

Access to Higher Education for Rural Communities

Barriers to higher education entry a Scottish rural perspective

Edinburgh, 1 December 2015

CREID Seminar

Widening Access to Scottish Higher Education:
Getting in, Getting by and Getting on

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ARC: Access (to HE) for Rural Communities

- **Pioneering project** aimed at supporting and enabling young learners from rural areas in Argyll & Bute, Eilean Siar, Highland, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands on their journey into university
- **Funded** by the University of St Andrews, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government
- **Two components**
 - a platform for pupils to explore opportunities in HE
 - a research component aiming to assess the effect of rurality on access to HE in Scotland, in particular to the University of St Andrews



University of
St Andrews | FOUNDED
1413 |



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education



The Scottish
Government

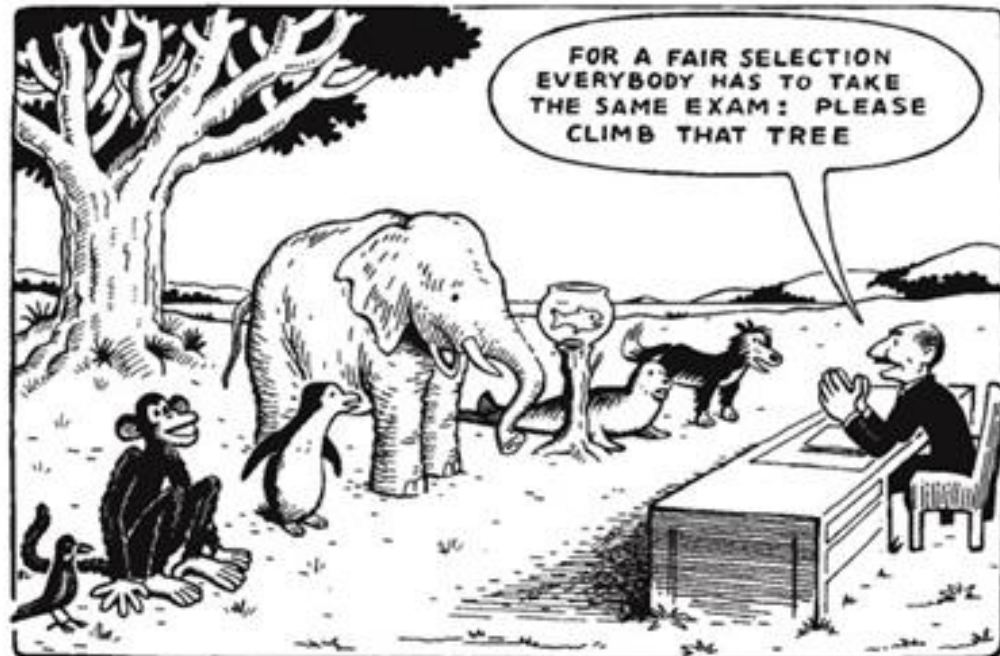
“I want us to determine now that a child born today in one of our most deprived communities will, by the time he or she leaves school, have the same chance of going to university as a child born in one of our least deprived communities.

That means we would expect at least 20% of university entrants to come from the most deprived 20% of the population.”

First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP

Scottish Parliament

26 November 2014





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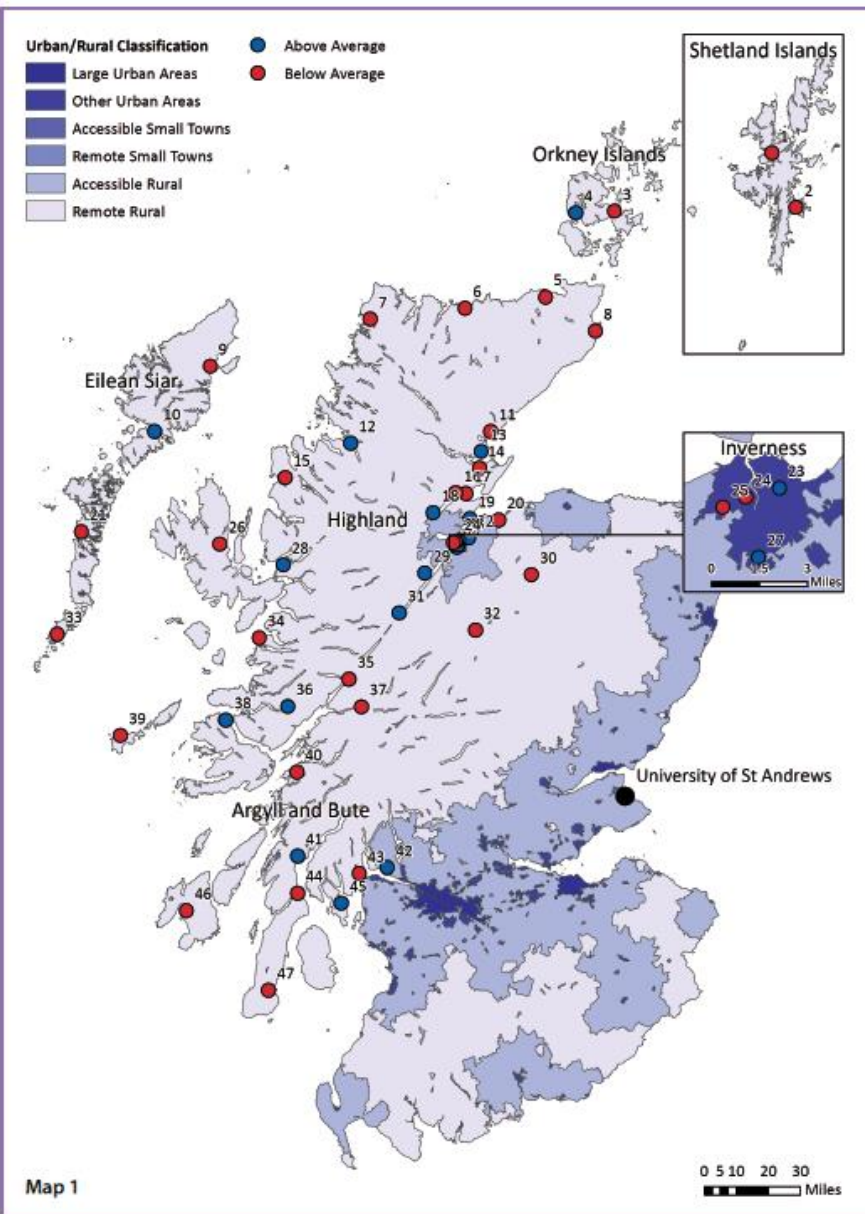


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Access to Higher Education for Rural Communities

Barriers to higher education entry a Scottish rural perspective





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5 local authorities

- mainly rural
- few SIMD20 and SIMD40 areas

Argyll & Bute: 33 out of 123 zones

Eilean Siar: 14 out of 36

Highland: 81 out of 292

Orkney Islands: 5 out of 27

Shetland Islands: 1 out of 30

47 secondary state schools

- **34%** progression rate to HE
- 7% of the students in HE in 2012-13

Obstacles to HE?

Research methods



January 2015 – March 2015

Research interview (~30 mins)

8 secondary state schools

26 adults: 23 school staff and 3 QIOs

35 young people: S5 and S6 pupils

**In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to
HE for young people in your area?**



Perceived barriers?

Financial

geographical

educational

personal

Are the perceived barriers identified by these young people similar to those described by their educators?

similar

How highly perceived are these barriers?

High financial & geographical barriers

because of their location

Involuntary educational barriers

“The accommodation would probably be the same as for most students but the fact that we’d even have to pay for a plane ticket or a boat ticket to home, we can’t just take a bus.”



Shetland Islands, Brae
the most northerly secondary school in Scotland

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image source: <http://www.alifeonyourterms.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/piggybank.jpg>



“that bit of water between home and where [their pupils] are [at university]” makes travel and distance “slightly more complex and slightly more expensive”



“I guess most subjects are offered, but I know from other schools like on the islands, there are so many subjects that aren’t offered. So you would not be able to go just because you can’t get the qualifications.”

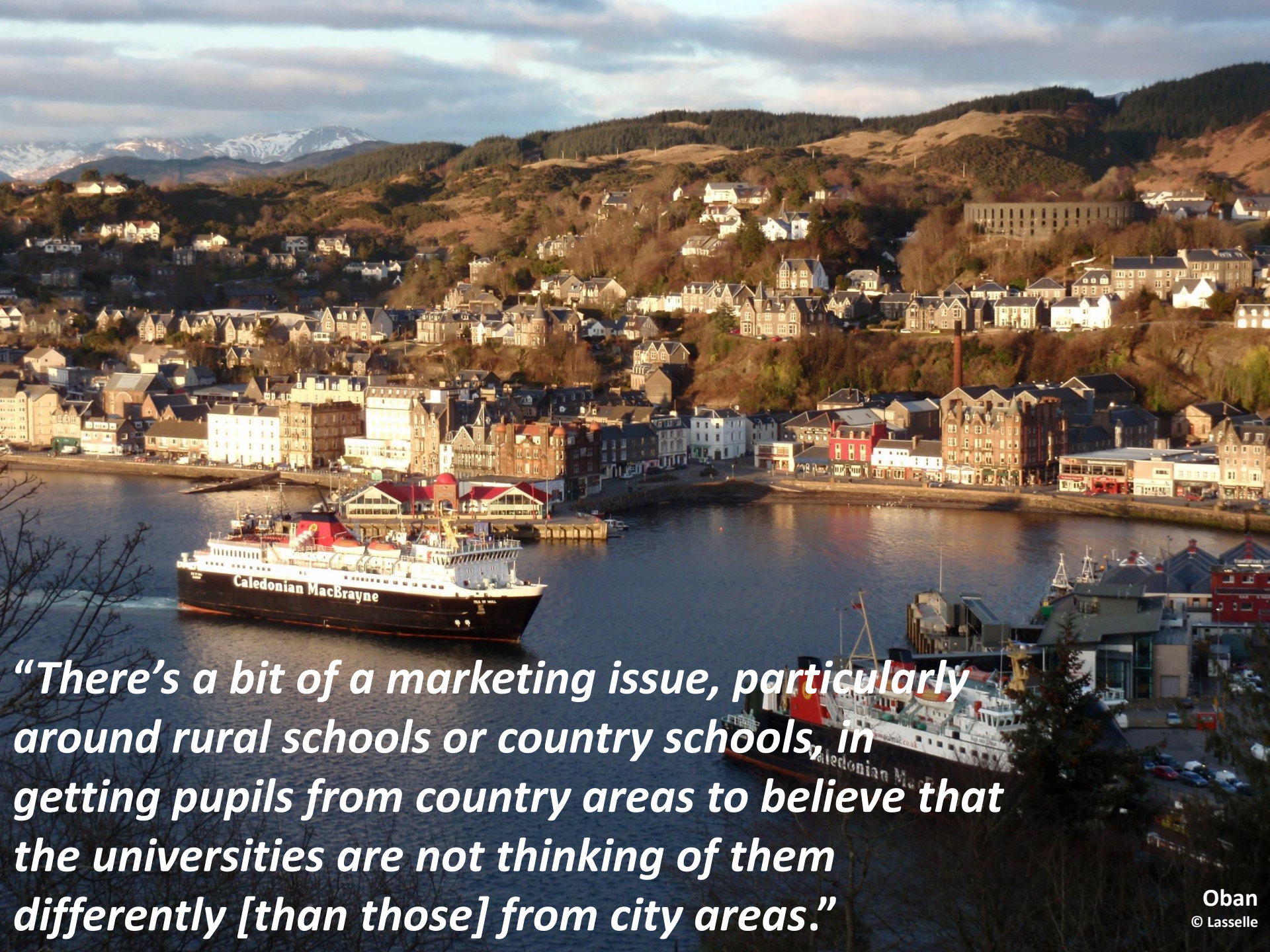


Eilean Siar, Castlebay
the most westerly secondary school in Scotland

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image source: <http://www.utoronto.mobi/margin-accounting-toronto/>



“There’s a bit of a marketing issue, particularly around rural schools or country schools, in getting pupils from country areas to believe that the universities are not thinking of them differently [than those] from city areas.”

“[Universities] might have good reasons for the rejection, but the information they’re giving us is that the offers are made based on the grades, but that’s clearly not the case, so what is making the difference? Because unless we have that information we can’t advise people appropriately.”



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More information

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ARC Project: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/access/school-college-projects/secondary-schools/arc/

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