in applying for grants or opportunities as they don’t consider themselves to be ‘good enough’ Likewise there are potentially people who might not attend workshops etc for the same reason, there may also be financial barriers.”**

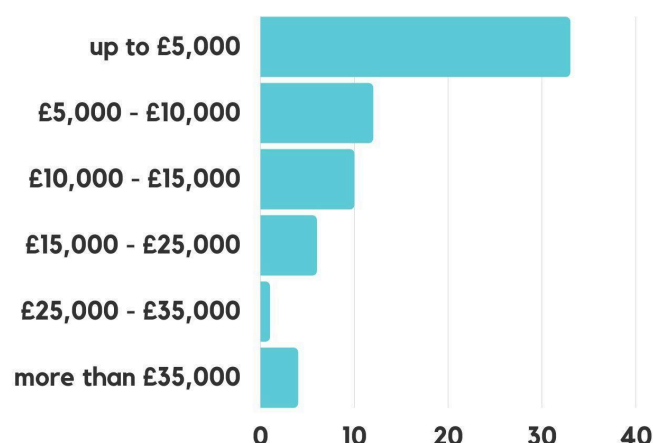
**“Large print documents for those with fading eyesight.”**

**“Everyone contributes to communities. People with disabilities will have different ways to contribute.”**

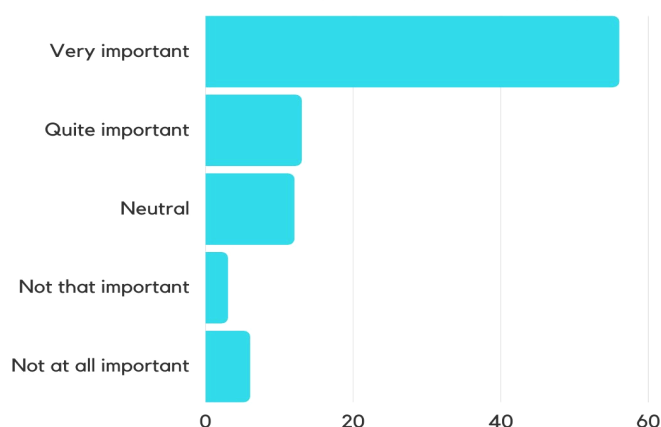
## 4. Work and Economy

**Of the 65 respondents who were happy to share their annual income from arts, culture and heritage activities, 50% made less than £5,000 a year**

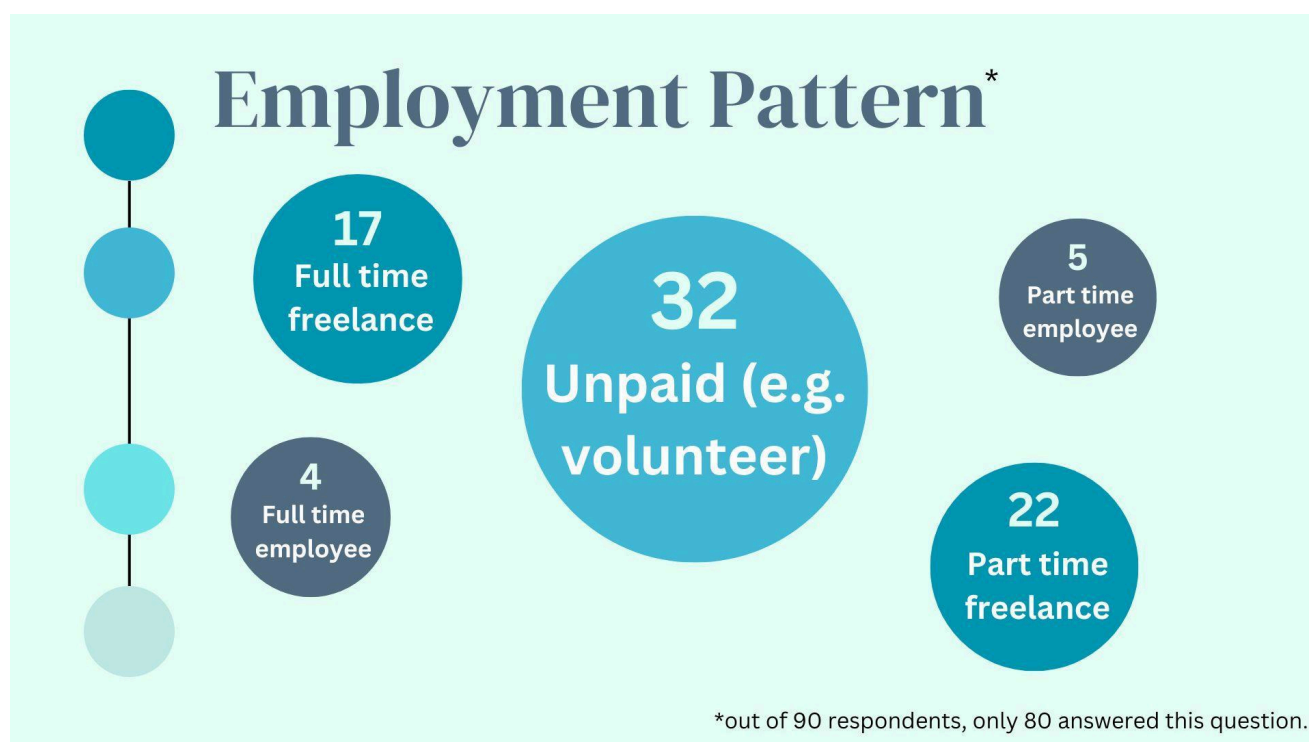
**WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL INCOME FROM CULTURE, HERITAGE OR ARTS?**



**HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK HERITAGE, MUSEUMS AND CULTURE ARE TO YOUR ISLAND'S ECONOMY?**



**However, the vast majority of respondents thought that heritage, culture and museums were quite or very important to their island's economy.**

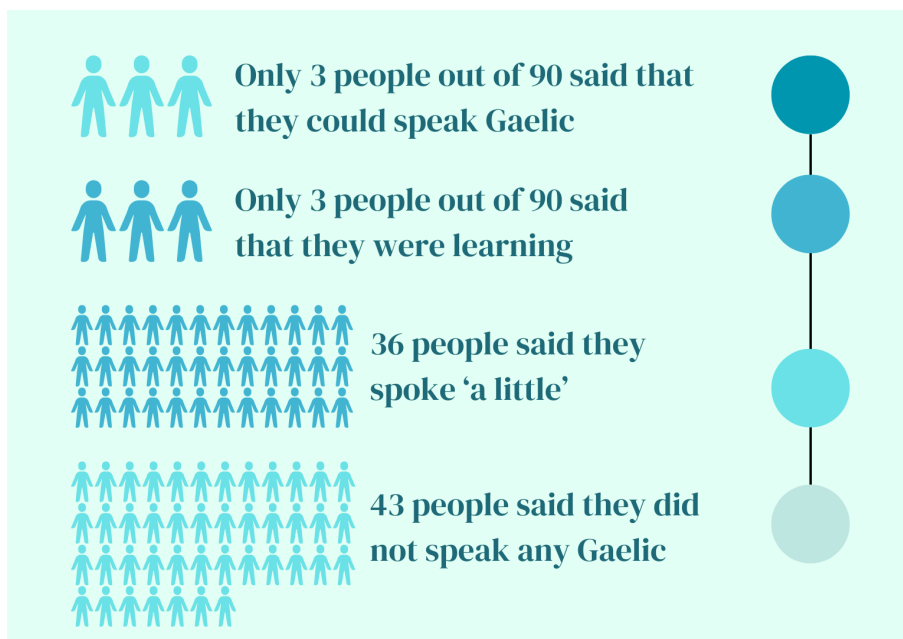


**Nearly half of respondents who answered this question were generally unpaid for their work in arts, culture and heritage.**

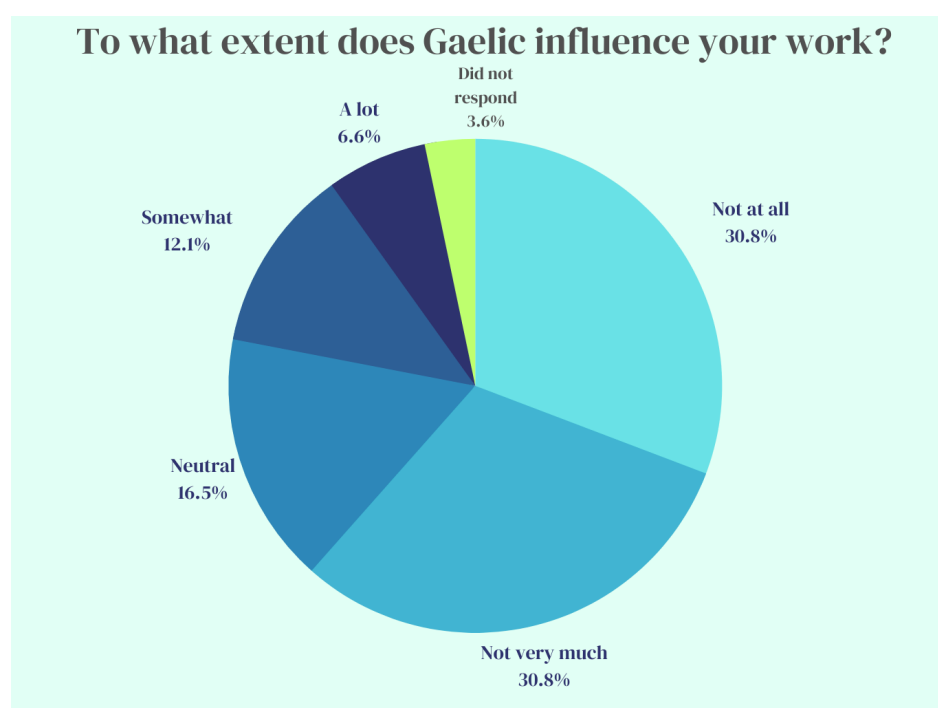
This was either because they were volunteers (which skewed much higher when it came to those working in heritage particularly), taking part in the arts in their free time and/or had retired.

A handful of people stated that they were aiming to start a career in the arts, culture and heritage and considered their current volunteering as a way to break into freelancing/employment. This comment came from a variety of age groups.

## 5. Gaelic



This data presents a harsh reality for the Gaelic language given that the islands have, historically, been cultural centres and important in the preservation of spoken Gaelic. However, it is hard to say what a '*a little*' means and to get a more accurate picture of how many people are using Gaelic in their day-to-day lives, a more in-depth survey would need to be distributed asking about levels of fluency. It is worth noting that although only 3 people expressly stated that they were learning Gaelic, there may be more within the '*a little*' camp who are actively learning the language.



Further still, very few reported that there was any influence of Gaelic in their work in heritage, arts and culture.

Though this is consistent with the response to the question above, it seems unusual that the work of so few is inspired or related to Gaelic.

It may be that a broader discussion around what this type of question means is required. In the second deployment of the survey, we asked

*“Is your creative practice influenced or inspired by Gaelic culture, heritage or language. If so, please feel free to expand on this. We are also interested in your practice, or how Gaelic is considered in the work of your organisation.”* Some of the quotes are listed below and show that there is a value and an appreciation of gaelic language and heritage in relation to place, and those working in arts and creativity see this as important.

**“I like using words in some of my work and sometimes these are in Gaelic, I would like to do more of this in future. I love knowing the Gaelic words for landscaped (sic) and wildlife around which my work is generally based.”**

**“Gaelic culture is important to us as an organisation, we screen a Gaelic programme of films and celebrate world Gaelic week through film and run education projects making films in Gaelic”**

**“Gaelic Language is imperative in understanding the consciousness of the Gael. And this is a consciousness that is desperately needed in the world today.”**

## 6. Conclusion

This survey was conducted to understand more fully what islanders were feeling about their homes, their practice and the landscape of the sector, however they related to it. Though there are some areas where further research is likely required, CHARTS now has a clearer picture of how the organisation can support and advocate for islanders involved in the arts, culture and heritage

**END**

Charts Key Information Links:

Website: <https://www.chartsargyllandisles.org/>

Business Plan 2025 to 2028:

<https://www.chartsargyllandisles.org/projects-and-showcases/business-plan-2025-2028/>

Member Registration: <https://www.chartsargyllandisles.org/sign-in/>