

Island Communities Impact Assessment

**A consultation document for the Scottish
National Adaptation Plan 2024 - 2029**

January 2024

Disclaimer

This draft document is an initial assessment of the impact of the draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 and Scottish Government will continue to review and update this document where required. Any future iterations will reflect an increased understanding of these impacts as the amount of data and research available continues to grow and responses are received during the consultation on the draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan.

This impact assessment should be read in conjunction with the draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan and the other impact assessments including Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Purpose

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 introduced a requirement for Scottish public authorities to complete an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) to determine the impacts that policies, strategies, or services which, in the authority's opinion, are likely to have an effect on an island community which are significantly different from the effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions. This duty is often referred to as 'Island Proofing'.

Due to the distinct nature of climate change on island communities and the statutory requirements of any Scottish National Adaptation Plan to respond to risks posed by climate change, the Scottish Government has produced a full ICIA covering the impact of the new Scottish National Adaptation Plan on island communities. The ICIA is structured following the steps set out in the Scottish Government's ICIA guidance:

- **Step one – Develop a clear understanding of the objectives.**
- **Step two – Gather data and identify stakeholders.**
- **Step three – Consultation.**
- **Step four – Assessment.**
- Step five – Preparing the ICIA.
- Step six – Making adjustments.

Step one: Develop a clear understanding of the objectives

Policy objectives

Scottish Ministers are required by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to set out a strategic Adaptation Programme, as soon as reasonably practicable after each round of the UK wide 'Climate Change Risk Assessment' (CCRA). The [third CCRA](#), or CCRA3, published in 2022 establishes 61 risks and opportunities from a changing climate. In response to this, the Scottish Government has developed a draft version of the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 (SNAP3, formerly known as the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme or SCCAP for the first and second publications), the final version of which is due for publication in Autumn 2024. SNAP3 aims to build on the outcome-based foundations of its predecessors to produce a programme that outlines 'actions today, for a climate resilient future'.

Intended outcomes and how do these potentially differ across the islands

SNAP3 is structured around five outcomes: *Nature Connects; Communities; Public Services and Infrastructure; Economy, Business and Industry; and International Action*. Each outcome is grounded in a 'big idea' for how we want to deliver adaptation action differently in Scotland. Each outcome has its own set of objectives that define how delivery of adaptation action is measured and provide structure around which the adaptation Monitoring Framework is being built. Specific objectives

underlying these outcomes can be found in Appendix 1. SNAP3 will outline a series of proposed policies under each objective to achieve the overarching objective.

Alongside shaping SNAP3 around these five big outcomes, the adaptation action outlined requires a place-based approach in its design and delivery. Local and lived experience is fundamental to effective adaptation action and this is of particular importance to island communities due to their unique vulnerabilities. The climate change risks outlined in the [CCRA3](#) (2022) may be intensified in many aspects in specific areas due to for example the characteristics of island living including the consequences of geography and therefore greater or altered policies may be needed in these areas to combat these risks.

These impacts can be summarised broadly as follows:

- Increased vulnerability to coastal erosion, coastal flooding, and sea-level rise, particularly in low lying areas
- Increased vulnerability to power outages caused by storm events and relative difficulty in repairing any damage to undersea cables
- Increased vulnerability to supply chain and transport disruption from climate-related weather events due to reliance on ferries or small planes.
- Key cultural heritage sites and assets are located on islands which are vulnerable to loss and important for community cohesion.
- Population loss due to migration to mainland/inland areas.

The Adaptation Plan must take into account these areas of vulnerability and ensure that it includes advice and support for relevant island communities.

Step two: Gather your data and identify your stakeholders

What data are available about the current situation in the islands?

There are a number of available data sources which provide information on the current situation in the islands. These include:

- the Scottish National Islands Plan Survey (SNIP, 2020);
- the 2018 National Islands Plan consultation;
- the 2019 Scottish Household Survey;
- 2019 research undertaken by Historic Environment Scotland
- 2022 census data
- 2021 Poverty in Rural Scotland Evidence Review,
- combined local authority data from the Scottish Health Survey 2017-2021.
- 2023 Just Transition Poverty Alliance Engagement [to be published 9 Dec 2023]
- 2022 Dynamic Coast (sea level rise and coastal erosion)

Who are your key stakeholders?

The key stakeholders identified are as follows:

- Scottish Government including the Islands Team and Carbon Neutral Islands project (Community Energy Scotland)
- Island Community Planning Partnerships

- NHS Scotland
- Local Health Boards
- The Care Inspectorate
- Local Authorities
- Skills Development Scotland
- Housing Associations
- Community councils
- Other groups and organisations who may wish to comment on this assessment and the draft version of SNAP3.

How does any existing data differ between islands?

The data show some key differences between island groups, particularly with regards to migration and long-term illness/disability as evidenced in the [2022 Scottish Census](#).

- The 2022 Census shows population change by local authority and Na h-Eilean an Siar saw the biggest decrease (down 5.5%). In Shetland, the decrease (1.2%) was driven by migration. The population in the Orkney Islands has, however, grown by 3%.
- The proportion of people with a limiting long-term illness or disability varied considerably by island group. It ranged from 38% in Flotta down to 5% in Easdale. The proportion of people whose daily activities were limited a lot by a long-term health problem or disability was highest on Eday, Orkney (21%) and lowest in Easdale, where no one reported their daily activities to be limited a lot.

The Scottish Health Survey 2022 also indicates disparities in perceptions of food security:

- Nationally, around 9% of households worry about affording food. The local disaggregation of this suggests that island areas generally report lower levels of food insecurity – at around 7% in Argyll and Bute, 7% in Na h-Eilean an Siar, 6% in Highland, 8% in North Ayrshire, 5% in Orkney and 5% in Shetland.

Step three: Consultation

Previous engagement

The Scottish Government did not undertake an ICIA for the current Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2019-2024 (SCCAP2) as the requirement to undertake an Island Communities Impact Assessment came into force on 23 December 2020, after the publication of SCCAP2 in 2019.

The Scottish Government is committed to a Just Transition to net zero by 2045 and as part of this is developing sectoral Just Transition Plans. These plans are designed in consultation with groups most affected by the transition to net zero and recognise that those least likely to have contributed to global heating are most likely to be impacted by climate change. A transition to net zero cannot be truly just if there is widespread disadvantage and exposure to climate risk.

Adaptation is a key outcome in Scotland's Just Transition framework. As part of the engagement on the development of Just Transition Plans, consultancy ARUP facilitated engagement sessions in summer 2023. ARUP place-based engagement focused on areas most susceptible to impacts of climate change in the remote rural and island sessions. Outputs suggested the need for understanding place-based issues and geographies at the beginning of policy development rather than as an add on issue.

Furthermore, as part of Just Transition Plan engagement covering the built environment, the Poverty Alliance were commissioned by Scottish Government's Just Transition team to support the engagement of people on low incomes in the development of Scottish Government's policies to support a just transition to net zero. Participants offered some lived experience of island and rural life and particular challenges faced in terms of skills gaps and difficulty in sourcing materials for adapting homes to a net-zero future.

The Carbon Neutral Islands Project is a Scottish Government commitment that aims to demonstrate the climate-resilience and low carbon potential of islands by 2040. The CNI project will help to deliver key commitments in the [National Islands Plan](#) and the [National Performance Framework](#), create island-based jobs, and support islands to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The project aims to align with wider net-zero and decarbonisation efforts and will contribute to the Scottish Government's statutory [target to reach net zero by 2045](#).

As part of the development of climate action plans for each of the 6 flagship Carbon Neutral Islands, community engagement through Adaptation Scotland was carried out to produce climate impacts maps for each of the islands ([Home Energy Scotland, 2023](#)). This information will help inform the SNAP and future engagement with island communities as part of the public consultation process.

Furthermore, in 2022 the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) Climate Change Working Group conducted climate impact interviews with multiple OHCPP partner organisations to understand how climate change is affecting organisational priorities across the Outer Hebrides ([National Islands Plan Annual Report 2022, 2023](#)).

In 2021, the Scottish Government worked with the Climate Beacon partnership to run a community engagement pilot in North Uist. The pilot activities used interactive maps to gather local knowledge and lived experience of climate hazards to explore what communities feel is important to protect in a change climate ([National Islands Plan Annual Report 2022, 2023](#)).

Lead officials on climate change in the Scottish Government also meet regularly with CoSLA officials to discuss climate change issues include climate change adaptation.

The public consultation on the draft version of SNAP3 is a further opportunity for relevant interests to provide comments that can be taken into account in the finalisation of SNAP3.

Public consultation

The Scottish Government plan to run a public consultation on a draft of SNAP3 in early 2024. This consultation will run for twelve weeks and will ask for views on the new Plan: its vision, outcomes, objectives and the policies in place to deliver these, as well as how we should monitor and enable progress on adaptation in Scotland. Prior to the launch of this public consultation and congruently, the Scottish Government also plans to host targeted engagement activities.

Proposed public consultation question:

Our islands face unique challenges around distance, geography, connectivity, and demography that we must be mindful of when planning a climate resilient Scotland.

What, if any, impacts do you think the Adaptation Plan will have on island communities? What, if any, measures could be taken to strengthen any positive impacts or lessen any negative impacts in this respect?

A separate consultation event is planned for island communities run through the regional adaptation partnership.

Step four: Assessment

The assessment identifies unique impact on island communities due to the demography, economy, social/cultural environment including concentration of Gaelic speakers:

Impact on Island Communities	Relevant proposed SNAP3 policy area
Demography	
The relative aging population living on Scottish islands makes those communities more vulnerable to climate change. Age is a factor which compounds vulnerability to climate change. The projected percentage change in population by age grouping, based on 2022 census data, shows that Scotland's population will age in every area to 2043. The highest % reduction in children and the working age population is in islands and remote rural areas (-23% and -15%). The projected percentage change in population is most extreme in island and remote rural areas, where an approximate drop of 19,000 people represents a 12% change between 2018 and 2043.	Implementation of our Climate-smart Workforce enabler section needs to take this difference in demography into account when considering further education and upskilling/reskilling options for the future.

<p>Furthermore, In the event of volatile weather, many older people – including those who are lonely, isolated, ill, living with dementia or reliant on medical equipment - need extra support to access supplies of food, warmth and medicine, and to rebuild damaged homes and possessions. The Scottish National Islands Plan survey 2020 found that only 38% of island residents felt older people could easily access on-island support, such as home care, assisted living or care homes (SNIP, 2020). The consequences of geography are likely to further exacerbate the issues affecting this population group’s adaptive capacity.</p>	<p>Implementation in local areas of our Community Preparation and response objective (C3) and our Accessing Public Services objective: (PS2) should be specific to each community and the needs of those within them, taking a place-based approach.</p>
<p>Economy</p>	
<p>Linked to the above, plans to improve the climate resilient economy in island communities needs to take into account the implications of a predicted shrinking working-age population. The nature of many island jobs being part-time, seasonal or self-employed should be considered when positioning any investment in climate-smart skills in the islands. Engagement through the Carbon Neutral Islands Project also identified availability of affordable housing as a barrier to young families staying and settling on the islands which should be seen in cooperation with addressing any skills gaps (Community Energy Scotland, 2023).</p> <p>In terms of access to food and essential items, evidence suggests that the cost of these may be higher in some rural and island areas, and that people may experience additional non-financial barriers to food in island communities linked to dispersed populations, limited food retail, irregular or disrupted transport, and weather-related disruption (Poverty in Rural Scotland review, 2021). This is compounded by the current cost of living crisis. SNAP3 has an objective to strengthen food security and supply chain resilience in the face of the changing</p>	<p>Implementation of the climate-smart workforce enabler section should take the differences in the working population to the mainland into account and the nature of the climate-smart jobs required in these areas may be changed to attract suitable candidates.</p> <p>Our Economic Development objective (B4), and the implementation of by businesses and other organisations, should aim to strengthen food security and supply chain resilience in the face of the changing climate and should take the increased risk into account for island economies.</p>

<p>climate and must take this into account for island economies.</p>	
<p>Social/Cultural</p>	
<p>The historic environment is an integral part of island communities – both the built heritage and the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) play an important part in shaping their sense of place, pride, and traditions (HES, 2022). Scotland’s islands have unique and significant heritage assets, including some with World Heritage status (HONO & St Kilda). Engagement with the historic environment is marginally higher in island Local Authorities with 39% of residents visiting a historic site in the previous year compared to 35% average across Scotland (SHS, 2019).</p> <p>There were approximately 68,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland at the time of the 2011 census. Of these, over half (52.3%) were registered as living in Na h-Eileanan an Iar. The Gaelic language, while intangible, is considered by many academics to be a cultural heritage site. Whilst not outlined specifically in the CCRA3 briefing on H11 (Risks to cultural heritage) on which SNAP3 is built, reference is given to the intangible assets of cultural heritage. Scottish Gaelic itself is recognised by UNESCO as “definitely endangered” while the Endangered Languages Project lists Scottish Gaelic as “threatened” (ELP).</p>	<p>As island heritage sites come under threat from coastal erosion, storms and sea level rise, the relevant objective (C5: Culture and Historic Environment) and all crosscutting policy areas should take into account the need to preserve the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of island communities.</p> <p>Our Cultural Connection enabling section strongly emphasises the need to preserve the Gaelic language and currently plans are underway for the final SNAP3 to have a Gaelic translation available to ensure accessibility. SNAP3 policy areas operating in islands spaces are strongly encouraged to provide Gaelic versions of resources where possible.</p>
<p>Potential barriers or wider impacts</p>	
<p>The need to construct adaptation measures such as new sea defences or reconstruct buildings and properties affected by the effects of climate change, e.g. flooded houses, may require longer and or more expensive recovery periods on islands.</p> <p>The difficulties currently experienced by island communities in accessing public</p>	<p>Implementation of the relevant objective (C4: New and existing Buildings) as well as all crosscutting policies and local policies that require physical construction works should take into consideration these extended timelines when delivering the policies outlined in SNAP3 to island communities.</p> <p>Implementation of the relevant objectives (PS2: Accessing public</p>

<p>services is likely to be exacerbated by an increase in extreme weather events due to the consequences of geography combining with travel disruption.</p>	<p>services and PS4: Transport system) should aim to ensure island communities are able to access the public services they require in a timely and safe manner.</p>
<p>While connectivity across islands has improved in recent years, some areas and islands still have issues with connectivity.</p>	<p>Policies across SNAP3 which require digital delivery should consider alternative delivery mechanisms for island communities where possible.</p>

Is a full Island Communities Impact Assessment required?

A 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to offer the optimal means of meeting however SNAP3 strongly supports the use of a Place-based approach to Adaptation in which local communities used lived experiences to make meaningful changes.

As outlined above, Scotland's island communities operate within unique circumstances and have specific vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change which SNAP3 aims to address. There is a strong case for the islands to require further support on the route to a climate resilient Scotland and to ensure the SNAP3 gives full consideration to their unique risks.

Steps 5 and 6 will be prepared post-consultation using the responses gathered and published alongside the final Scottish National Adaptation Plan in Autumn 2024.

Appendix 1: Proposed SNAP3 Outcomes and Objectives

Nature connects across our land, settlements, coasts and seas.

- *NC1: Nature-based solutions at all scales are protected, enhanced and connected to enable healthier, cooler, water resilient and nature-rich places.*
- *NC2: Development planning (including Local Development Plans and associated delivery programmes) takes current and future climate risks into account and is a key lever in enabling places to adapt.*
- *NC3: Nature networks across every local authority area are improving ecological connectivity and climate resilience, alongside other transformative national actions to halt biodiversity loss by 2030.*
- *NC4: Evidence informed planning and management is increasing the climate resilience of Scotland's marine ecosystems and Blue Economy, with coastal change adaptation plans safeguarding coastal communities and assets.*
- *NC5: Resilient natural carbon stores and sinks (such as peatland, forests and blue carbon) are supporting Scotland's net zero pathway, alongside timber production, biodiversity gains, flood resilience and the priorities of local communities.*

Communities are creating climate-resilient, healthy and equitable places.

- *C1: Place-based collaborations across Scotland have delivered effective, inclusive adaptation action across cities, regions and localities engaging a broader range of delivery partners.*
- *C2: Communities and individuals are supported, informed and able to take locally-led adaptation action, supporting local priorities and resilient, healthy, equitable places.*
- *C3: Communities and individuals are able and supported to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies in a way that builds future climate resilience, complements the work of emergency responders and protects those with societal vulnerabilities to multiple risks.*
- *C4: New buildings are designed for a future climate, and opportunities for adaptation in existing buildings are taken during maintenance or retrofit.*
- *C5: Scotland's historic environment is preparing for a future climate, and the transformational power of culture, heritage and creativity supports Scotland's adaptation journey.*

Public services are collaborating in effective, inclusive adaptation action.

- *PS1: Providers of public services have the governance, culture, skills and resources and are collaborating in effective, inclusive adaptation action.*
- *PS2: People are able to access the public services they need - including health, education, social care and infrastructure - by the designing, managing and maintaining services, estates and assets to be resilient and equitable in the changing climate.*
- *PS3: Power assets and the energy system have reduced vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and the most vulnerable people are identified and supported during and after instances of power failure.*
- *PS4: The transport system is prepared for current and future impacts of climate change and is safe for all users, reliable for everyday journeys and resilient to weather-related disruption.*
- *PS5: The management of water, sewerage and drainage services builds resilience to drought and flooding and protects water quality and quantity.*

Economies and industries are adapting and realising opportunities in Scotland's Just Transition.

- *B1: Businesses are supported to embed the risks of climate change into governance, investment and operations, and are collaborating in effective, inclusive adaptation action.*
- *B2: Farming, fishing and forestry businesses are supported to adapt production and operations in a way that benefits livelihoods, resilience and the economy in a changing climate.*
- *B3: Scotland is an innovation hub for adaptation solutions.*
- *B4: Economic development is informed by climate risks and opportunities to support resilient, healthy and equitable places.*

Scotland's international role supports climate justice and enhanced global action on climate adaptation

- *IA1: Scotland's international programmes support communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change to adapt and thrive*
- *IA2: Scotland is an advocate in international fora for those most affected by climate change and least able to adapt. Through membership of international*

organisations it pushes states and international bodies to increase ambition on adaptation and biodiversity loss

- *IA3: Scotland is a global knowledge hub for research and innovation on climate adaptation, loss and damage and climate justice and facilitates knowledge sharing between Global South/Global North.*