

# 'Island-Proofing' your work

## Introducing Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIA)

You're developing a new policy, strategy, law or service. You want it work for **everyone** in Scotland.

Life on Scotland's islands can be a bit different from the mainland. So you need to consider – what will be the impact on island communities? And what can you do about it?

That's what Island Communities Impact Assessments are all about.

# Why do I need to do an Island Communities Impact Assessment?

In Scotland, Local Authorities, Scottish Government and other public bodies have to carry out an Island Communities Impact Assessment when developing, revising and delivering any policy, strategy, service or legislation that could have a significantly different effect on island communities. It's a duty under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

It's the law. But it's not just the law. It's about the principles of **fairness, integration, and inclusiveness**.

While our island communities are different from each other, they often face challenges compared to mainland and urban areas – due to distance, geography, connectivity and demography. There might be issues or barriers you haven't thought of, which unfairly disadvantage islanders.

## Some examples of how islands are different:

- Higher delivery charges and higher costs for utilities like electricity
- Longer, more complicated and more expensive journeys to education, work, leisure, and healthcare
- Affordable and suitable housing is often more scarce on islands
- Islanders may face isolation and loneliness
- Shrinking and ageing populations on some islands can make it harder to deliver services such as education or health care
- Some island communities have poor and unreliable internet connections.



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Scotland's Island communities are very important.

Islanders deserve high-quality accessible services, and the same opportunities as people living on the mainland.

Island Communities Impact Assessments are designed to help you to consider islands carefully throughout your work to develop new policies, strategies, or services - from inception to delivery and beyond.”



**Cabinet Secretary for  
Rural Affairs and Islands**  
Mairi Gougeon

## Do I have to do an Island Communities Impact Assessment for every policy, strategy, law, or service?

No.

Only if your policy, strategy, law, or service will have a significantly different effect on island communities.

But you always have to consider properly whether it will have a significantly different effect on islanders.

And if your decision is 'no', you have to

- record your decision not to carry out an ICIA
- evidence your decision-making process
- publish your explanation.

## What about legislation?

Government Ministers have to consider whether any new laws will have a significantly different effect on island communities. So legislation needs to go through the ICIA process too.

## How do I find out about islands communities?

Just as in any other policy or strategy development, you find out by consulting people. There are lots of ways to do that.

You don't have to tour round every island in Scotland yourself. You can use existing data, or you can 'piggy-back' a survey on existing consultations – there are plenty of options.

More tips are available in the full [ICIA guidance](#) on the Scottish Government website.

## When do I start?

It's really important to start your Island Communities Impact Assessment as soon as you start to develop your policy, strategy, legislation or service.

This isn't an optional add-on you can bolt on at the end: you need to consider the needs and perspectives of island communities from the beginning.

## How do I do it?

There are seven steps, outlined in the next pages.

## How long does it take?

This is not a tick-box exercise. It will demand some time and attention from you and your colleagues.

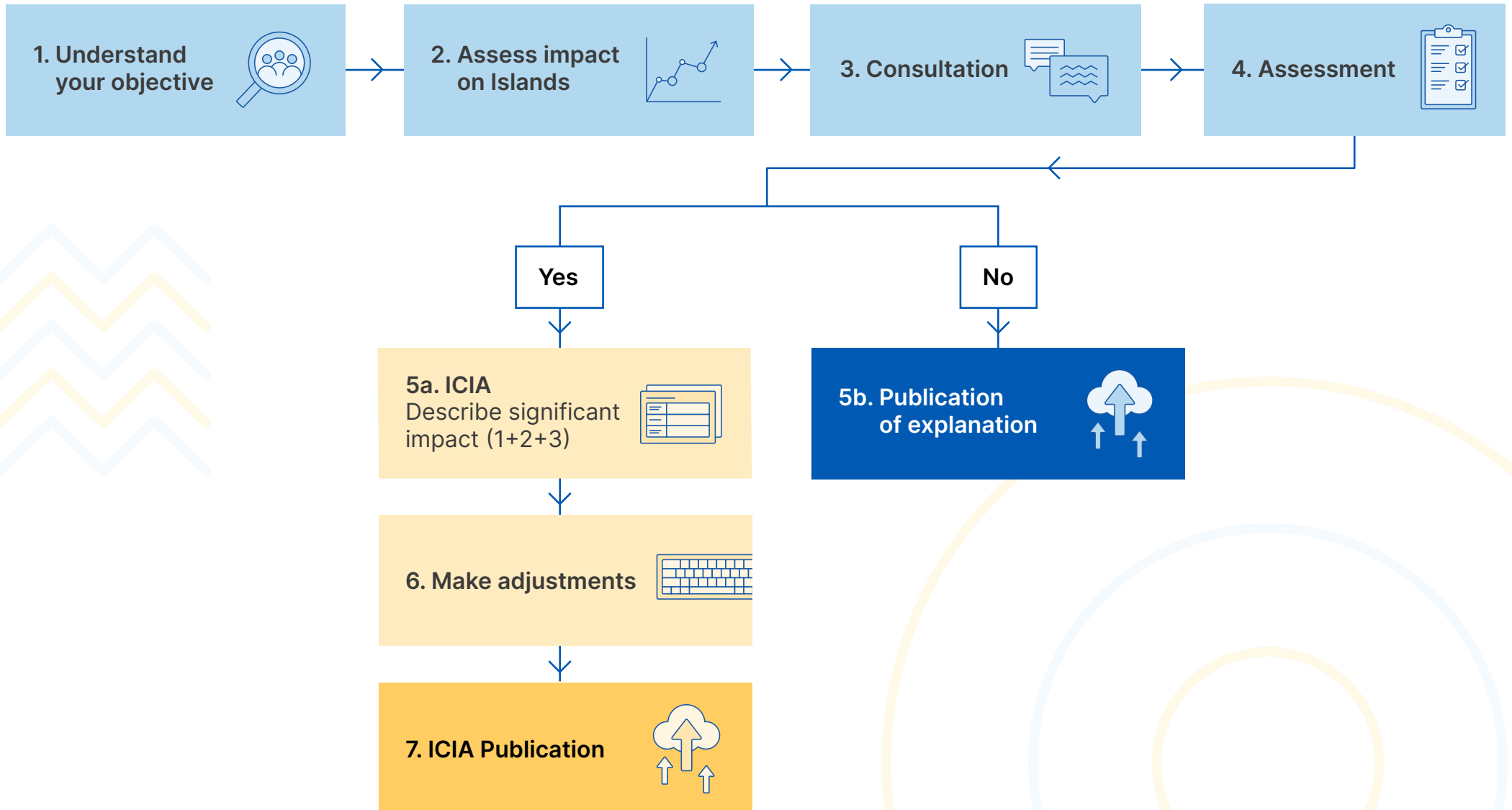
But there is support and guidance available; and it's worth the effort, to ensure your policy works for island communities as well the mainland.

## Where do I get help?

There's plenty of help and guidance. See the links on the final page of this leaflet.

Or ask the Scottish Government Islands Team on [info@islandsteam.scot](mailto:info@islandsteam.scot)

# The Seven Steps



## Step 1: Develop a clear understanding of your objectives

- Think about whether your policy, strategy, or service might have a significantly different effect on island communities.
- If it does, how can you improve or mitigate outcomes for islanders?
- If so, consider adaptations to account for variations across different islands.
- Identify any benefits to island communities.



## Step 2: Gather your data and identify your stakeholders

- Dig deeper.
- Find, collate and consider the available data on the differences between islands and the mainland, and between island groups.
- You can find sources of data in the full ICIA guidance online.
- Spot where there are gaps in the data.
- Line up relevant stakeholders, island experts and contacts from different organisations who can share their expertise and views with you.

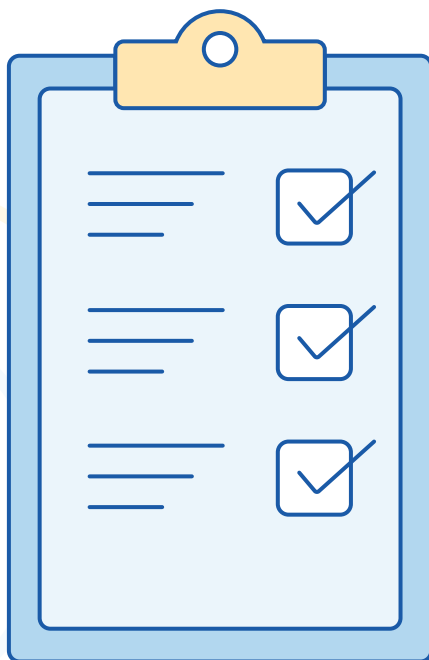
## Step 3: Consultation

- Consult the Local Authorities listed in the [schedule](#) to the Islands Act, and any other bodies or groups relevant to your policy, strategy, legislation or service.
- To get feedback from island communities, you can
  - use existing data
  - hold online events
  - use local print media, local radio and posters
  - link into other ongoing consultations.



## Step 4: Assessment

- Armed with the insights you've gained, it's time to assess the potential barriers or wider impacts of your policy, strategy, legislation or service on island communities - and how you will address them.
- There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to what is a significantly different effect for the island community compared to the mainland or other islands. And what works for one island may not work for another.
- You need think about demographic, economic and social and cultural considerations, asking yourself if any effects are significantly different for an island community compared to the mainland or between island groups?
- Remember to record your findings.

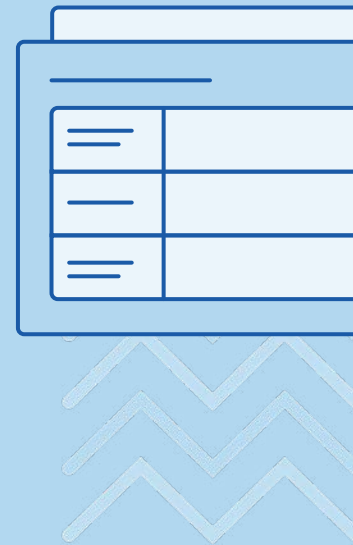


## Step 5: Preparing your ICIA

- There's an online template for you to use:

[View the template](#)

- Your ICIA must:
  - Describe the likely significant different effect of the policy, strategy, legislation or service on island communities
  - Assess how you can improve outcomes or mitigate any significant differences.



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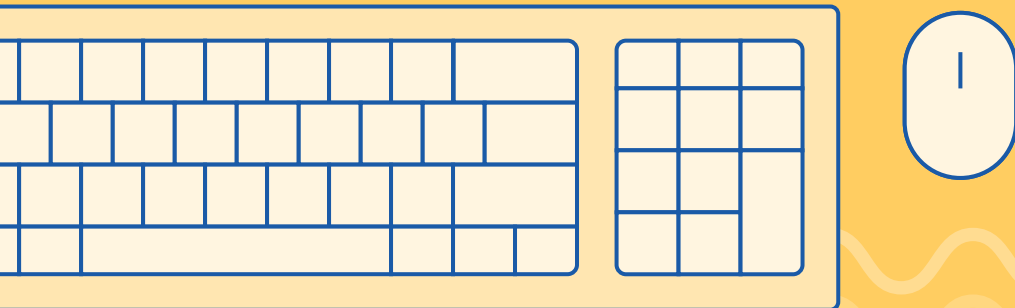
The ICIA is a valuable framework. It compliments other impact assessments. It allowed us to reflect on both the challenges and the benefits. We gained a list of actions to take forward, and further thinking to develop through ongoing engagement.”

**Matthew Shepherd**  
Senior Programme & Policy Advisor

## Step 6: Making adjustments to your work

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- After assessing potential impacts on island communities, work out to what extent you can adjust your policy strategy or service to improve or mitigate the impact on island communities - and how you plan to do this.
- Think about using island-specific indicators or targets for monitoring.
- Do you need to adjust the objectives you set out in Step One?
- Do you need to pilot your proposals or mitigations?



## Step 7: Publishing your ICIA

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- Congratulations – you're done!
- In the interests of transparency, all ICIA's must be published.
- You simply publish it on your organisation's own website.



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ICIA gives you the practical, effective steps to ensure our islands have fair and equitable treatment.”

Senior Officer  
North Ayrshire Council

## Where to get help

Dealing with an Island Communities Impact Assessment for the first time can be daunting.

Help is at hand.

- Full [guidance and toolkit](#)
- Download a blank ICIA form [template](#) to fill in
- Find '[Right First Time](#)' guidance on public authority decision-making
- Read the [The National Islands Plan](#)
- Check out the National Islands Plan consultation [reports](#)
- Find the National Islands Plan Survey [report](#).

This leaflet is also available in Gaelic.

If you need any more help or advice or answers to your questions, contact the friendly Scottish Government's Island Team on:

[info@islandsteam.scot](mailto:info@islandsteam.scot)

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Doing the ICIA was hugely beneficial. It really focused our thoughts on the unique circumstances island communities can experience.”

**Lorne Frew**  
Senior Policy Officer



THE  
**ISLANDS**  
SCOTLAND ACT 2018  
ACHD  
**NAN EILEAN**  
ALBA 2018





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