

## PRESS RELEASE

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No Embargo

### THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

A grassroots event in Argyll is set to challenge the nature of local democracy in Scotland.

In the aftermath of council decisions considered by many in Argyll and Bute to be to the benefit of the council rather than the people it represents, a number of community campaigners began chatting online.

With a common belief that current local democracy arrangements - in Argyll and Bute and throughout Scotland - simply are not working, the group feels that the structure and ethos of councils, and not just their actions and decisions, must be challenged. They are calling for fundamental reform of local government in Scotland – and have some high-flying supporters including broadcasters and well-known politicians.

As discussions moved from protesting against decisions - such as failing to support a community buy-out of Castle Toward and objecting to a ruling cabal within the council deciding on hurtful service cuts in secret (even from other councillors) - the Argyll and Bute residents decided to hold a public event: The People's Council.

This will be a one-day event in Oban exploring local democracy reform from a grassroots perspective. Speakers include writer and broadcaster Lesley Riddoch, Common Weal's Robin McAlpine, Paddy Bort of the University of Edinburgh, campaigner Cat Boyd, local MSP Mike Russell and Councillor Vivien Dance, among others.

The aim of the event is to plan and organise how people can effect change in our local communities and across Scotland. Everyone knows that local democracy in Scotland is broken. The People's Council wants to try and fix it.

The event will take place at Oban High School on Saturday June 6th and will run from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Tickets are £10/£7 and can be purchased online from Ticket Tailor, or via [www.thepeoplescouncil.org](http://www.thepeoplescouncil.org). A number of free tickets are also available.

Broadcaster Lesley Riddoch said:

“Scotland has Europe's largest councils by population and physical size. That means distant decision-making, low levels of participation and constant battles between communities and councils. Argyll and Bute Council's shameful failure to transfer Castle Toward to the local community as agreed was one of the lowest points in the history of Scottish local democracy.

But now activists from across Argyll are demonstrating real leadership by deciding to get even – not angry. These campaigners have kick-started a process to devise a new workable template of truly local government in Scotland involving folk from all over Scotland – the People's Councils. There's been support for this novel, grassroots idea at every meeting I've spoken at during the election campaign -- from Assynt in the Highlands to Duns in the Borders. Truly local councils are an idea whose time has come – well done Argyll for getting the ball rolling.”

Independent MSP John Finnie said:

“In far too many local authorities decisions reached indicate just how far, both in terms of geography and mind-set, those charged with representing communities are from what really matters.

That must and will change as the growing debate around the need to ensure meaningful local democracy, which reflects community aspirations, gathers momentum from events like ‘The People’s Council.’”

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Links: <http://thepeoplescouncil.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Peoples-Council/355255141346984>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/peoples\\_council](https://twitter.com/peoples_council)

Tickets: <https://www.tickettailor.com/checkout/view-event/id/25745/chk/0fe2?widget-disable=true>

For further information, and press accreditation for the event, contact Rhona Dougall  
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The People's Council - reforming local democracy from the ground up