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National Islands Plan Annual Report 2021



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Foreword from Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands



I am delighted to present the Scottish Government's second annual report on our delivery of the National Islands Plan for 2021.

Against the backdrop of Brexit and COVID-19, the Scottish Government continues to support our island communities through the Plan and its accompanying Implementation Route Map. I am acutely aware of the impact both leaving the EU and the pandemic have had on our island communities. In response, over the past 12 months we have prioritised work which best supports a green recovery and long-term sustainability across our islands as we take forward delivery of the Plan.

Across the board, a number of commitments have either been fulfilled or are on their way to being met. The actions that we are taking to deliver on these commitments continue to help our island communities thrive, whilst the ongoing implementation of the Plan champions the uniqueness of our islands.

I am particularly proud to report that we have started the successful roll out of our £30 million Islands Programme. Through our Island Communities Fund and Healthy Islands Fund, we have been able to support numerous businesses, community groups and organisations. Investments have been made across many of the Strategic Objectives within the Plan, including sustainable economic development, health and wellbeing, and education.

In our 2021/22 Programme for Government, we commit to introducing a new Islands Bond initiative to help support repopulation in some of our most vulnerable communities. This directly responds to the feedback we received during the 2019 consultation process for the National Islands Plan, which highlighted depopulation as being the most crucial issue for people living on our islands. I wish to thank everyone who contributed to the consultation process for the Islands Bond, and look forward to publishing the analysis of this in the spring ahead of the launch of the Islands Bond in the summer.

The National Islands Plan contains a number of commitments designed to improve outcomes for island communities as they move towards carbon neutrality. These commitments will support our work to address the challenges that face all of Scotland's islands as we move towards a Just Transition. We recognise the urgency of this work and are fully committed to supporting six Scottish islands through the Carbon Neutral Islands project. A report setting out the steps we will take to support the islands included in the Carbon Neutral Islands project will be published by summer 2022.

The work that we undertake within the Scottish Government is only part of the story. Over the past year we have benefited from vital collaborations with local authorities, island stakeholders and communities themselves. The valuable knowledge, expertise and continued support of our partners is crucial to delivering the Plan and I look forward to continuing these relationships in the months and years ahead. I would like to conclude by thanking our islanders, stakeholders and local authorities for their tremendous support as we continue to deliver the National Islands Plan.

Introduction

The National Islands Plan provides a framework for action in order to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities. The Plan sets out 13 Strategic Objectives and over 100 commitments, which must be delivered over the five year lifetime of the Plan. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires that a report is presented to parliament each year setting out the progress made towards delivery. This Annual Report fulfils that requirement, outlining where progress has been made towards each specific commitment of the National Islands Plan, and detailing projects and resource spend where appropriate.

This report is accompanied by the revised National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map (IRM), which sets out how we will continue to contribute to improved outcomes across our islands. The 2022 IRM takes a forward looking, action focused approach and has been developed in collaboration across Scottish Government to ensure all policy areas with responsibility for delivering the Plan have contributed.

We will also shortly launch a virtual National Islands Plan Progress Dashboard that will allow for real-time progress towards both our Strategic Objectives and commitments to be displayed in an accessible and transparent manner.

Additionally, the implementation of the National Islands Plan continues to be supported by both the Islands Strategic Group and the National Islands Plan Delivery Group. The Islands Strategic Group allows for greater involvement of the relevant local authorities in helping design solutions to the challenges islanders face, whilst the Delivery Group ensures that work continues to be driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities.

Summary of Strategic Objectives and Values

The National Islands Plan sets a direction for the Scottish Government and provides a framework for action in order to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities. The Plan has 13 Strategic Objectives which we will use to direct our work over the coming months and years:

	Strategic Objective 1 To address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile
	Strategic Objective 2 To improve and promote sustainable economic development
	Strategic Objective 3 To improve transport services
	Strategic Objective 4 To improve housing
	Strategic Objective 5 To reduce levels of fuel poverty
	Strategic Objective 6 To improve digital connectivity
	Strategic Objective 7 To improve and promote health, social care and wellbeing



Strategic Objective 8

To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity



Strategic Objective 9

To contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and promote clean, affordable and secure energy



Strategic Objective 10

To empower diverse communities and different places



Strategic Objective 11

To support arts, culture and language



Strategic Objective 12

To promote and improve education for all throughout life



Strategic Objective 13

To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan

A Fair, Integrated, Green and Inclusive Plan

The four principles of fairness, integration, environmental (green) protection and inclusiveness underpin the National Islands Plan by guiding us and our partners in meeting its ultimate objective – which is to improve outcomes for island communities.

A **fair** Plan with wellbeing at its heart will strive towards fairer, healthier, happier communities across Scotland. Its human rights approach will support greater accountability and help ensure that island communities' rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

An **integrated** Plan will promote joined-up services based on a cohesive, place-based and holistic approach to policy and will build economic, social and environmental considerations in an integrated approach to island policy.

A **green** Plan will harness the opportunities of a greener, fairer economy while we work toward ending Scotland's contribution to climate change.

An **inclusive** Plan will promote genuine community empowerment at the local level enabling decisions to be taken as close as possible to where their impact will be felt.

Island Communities Impact Assessments

As stipulated by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the [Island Communities Impact Assessments \(Publication and Review of Decisions\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) came into force on 23 December 2020, meaning that the duty to carry out an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) became a legal requirement for Scottish Government and relevant authorities when developing or reviewing policies, strategies or services.

The laying of these Regulations followed consultation with island communities, relevant authorities and local government partners on the proposed ICIA Guidance and Toolkit, which was published alongside the Regulations on the 23 of December 2020. This can be found online at: [Island Communities Impact Assessments: guidance and toolkit - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

During the first year of the regulations coming into force, we have supported Scottish Government and relevant authority colleagues in producing ICIA. Throughout this period, we have taken into consideration feedback from relevant authorities and local government partners, which has lead us to review the guidance. We will shortly publish an updated document, support leaflet and an accompanying educational video on the ICIA process to further support those undertaking ICIA.

ICIA Scottish Government have carried out to date can be found in the publications section of the Scottish Government website here: [Publications - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#). ICIA completed by relevant authorities are published by them, usually on their websites, where they are also required to complete annual reporting setting out how they have complied with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 during the reporting period.

We will continue to support our colleagues across the Scottish Government as well as the relevant authorities in implementing the ICIA process. Our work so far and the feedback received will also be considered during the first report on the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which is due to be completed this year.

Population Levels

Strategic Objective 1 – To address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile

We committed to identifying islands where population decline is becoming a critical issue in order to ensure that these islands have their needs addressed.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In March 2021, the Scottish Government published Scotland's first population strategy, [A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population](#). The strategy sets out the cross-cutting demographic challenges that Scotland faces at national and local level, and outlines a new programme of work to address these challenges and harness new opportunities. It identifies 36 initial actions across four themes – a family friendly nation; a healthy living society; an attractive and welcoming country; and a more balanced population.

In Programme for Government 2021/22, Scottish Government committed to developing a £5 million Islands Bond fund, providing up to £50,000 each for up to 100 households by 2026, by providing financial support for island residents to remain in their community, or to encourage people to move there. We launched the Islands Bond consultation on 2 August 2021, providing an opportunity for our island residents in particular to identify the key challenges that a bond may be able to respond to. The consultation closed on 25 October with 1661 responses and a finalised analysis report will available in March 2022.

Scottish Government have also engaged closely with the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI) working group on population, which was established following the meeting of COHI in [March 2021](#) to lead on exploring actions and initiatives to tackle depopulation in the region. The CoHI Working Group included representatives from Argyll and Bute Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council – as there were acute areas of depopulation identified as being within those four local authorities.¹ Alongside these local authorities, membership also included Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and officials from the Scottish Government.

¹ [Paper+6+-Population+and+Fragile+Communities.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (Evidence paper presented at CoHI, October 2020).

Growth Deals

The Islands Growth Deal, which covers Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides, also seeks to address the Islands' demographic challenges, by investing in the growing renewables sector along with academic, aquaculture, cultural and tourism offerings. The projects within the Deal will:

- demonstrate how to achieve government net zero carbon targets;
- create nationally significant new port infrastructure that will play an important role in supporting Scotland and the UK to achieve net zero targets;
- strengthen their place as unique 'living laboratories' for global innovation in low carbon technologies, wellbeing research and sustainable food production in partnership with our leading universities and research institutes;
- showcase their outstanding natural environment, heritage, culture, and creativity to the world; and
- create the foundation for an innovation-focused recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and support inclusive growth across island communities.

As part of the programme, Island Deal partners estimate that projects have the potential to create over 1300 sustainable jobs aimed at retaining and attracting workers aged 16-40, supported by a programme to equip the islands workforce with the skills to support their growth sectors. Heads of Terms for the Islands Growth Deal was signed on 17 March 2021, securing investment of up to £50 million each from both the Scottish and UK Governments over 10 years. It is expected to reach Full Deal in late 2022.

- At the end of 2021, outline business cases for the following projects were approved by the Islands' Growth Deal Joint Committee.
- ShellVolution, which will support significant expansion in the mussel farming sector in Shetland and throughout Scotland.
- The TalEntEd Islands Programme, which will create opportunities for education, skills, centre and intrapreneurship and commercialisation, supporting the increase in sustainable 'green' jobs across all three island groups.
- Scapa Flow Future Fuels Hub, which will enable the supply and distribution of low and net zero fuels to be established in Orkney.
- The second phase of the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus (ORIC2) at Stromness, enhancing existing facilities and creation of new spaces to further enable academic and commercial activity, collaboration, and business incubation.

These projects will help to support mussel farming, sustainable green jobs and low carbon fuels.

The Scottish Government has also committed to investing up to £25 million in the Argyll and Bute Growth Deal over 10 years. The Deal seeks to address demographic challenges through Argyll and Bute including its Islands and has three main themes:

- Connecting: improving physical and digital infrastructure to strengthen communities and supporting their high value and growth sectors to connect with national and international business markets;
- Attracting: providing additional skills, training and learning opportunities to attract and retain young talent and boosting the tourism offering; and
- Growing: doing more of what works; making more of their natural and built resources, supporting the innovation and growth of their key sectors.

Heads of Terms for the Deal were signed on 11 February 2021, and it is expected to reach Full Deal in the second half of 2022. The Deal includes the Low Carbon Economy Project which will complement the work being undertaken to support the development of a local energy plan for Islay and lead to the implementation of local energy initiatives across the island. This will help address fuel poverty as well as demographic and other challenges Islay faces including a constrained Grid network, high fuel and transport costs, high energy usage from distilleries and low local energy generation. In addition, the Rural Skills Accelerator project will include a mobile STEM Academy to enable delivery of STEM-focused lessons and workshops anywhere within Argyll and Bute including inhabited islands.

The Scottish Government is also a full partner in the Inverness and Highland City Regional Deal, contributing £135 million over 10 years. The Deal aims to drive inclusive economic growth across the region through investment in housing, skills, innovation and entrepreneurship, tourism, transport and digital. In addition, the Deal seeks to rebalance the population by attracting and retaining an additional 1,500 young people in the 18-29 age group. The Deal includes the Science Skills Academy project which is working with partners to establish sites for STEMD focused Newton Rooms in five locations working with local education and businesses. This includes a pop-up Newton Room for the west coast which became operational in August 2021 commencing activity in Portree on the Isle of Skye.

Aquaculture in Scotland brings significant benefits to our economy, produces healthy protein and supports over 12,000 jobs, many of which are based in our island and coastal communities, providing skilled and well paid employment. We are supporting women into aquaculture careers through the Women in Scottish Aquaculture initiative and are working to ensure that farmers and land managers have the skills they need through a comprehensive require of land based learning to increase opportunities for more people, particularly women, to gain qualifications, training and employment in the land-based and aquaculture sectors.

Work has begun to deliver our Vision for sustainable aquaculture in Scotland which will place an enhanced emphasis on environmental protection and community benefits. This will build on the community initiatives which the sector already actively supports, such as its contribution to infrastructure, IT and housing projects in the island communities in which it operates. Examples of impact include grant funding of over £1 million through the Rural and Islands Housing Fund and close working by Mowi, Argyll and Bute Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Communities Housing Trust and the Colonsay Community Development Company to deliver affordable housing on Colonsay, providing a solution to the housing shortage.

The wider seafood sector is also of huge benefit to the local islands economy, and we will deliver a seafood trade strategy for the sector in 2022, which will outline a vision and strategic aims to ensure the resilience and sustainability of this sector into the future, and enhancing the role of seafood as a low carbon sustainable source of protein. The strategy will set out our ambition to help revitalise the sector and secure jobs in line with a sustainable and natural capital approach.

We committed to understand the impact of Brexit on islands and island communities.

This commitment has been met.

Rural and island communities are particularly dependent upon tourism, fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture, and also are renowned contributors to our food and drink success story. Unfortunately, these sectors have been disproportionately hit by Brexit, not least through labour shortages. We also know that these communities benefited from European funds which have now been lost. UK Ministers pledged that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would at least match the size of EU Structural Funds in each nation, each year – but current spending plans fall far short of replacing EU funds. Scottish Government will continue to utilise available powers and resources to maintain connectivity and help Scotland's islands to thrive.

We have worked closely with the Scottish Islands Federation to better understand the direct, grassroots impacts of Brexit across our island communities. Similarly, we have worked closely with our EU secretariat colleagues to reflect on feedback from a range of key stakeholders, in order to ensure that we are fully informed regarding the consequences being experienced at an islands level. This process has engaged a broad range of government colleagues e.g. Transport, Skills and Rural Economy in addition to collaboration with local authorities, HIE, SDS and UHI.

To support continued export of Scotland's fisheries and aquaculture sectors following Brexit, the Scottish Government has worked with UK Government to seek trade barrier solutions through the Scottish Seafood Industry Action Group. We also worked with the salmon producers, caught fish sectors, Food Standards Scotland, South Lanarkshire Council and transport company DFDS to create a seafood certification export hub in Larkhall. The creation of this hub has allowed the continued supply of fresh salmon, the UK's number one food export, to EU markets from our islands. In Q3 of 2021 Shetland, the Outer Hebrides and Orkney accounted for 50% of salmon production in Scotland.

Scottish Seafood has an international reputation for high quality, and contributes significantly to the islands economy. We will deliver a seafood trade strategy for the sector in 2022, which is integral to our Blue Economy approach that will help us to realise our ambitions for a wellbeing economy in Scotland which maximises growth opportunities while protecting marine biodiversity. The strategy will ensure we value and take care of the natural capital in our marine environment, and where secure and resilient future based on a sustainable seafood economy provides benefits to island communities.

We committed to develop an action plan to support repopulation of our rural and island communities and work with partners to test approaches using small-scale pilots.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The work on Workforce Dispersal has resumed, with plans to form a working group to look at Scottish Government workforce and how jobs can be undertaken across any area of Scotland.

Work has also continued on this commitment through Scottish Government engagement with the CoHI working group on population, which was established in April 2021. The initial aim of the Group was to:

- better understand the conditions that are combining together to cause depopulation or restrict population growth;
- identify and develop a set of short, medium, and long-term actions to support the addressing of population growth challenges in our remote, rural and island communities; and
- investigate the concept of Repopulation Zones further, as was outlined in March's [COHI paper](#).

The group identified five key thematic focuses central to the challenge of ensuring sustainable populations in communities. These included the availability and suitability of housing, the availability of jobs across the region (including public sector), critical infrastructure (including transport and broadband), the provision of and accessibility to public services, and attracting and retaining young people to the region.

At the October 2021 CoHI, the working group presented a [paper](#) setting out policy considerations and suggested locally-led population initiatives for discussion, and confirm next steps in regards to developing the concept of Repopulation Zones.

The paper set out a three-track approach:

- identify work underway and new commitments announced since March 2021 across organisations;
- recognise the urgency of the population challenge in certain areas, and provide suggestions on thinking for pilots and actions to be trialled locally and driven by local placed-based understanding within the next 6-12 months; and
- acknowledge the need to continue a long-term strategic dialogue between Scottish Government, local authorities, and enterprise agencies on population issues, provide an update on the development of the concept of Repopulation Zones.

Work continued in 2021 on developing a Rural Visa Pilot following the UK Government's own Migration Advisory Committee, in 2019, recommending the piloting of a scheme to attract and retain migrants in rural areas, stating that: "the current migration system is not very effective in dealing with the particular problems remote communities experience. If these problems are to be addressed something more bespoke for these areas is needed".

The 2021/22 PfG, therefore, contained a commitment to "develop a Rural Visa Pilot proposal, to support people to move to and work in our rural communities, submitting a proposal to the UK Government in 2022", to facilitate migration to rural and remote areas impacted by depopulation, in a way which best meets the needs of the communities affected. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands wrote to Kevin Foster MP, UK Government Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, in January 2022, signalling the Scottish Government's intention to proceed with this commitment. A short-life working group is being established, comprising a range of local, regional and national stakeholders, to collaboratively input into the development of pilot proposals, and the Scottish Government plans to submit these proposals to the UK Government and the Migration Advisory Committee during summer 2022.

We committed to work with young islanders to identify actions to encourage them to stay on or return to islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Work on the Student Retention project is continuing. Student Retention aims to encourage students to remain in Scotland (and rural locations/move to islands or highlands) after completing study – this applies to any students from Scotland or the rest of the UK. Working with young islanders will help us develop our understanding of what would make them want to stay or return after study. Workforce dispersal could also allow for jobs to be done anywhere and therefore there would be less of a need for young people to leave in order to engage in particular types of work.

Building on the Young Islanders Network Pilot project which was launched in January 2021, Youth Scotland are supporting delivery of the Scottish Government funded [Young Islanders Network](#), which will be co-created and led by our young islanders, ensuring that the interests and priorities of this cohort are carefully considered and reflected in the development of this new forum.

We committed to fully consider policy developments, such as the findings of Scottish Government commissioned research Rural Planning to 2050 when ensuring that the needs of Scotland's islands are taken into account by the Ministerial Taskforce on Population.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to ensure that policies aim to retain and attract Gaelic speakers to live and work in Gaelic speaking island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Government Gaelic policy seeks to ensure that job opportunities using Gaelic are located in island communities and that authorities and public bodies are employing Gaelic speakers where possible. Specific Scottish Government Gaelic funding contributes to this commitment, but it is noted that there is potential for larger employers to locate jobs and housing in island communities and consider Gaelic skills, which Scottish Government encourages.

Support for new early years developments and education resource is aiding Gaelic in these communities. The local authorities of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highlands Council and Argyll and Bute Council all have Gaelic plans in place and commitments to encourage the use and learning of Gaelic. Some example projects include MG ALBA, Cèolas, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Storlann, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

We committed to work with policy colleagues to produce a National Development Plan for crofting which will set the long-term strategic direction for crofting – highlighting the core elements necessary to ensure crofting remains at the heart of our rural and remote communities.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

The Plan was published on 18 March 2021. It can be accessed at:

[Crofting: national development plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

We committed to work with the Crofting Commission to encourage a healthy turnover of croft tenancies on our islands to create opportunities for new people into crofting.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Crofting Commission are exploring new ways to ensure that entry to crofting is more accessible, and that we continue to see the increase in new entrants as we saw in 2019 and 2020, with over 830 new entrants into crofting – 44% of which were women.

The Crofting Commission has appointed two Crofting Development Officers, based in Stornoway and Balivanich. The new officers will liaise with crofting communities to encourage croft occupancy, working with assessors, landlords and townships to encourage opportunities for new entrants. The Commission has also expanded its Residency and Land Use team, in order to increase its work in addressing absenteeism and bringing crofts back into active use.

We committed to continue to provide support for island crofters to make improvements to their crofts and help to sustain their businesses, these will include: Croft House Grant Scheme, Cattle Improvement Scheme and other crofting support mechanisms.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

The Scottish Government continues to provide support to island crofters to help sustain their croft businesses and make improvements to their crofts, and provide assistance towards the building of a new croft house or improvements to an existing croft house.

Since the Croft House Grant scheme was launched in 2007, more than £23 million has been awarded to 1,067 families and individuals in rural and island communities. Approximately half of which has been awarded to island crofters.

Since March 2020 we have awarded over £2 million in grant funding to help build and improve homes for 73 crofters and their families.

In financial year 2021/22, the Scottish Government provided a 75% increase to the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme budget, to £3.6 million.

Sustainable Economic Development

Strategic Objective 2 – To improve and promote sustainable economic development

We committed to identify key actions to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth on islands, such as community-run businesses, e-commerce and digitally enabled island-based businesses.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Digital technologies are crucial for our island businesses and economy and continue to transform the way we do business across all sectors and regions. We have committed £100 million over the life of this parliament to increase the digital capacity and capability of our businesses across Scotland. This includes our DigitalBoost Programme, which is our national business digital engagement programme offering digital support to SMEs including workshops, 1-2-1 advice, health checks, online guides and tutorials.

In 2020/21, HIE invested £2.5 million in 206 digital enablement projects. Over 89 of the businesses, social enterprises and voluntary organisations supported were in island communities, where we made an investment of £925k. Useful case studies are available on our website – for Ortak (Orkney) and An Lanntair (Lewis).

Additionally, HIE can provide specialist digital advice (up to 3-days), events and grants to organisations across the region through our area teams. HIE also collaborated with the Scottish Funding Council, The Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise to invest over £2 million in national Innovation Centre hubs (The Data Lab, CENSIS, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and IBioIC) which provide digital innovation support, MSc and PhD student placements and funding to organisations across the region.

We committed to explore how best to ensure the needs of islands are met within emerging regional economic partnerships including the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI).

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP) has been established, meeting for the first time in December 2021. Membership includes the six local authorities with island populations, together with Moray Council, HIE, UHI, and other public bodies. Business and third sector representation will be drawn from the mainland and islands. The REP will provide a regional voice and enable collaboration across key regional challenges and opportunities such as economic recovery and transformation, net zero, repopulation, infrastructure and transport, each of which have specific island perspectives. The work of the REP will align with and feed into that of The Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI).

COHI meets biannually, in spring and autumn, and brings together the Highlands and Islands Local Authorities, public bodies and institutions with responsibility for, or interests in, the economic and social development of the Highlands and Islands. CoHI aims to strengthen alignment between the Scottish Government and member organisations to increase sustainable economic growth and its processes are under constant review and evolution. Conventions normally alternate between mainland and island settings however in 2021, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID Recovery hosted the meetings online and discussion themes included: Workforce and Skills, Population, Housing, Gaelic and Crofting.

Additionally, work continues on the Talent Attraction and Retention programme to support business to attract people with the skills required; the Student Retention programme to support students to stay, live, and work in Scotland post-qualifying; and the Skills Recognition Scotland project to help migrants already living in Scotland secure the right level of employment by profiling their skills gained outwith the UK and increasing links to employers with vacancies. This is undertaken in collaboration with the Population and Migration Unit and various other Scottish Government teams, Skills Development Scotland and enterprise agencies.

We committed to tailor business and community support for island communities to ensure products and services are fit for purpose, accessible and effective. This will include exploring new and innovative models and working with national providers to consider how programmes can better address needs of island communities and businesses.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Our £2,586,000 investment through the Island Communities Fund (ICF) was delivered as one strand of the 2021/22 Islands Programme, providing capital investment for community-led projects that align with community wealth building approaches and support employment, community resilience and contribute to Scotland's just transition to net zero and climate resilient living on islands.

Supporting island businesses and community groups, the ICF built on the success and our learning from the Islands Green Recovery Programme (2020/21), and provided grants of up to £150,000 for projects focused on developing sustainable economic activities on islands, while also supporting the delivery of the [National Islands Plan](#).

Additionally, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) delivers economic and community development for the region through eight area-based teams which enables our response to meet local needs and opportunities using extensive local knowledge, partnerships and a customer-focused approach. Intervention rates and eligibility criteria for programmes are often flexed to increase support to islands. One example where island areas have specifically been targeted is the Graduate Placement Programme, in recognition of distinct needs in particular islands and as part of our response to population challenges.

We committed to work in partnership to support strategic projects which deliver sustainable economic growth in the islands, e.g. Orkney Research and Innovation Campus and Stornoway port developments.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Islands Growth Deal has three main themes: leading the way to a low carbon future; supporting growth and future industries; and building thriving sustainable communities. Eighteen projects are included in the Islands Growth Deal Heads of Terms and these include the Islands Centre for Net Zero, Dales Voe Deep Water Port and Outer Hebrides Energy Hub, which have a low carbon theme running through them, although the low carbon theme will run through all Islands Deal projects to some extent.

We committed to drive the many socio-economic opportunities arising from the 2019 Science and Innovation Audit report Maximising Opportunities for the Marine Economy in the Highlands and Islands as well as enhance those arising from Growth Deals.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Our [Fisheries Management Strategy](#) commits us to responsible and sustainable sea fisheries management and is underpinned by a 12 point action plan which is being delivered over the next ten years. Key actions include increasing the obligation on fishers to land into Scotland, with associated benefits to onshore processing and ancillary services; and improving the resilience of the fishing industry, working with stakeholders to strengthen links to local and global markets, and supporting diversification.

The Strategy puts a strong emphasis on local management of fisheries, with investment in our network of local Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups. Part of this is through the Inshore Fisheries Pilots initiative where the Inshore Fisheries Groups, working with Marine Scotland, have developed two projects – a holistic approach to optimising fishing gear use in the Outer Hebrides, and in Mull a trial separating mobile and static gear. Both have been met with positivity by stakeholders and anecdotal evidence suggests a positive effect. We are using learning from these pilots to help inform inshore fisheries management options nationally, and explore opportunities to strengthen outputs across all of our coastal communities.

Our approach to securing fishing opportunities through international negotiations seeks to maximise the benefits of fishing to our local communities. This includes many of our fishing communities based in the highlands and islands, with significant benefits flowing to (for example) Shetland as a result. Quota secured at an international level helps to maintain and grow local businesses, providing employment opportunities both offshore and onshore as a result.

We have also initiated a number of projects to support new entrants into the fishing sector and we have so far awarded 23 new entrants totalling £1,740,470.00 of Marine Fund Scotland to help fishers purchase their own vessel. Out of the 23 awarded Young fishers four came from Highlands and Islands region. The grant awarded for these totalled £239,115.00.

Several projects are also being developed as part of both the Islands Growth Deal and the Argyll and Bute Growth Deal that have a strong focus on the Marine Economy. These include Scapa Flow Future Fuels Hub, Outer Hebrides Food and Drink and Dales Voe Ultra Deep Water Port projects in the Islands Deal, and UHI/Argyll Collage Marine Industry Training Centre, MERL Machrihanish Innovation Campus, SAMS International Seaweed and Shellfish Centre and Marine Tourism projects in the Argyll and Bute Deal. Both the Scottish and UK Governments are working closely with partners in both Deals to develop these projects to the benefit of coastal communities.

We committed to display leadership in the public sector by demonstrating that jobs and careers can be successful on islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Plans to form a Workforce Dispersal working group are being discussed, initially looking at Scottish Government workforce and how jobs can be undertaken from across Scotland. This work has been supported through engagement with the CoHI Population Working Group, which identified five key thematic focuses central to the challenge of ensuring sustainable populations in communities. These included the availability and suitability of housing, the availability of jobs across the region (including public sector), critical infrastructure (including transport and broadband), the provision of and accessibility to public services, and attracting and retaining young people to the region.

At the October 2021 CoHI, the working group presented a paper setting out policy considerations and suggested locally-led population initiatives for discussion, and to confirm next steps in regards to developing the concept of Repopulation Zones. Scottish Government will continue to engage with and reflect on this emerging work.

We committed to promote a thriving business environment that allows individuals to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities on islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Islands Growth Deal sets out a number of collaborative and Island specific proposals, designed to address the islands' demographic challenges, as well as supporting business innovation, and the move towards net zero.

The 18 projects within the Islands Growth Deal focus on developing infrastructure to support the growing renewables cluster, innovation programmes to maximise the value of primary and emerging growth industries, boosting the sustainable tourism and cultural offering, supported by a programme to equip the Islands workforce with the skills to meet current and future demand. The projects span a number of areas including low carbon, housing, skills, sustainable tourism, creative industries, space, food and drink and business innovation.

The Argyll and Bute Growth Deal projects span sustainable tourism, digital, business innovation, housing, skills, aquaculture, low carbon and regeneration. In the context of the climate emergency and the need to address the economic challenges facing island and rural communities in Argyll and Bute, the Deal will look to harness opportunities provided by the region's abundant marine renewable resources.

Through HIE significant investments are being made to support the transition to net zero, innovation and community infrastructure with creative industries, tourism and food and drink sectors in particular receiving support. Many of these investments are being delivered through important partnerships across public, private and third sectors.

In terms of innovation and entrepreneurship, the following programmes are accessible to our island communities:

- HIE Innovate supports businesses as they seek to develop their products, processes and business models.
- Interface Knowledge Connection links businesses with academia to find solutions to business problems. The service has been well used by island based businesses
- Your Business offers innovation support to .with cases studies - e.g. [Outer Hebrides Tourism](#)
- [Co-Innovate](#) provides access to innovation support and advice in Argyll and the West Highlands and Islands and has supported over 200 businesses to date.

HIE runs a [programme of additional support](#) to help entrepreneurs shape and develop their that address a social purpose. The programme was developed by HIE with colleagues across Europe and is funded through Interreg. Initially targeted at areas of rural disadvantage/remote rural, it is now a pan regional programme. The programme runs until June 2022 and has achieved over 30 start-ups since it began in March 2018, with a further 60 in development. Four physical hubs were initially established in Sutherland, Wester Ross, Easter Ross and Isles of South Uist. Support has been developed into a virtual online toolkit for social entrepreneurs which will remain available beyond the life of the programme.

We committed to create and promote apprenticeships and job opportunities for young islanders.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

HM Inspectors are producing a report for Scottish Government early in 2022 to evaluate Foundation Apprenticeships. This will identify what is working well, highlight any barriers to implementation, and make recommendations regarding aspects for improvement. On completion this process will build on the evidence base for how apprenticeships can support pathways to positive destinations in our island communities.

In recent years, the delivery of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) across the Islands in Scotland has been fairly consistent with 872 starts in 2018/19 and 904 in 2019/20. Like most regions across Scotland MA starts in the islands were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as employers reviewed, delayed and paused recruitment plans, resulting in fewer starts in 2020/21 (643 starts). Published on 15 February 2022, the Quarter 3 statistics, covering April-December 2021, show a positive increase in MA starts (514 at the end of Q3 2021/22) compared with the same time last year.

Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships are also being delivered across the Islands, with numbers improving. For instance Na h-Eileanan Siar have increased the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) from 18 starts in 2018 to 54 starts in 2020. Graduate Apprenticeships have seen similar expansion in the Islands with both Argyll and Bute and Shetland Islands delivering eight GA opportunities in 2020/21 and Orkney Islands offering 12 GA opportunities in the same year.

Work on the Student Retention project is continuing. Student Retention aims to encourage students to remain in Scotland (and rural locations/move to islands or highlands) after completing study – this applies to any students from Scotland or the rest of the UK. Workforce dispersal could allow for jobs to be done anywhere and therefore there would be less of a need for young people to leave in order to engage in particular types of work.

We committed to ensure that skills provision is agile and responsive to future demand and enables individuals to take up opportunities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The 2019 Future Skills Action Plan (FSAP) sets out our ambition that people across Scotland should have access high quality skills support throughout their working life. Since the Plan's launch socio-economic conditions have changed greatly and while some of the trends and actions set out in FSAP have been delayed, others have been accelerated. We have now progressed into a second phase of the plan, allowing us to take stock of labour market changes and emerging economic challenges, and to align closely with the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

A key priority of FSAP was to publish a Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP). Published in December 2020, CESAP sets out the actions we need to take to ensure our workforce is able to support the transition to net zero. Since publication, the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan has been driven forward by an Implementation Steering Group tasked with developing an Implementation Plan to set out a route map for green skills provision. As a priority action of CESAP, the Green Jobs Workforce Academy – administered by Skills Development Scotland – launched in August 2021. The Academy makes it easier for individuals of all backgrounds at any stage of their career to consider how their skills and experience can be built upon to launch a green career and to access upskilling or retraining courses.

In August 2021, we set up a Commission to undertake a review of learning for Scotland's land-based and aquaculture sectors. The review will cover learning from early years to adulthood, to provide opportunities and qualifications through school, college, university and work-based learning including apprenticeships, for more people, and specifically more women, to work with and on the land, particularly in green skills. The Commission will provide independent, evidence-based advice and recommendations to Scottish Ministers. The Commission met twice in 2021.

The National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) was introduced in 2020 as a specific response to the economic impact of COVID-19. In Year 2 the NTTF continues to support individuals and sectors affected by COVID-19, in Scotland, but also to address Brexit impacts and support future skills needs including the transition to net zero.

The Individual Training Account (ITA) programme is an established and important instrument in our ability to respond to Scotland's skills gaps for those both in and out of work. The programme supports individuals who are unemployed or earn £22,000 or under to access training in a number of curriculum areas to improve prospects of gaining employment or progressing in employment.

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) provides £15k of training for Scotland's Apprenticeship Levy-payers to upskill and/or reskill their existing workforce and £5k of training for non-levy payers (SME's). The training is delivered in partnership with local colleges, the Open University in Scotland (OUIs) or independent training providers, where specific training needs cannot be provided via a local college.

We committed to build on Scotland's National Marine Plan to ensure that fishing, other economic activities stemming from the sea provide increased opportunities for island communities, but at the same time that they are pursued in a sustainable manner.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In 2021, we fulfilled our statutory requirement to review Scotland's National Marine Plan (adopted 2015). While the plan was found to be effective, the review noted that recent developments, like UK exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the climate emergency, as well as new efforts like the Future Fisheries Management Strategy, impact on our management of marine activities and point to the need to update the plan. Scottish Ministers have considered the findings of the Review, and a decision on those findings will be announced in spring 2022.

Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy, published in December 2020, established a 12 point action plan which will deliver a range of policies to support sustainable and responsible fisheries management in Scotland. Those policies include working with local stakeholders to deliver tailored management approaches, and ensuring that the benefits from fishing can flow to local communities, for example, by increasing the volume of fish landed into Scotland.

To support aquaculture, the Scottish Government in its first 100 days appointed Professor Russel Griggs to lead an independent review aquaculture regulatory processes to ensure that development is more responsive, transparent and efficient. The sustainable development of Scotland's finfish, shellfish and seaweed farming sectors will be supported by the development of a Vision for sustainable aquaculture.

We committed to ensure that sustainable land use including agriculture and forestry continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

We are moving forward to put in place a successor to the Common Agriculture Policy that will guide farming, food production and land use in the coming years. Our approach supports farmers and crofters to ensure their economic sustainability as we deal with the twin global emergencies of climate change and biodiversity, whilst continuing to produce high quality food. Development of the new approach will be fair and equitable as set out in the terms of a Just Transition that ensures a sustainable future for a reformed agriculture sector. We will adopt a new approach to policies for agriculture and food production and realise the collective desire to ensure Scottish policy, regulatory and funding frameworks enable investment in rural and island businesses and communities. Amongst other things, this will underpin the creation and maintenance of green jobs in the sector across our islands.

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) continues to run the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) in order to support communities to buy or lease land to empower local communities and support local objectives. This continues to provide opportunities for community ownership of woodlands and land that can be used to create new jobs and generate income on islands. The most recent asset transfer request, currently under CATS evaluation, is from the Arran High School Mountain Bike Club to create a new skills trail near Lamlash, with the aim of giving pupils the chance to improve their skills and gain MTB qualifications, as well as a bespoke facility for residents and visitors interested in mountain biking on Arran. On Mull, other requests in development include a historic walled garden and a community native tree nursery.

Scotland's forestry sector continues to employ people across Scotland and as part of the Green Recovery Scottish Government continues to support the expansion of the forestry workforce to respond to the increase in woodland creation and sustainable timber production, including on the islands.

FLS continue to sustainably manage the Scottish Minister's National Forest and Lands on the islands such as Isles of Arran, Mull and Skye. The management of these areas continues to support local economies (through direct forest management activity, outdoor recreation use and related wildlife tourism), increases local biodiversity and provides opportunities for people to access and use local woodlands on islands.

The Crofting Commission received additional funding which enabled it to appoint four permanent Crofting Commission staff in the Western Isles. The Commission intends to review this in the future, with a view to considering further Commission positions in other island crofting areas. Officers in post liaise with crofting communities to encourage croft occupancy, working with assessors, landlords and townships to encourage opportunities for new entrants, and encourage active croft use and management of common grazing land.

Scottish Government and Lantra have collaborated with SDS to produce a rural employers toolkit ([Rural employers toolkit by lantra.scotland - Issuu](#)). To address gender barriers and the uptake of practical training by women, as highlighted by the Women in Agriculture taskforce, the Women in Agriculture ([Women in Agriculture Practical Training Fund | Lantra - Scotland](#)) and Women in Rural Economies Training fund ([Women in the Rural Economy Training Fund | Lantra - Scotland](#)) were developed and had strong applications from our islands. Lantra have also worked with CivTech 5.0 to identify SkillSeeder, an app that supports those, particularly in our rural and island communities to find new opportunities to learn and share skills (<https://www.skillseeder.com/>).

We committed to work with relevant partners and stakeholders to make tourism more sustainable and less seasonal, and encourage development of a year-round offer across a wider range of islands that delivers economic, environmental and social benefits.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce

To support the long-term recovery of Scotland's tourism and hospitality industry, the Scottish Government established its Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce (STRT) in June 2020. It was co-chaired by the former Tourism Secretary Fergus Ewing, MSP and Business Minister Jamie Hepburn, MSP and was made up of more than 30 representatives with experience from across the industry.

The Taskforce looked at the priority rescue measures that could be taken by both the Scottish and UK Governments to bolster recovery. Phase 1 recovery measures are currently being taken forward by the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG). Members include VisitScotland, Enterprise Agencies, Skills Development Scotland, COSLA and the Scottish Tourism Alliance.

For further information please see: [Tourism recovery programme - News | VisitScotland.org](#) (<https://www.visitscotland.org/news/2021/tourism-recovery-programme>). Alongside implementing Phase 1 we have been working to co-produce plans for Phase 2 of recovery.

Tourism Recovery Programme

Phase 1 of the Tourism Recovery Programme commenced in 2021 and is well underway. The initial priorities for recovery are based on the recommendations by the Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce and comprise new areas of work in addition to the work that is being undertaken by VisitScotland, the Enterprise Agencies and Skills Development Scotland. They are designed to support the four outcomes identified in [Scotland Outlook 2030](#):

- Outcome 1: We will attract, develop and retain a skilled, committed, diverse and valued workforce.
- Outcome 2: We will create and develop a sustainable destination together.
- Outcome 3: We will provide the very best, authentic and memorable experiences.
- Outcome 4: We will build business resilience, sustainability and profitability.

The 10 measures, supported by £25 million from the Scottish Government are:

- International Demand Building
- Destination and Sector Marketing Fund
- Holiday Voucher Scheme – Social Tourism
- Day's Out Incentive Scheme
- Strategic infrastructure Plans
- Tourism and Hospitality Talent Development Programme Phase 2
- Leadership development to boost product innovation
- A Net Zero Pathway for Scotland's Tourism Industry
- Scottish Tourism Observatory
- Investment models to support Scottish Tourism recovery

These 10 projects have a significant positive impact throughout the entire tourism supply chain.

Alongside implementing Phase 1, officials have been working with STERG to co-produce plans for a Phase 2 of recovery (2022/23 and 2023/24). The Scottish Government received proposals from STERG, on behalf of the Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce, on 27 August for Phase 2 of the Tourism Recovery Programme, setting out recovery actions for the next two years, including 13 Recovery Projects (some new, some continuing). We are now considering best approach to support the Phase 2 recovery work.

The Phase 2 recovery programme:

- proposes a set of 13 recovery projects;
- supports the rebuilding of the visitor economy in a responsible way, to ensure that tourism thrives; and
- will set Scotland's tourism and hospitality industry back on track to delivering the ambitions of Scotland Outlook 2030.

We are now considering the best approaches to support Phase 2 recovery work, which will focus on the subsequent two years.

We committed to ensure that crofting continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government continues to provide support to help sustain croft businesses. Officials continue to consider potential changes to the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme, which include widening the scope of activity which can be grant supported.

The Crofting Commission received additional funding which enabled it to appoint four permanent Crofting Commission staff in the Western Isles. The Commission intends to review this in the future, and if successful, can consider further positions in other island crofting areas.

We committed to deliver the Islands Passport initiative, which will promote the opportunity to visit a wider range of Scotland's inhabited islands, encouraging visitors throughout all seasons and by public transport, thereby delivering economic opportunities for island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The 2018-19 Programme for Government made a commitment to develop an Islands passport scheme as a marketing initiative to encourage people to visit more of Scotland's inhabited islands. This would raise awareness of the unique offer of each of our islands both domestically and internationally. Work on delivering the proposal is led by our delivery partner HITRANS, alongside wider stakeholder engagement. The proposal is based on adapting similar marketing initiatives that have been deployed successfully elsewhere, including the Danish islands passport.

The Islands Passport will contribute to the delivery of the National Islands Plan by supporting economic development and sustainable tourism. The passport will be both digital and hardcopy, with the digital product available first: [Scottish Islands Passport](https://islands.scot/) (<https://islands.scot/>).

The project comprises four key areas of delivery:

- a mobile app providing island information and mechanisms to encourage people to visit more islands, explore and spend once they are there;
- a physical souvenir ‘passport’ and rubbing stamps on each island providing a timeless, digital detox experience and creating opportunities for merchandise sales;
- a website to enable visitors to access the app and passport and to point to other organisations and sources of island information; and
- and a marketing campaign to support widespread awareness and uptake.

We have continued funding this project in 2021/22, bringing our total support to £200,00. The project will be officially launched in 2022.

We committed to work with the food and drink industry to leverage its economic potential and explore options for sharing some of its benefits with island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit taken together represented the biggest challenge and threat to our food and drink sector for a generation, and that is why Scottish Government has worked with Industry to support the [Food and Drink Sector Recovery Plan](#), led by Scotland Food and Drink with input from NFUS, QMS, SSPO and other sector bodies.

The three year plan was launched in November 2020 and has so far received £10 million from Scottish Government, with industry also committed to raising £3 million in private sector funding to support the programme through to 2023. The plan does not provide direct financial support to businesses, but rather offers wrap around holistic support identified by Industry themselves. It contains 50 actions to support all sectors of Scotland’s food and drink industry, including island communities, to recover from COVID-19 and mitigate the impact of Brexit. Moving forward, we will be working with the industry in refreshing Ambition 2030 as the sector adapts to the changing operating landscape post pandemic and Brexit. This work will, as the Recovery Plan before it, underpin the sustainability of the sector and the jobs it creates, especially in remote, rural and island communities.

HIE has worked to develop local food groups, which bring producers together to develop their businesses. The focus may be on selling off-island (e.g. Taste of Arran) or connecting businesses with visitors (e.g. Eat Drink Hebrides).

We committed to seek to expand the range of economic, social, and environmental benefits that island communities derive from forestry.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment

Woodland creation projects and forestry activities such as woodland management and timber harvesting continue to contribute to the delivery of the Scottish Government annual woodland creation target to help mitigate climate change, improving biodiversity and are supporting local businesses.

Scottish Forestry continues to work closely with Island communities that own woodlands, such as the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, to support the sustainable management and expansion of local woodlands that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. On Eigg this includes the creation of three part time forestry jobs and a nearly full time tree nursery manager.

Scottish Forestry also supports communities through funding of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA). CWA provides independent advice and support to enable communities across Scotland and its islands to acquire, expand, manage and sustainably utilise local woodlands to meet local objectives. In 2021, this included working with the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust on woodfuel development.

The Scottish Government's Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) continues to support projects that facilitate the sustainable transport of timber in rural areas of Scotland, including the islands that deliver benefits for local communities and the environment. For example, the planned improvements to the Ross Road on the Isle of Arran.

Engagement re: forestry would be undertaken via the SFTT Industry Leadership Group (ILG) Skills group and organisations such as Scottish Forestry to agree island specific actions that will target positive outcomes for island communities.

Skills activity in the Forestry sector links via the Scottish Forest Trees and Timber ILG Skills group, and reports into the SFTT ILG. The groups are coordinated by Confor. There has been a range of skills activity to support the development of skills. This has included work to develop a Forestry Induction pack – developed by Scottish Forestry – <https://www.scotland.lantra.co.uk/forestry-induction-pack-wood-and-trees>

National Training transition funding was given to Scottish Forestry to support engagement and attraction of entrants to the industry and focused on two critical areas. Forestry haulage and forest machine operator training.

The Forestry Ambassador Scheme was part of the STEM Ambassador Scheme. <https://www.scotland.lantra.co.uk/stem-ambassadors> to encourage pathways into the Sector while the Skillseeder website also offers a platform to share skills, and engage in networking <https://www.skillseeder.com/about>

We committed to review Scotland's National Planning Framework to ensure sufficient flexibility for island interests, including in how best to meet housing need.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The draft [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) was laid in the Scottish Parliament and published for public consultation in November 2021. Draft NPF4 includes land use planning policies on key issues supporting island and coastal communities lives such as: engagement, local living, housing, spaces and places, rural and coastal policies, health and wellbeing and connectivity.

An [Island Communities Impact Assessment](#) was undertaken for draft NPF4. From the evidence it sets out so far, the potential issues for island communities include a lack of a variety of housing types, sizes and tenures to meet people's needs and a lack of affordable housing. The assessment concluded that the island focused element of the spatial strategy, combined with the scope for underlying policies to fit with local circumstances, will achieve beneficial impacts for different island communities. Further consultation with island communities will be undertaken to maximise these benefits and a final assessment of the impact of these policies will be published alongside the adopted NPF4.

Scotland's north and west coast and islands have been identified as being at the forefront of our efforts to reach the Scottish Government's target of net zero emissions by 2045. The draft NPF4 spatial strategy specifically recognises the diversity of this area, from Shetland and Orkney in the north to the Outer and Inner Hebrides and the coastal areas of Argyll and Bute and Highland. Draft NPF4 aims to provide flexibility at the local development plan stage for local and specific island circumstances to be recognised, encouraging island authorities to set out tailored approaches to housing which reflect local specific market circumstances and delivery approaches.

Draft NPF4 aligns with the ambitions set out in Housing to 2040, Scotland's first long-term housing strategy, which was published in March 2021. Feedback received from those living in and working with island communities as well as the findings from the National Islands Plan consultation helped to inform the vision and strategy for Housing to 2040.

The Scottish Parliament will scrutinise this draft of NPF4 over a period of up to 120 days. The public consultation runs until the end of March 2022, which the Scottish Government is supporting with a series of engagement opportunities and encouraging everyone to share their views on planning Scotland's future development in response to this consultation.

Further information is available from: www.transformingplanning.scot

We committed to reflect the National Islands Plan and relevant regional perspectives in the review of the National Planning Framework and preparation of National Planning Framework 4.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The National Islands Plan is reflected in the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which was laid in the Scottish Parliament and published for public consultation in November 2021 (please find more detail in the previous commitment).

Each of the three Island authorities – Orkney Islands, Eilean Siar and Shetland Islands – developed and submitted their indicative Regional Spatial Strategies to help inform options for the national spatial strategy in the draft NPF4. The draft NPF4 proposes a series of strategic priority action areas which includes the ‘North and west coastal innovation’ area which includes the three Island authorities.

Kerrera Track Road

Scottish Government provided grant funding of £550,000 to the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust to support the delivery of a track connecting the north and south of the island which had been a long-standing priority for the island.

The project involved close collaboration between the development trust, local authority and Scottish Government, with work beginning in August 2021. In November 2021, Barrachander Quarry (Taynuilt) completed the forestry grade track from the ferry in the centre of the island, up to Ardentrive Farm in the north. While it took only three months to dig and build the road, this project has taken years of hard work and perseverance behind the scenes from the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust.

This project now means that residents in the north of the islands can have equal access to the lifeline ferry service, giving them more resilience and opportunity. It also gives the rest of the island access to the marina facilities at the north end, which will be of great benefit in terms of accessing out of ferry hours activities on the mainland.

With a new community hub at the Old School also being progressed in 2021, this new road allows the whole island access to what will be a much needed neutral venue to meet, learn and socialise.

The community plan to engage with the local NHS management to try to implement an emergency plan for the island, now that the majority can be reached by road. This is seen by the community as great progress for their island’s resilience.

During the preparation of the 2020 Infrastructure Investment Plan, we committed to consider the implications of the National Islands Plan on future infrastructure requirements.

This commitment is fulfilled.

The Islands Programme is investing £30 million of Infrastructure Investment Plan capital funding over five years to ensure delivery of the National Islands Plan, by supporting a range of areas, including tourism, infrastructure, innovation, energy transition and skills – informed by our learning of how island communities have responded and adapted to COVID-19.

In financial year 2021/22, the Islands Programme encompassed three project strands:

Islands Infrastructure Fund

The Islands Infrastructure Fund (IIF) represents a £6.2 million capital investment in 2021/22. Based on community input and in collaboration with HIE and our local authority partners in Shetland and Argyll and Bute, two key projects totalling £1.2 million for this financial year under the IIF strand of the Islands Programme, have already been approved. These are the Kerrera Track upgrade, and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory rebuild. The remaining £5 million was allocated direct to the six island local authorities to sustain, enhance and develop transformational and critical infrastructure projects based on local priorities whilst supporting delivery of the National Islands Plan.

Island Communities Fund

The £2 million Island Communities Fund (ICF) functioned as one strand of the 2021/22 Islands Programme, providing capital investment for community-led projects that aligned with community wealth building approaches and support employment, community resilience and contribute to Scotland's just transition to net zero and climate resilient living on islands. The ICF has delivered a £2,586,000 grant commitment through 35 island-based community groups and businesses that will provide direct support across 55 islands, who have been awarded grants of up to £150,000 each.

Healthy Islands Fund

The £1.3 million Healthy Islands Fund (HIF) focused on building local capacity to increase wellbeing, foster connections and promote healthy and resilient islanders and communities. Successful applicants are spread across 35 different islands and when taking the Scottish Rural Health Partnership/University of the Highlands and Islands research project into consideration, (which proposes to undertake a review of island mental health and wellbeing evidence across the entirety of the three island authorities), this extends the reach of the HIF to 60 islands.

Recognising the services that island abattoirs provide to their communities, we committed to work with relevant partners to deliver sustainable and economical viable operations.

This commitment is fulfilled.

Although there is a relatively good abattoir coverage for all areas in Scotland, we recognise that there will be occasions where local requirements are not met. There are several reasons why this may be the case, based on throughput, costs, commercial pull of bigger processors and, on occasion, lack of local interest. It is vital that all abattoirs are fit for purpose and have a viable future, and to achieve this, a plant needs to run at a near to capacity for the size of the plant and in order to ensure sustained viability. Unfortunately, this might not be the case where low local throughput makes long-term viability an issue.

The Scottish Government commissioned a feasibility study to determine whether mobile abattoirs would be a viable option in Scotland. The study, which was published early in 2020, provides details of what would be required to operate mobile abattoirs in Scotland; including the regulatory framework and cost-benefit analysis of possible operational models.

Mobile abattoirs are required to have all the regulations that a stationary slaughter house have and are subject to official controls enforced and executed by Food Standards Scotland (FSS). A mobile abattoir would require a stance, which would require planning permission and be approved by FSS, meeting the same specifications as a stationary abattoir. Each individual location that a mobile abattoir operated in would hold the same requirements before the mobile abattoir could operate. No further legislation would be required other than what is already laid down for the running of a slaughter house. In addition, all abattoirs require to have OVS present and FSS meat inspectors, which would have a proportionately high cost burden for a mobile abattoir with what would likely be a very low throughput facility.

Any next steps would be for a commercial operator that wishes to take this forward. The Scottish Government, in conjunction with Food Standards Scotland, would of course be willing to discuss in more detail with any organisation who are considering operating either mobile abattoirs in Scotland, or indeed a new stationary abattoir.

Subject to specific eligibility rules, abattoirs are able to apply for funding, for capital and non-capital projects through the Food Processing, Marketing and Cooperation (FPMC) grant scheme and many have benefited from this over the years. The FPMC scheme is going through a process of change, as is the case with all schemes previously funded through the SRDP, however they continue to provide application windows where abattoirs and new food venture businesses would be able to apply for grants.

We committed to ensure that legislation and policy relating to early learning and childcare is appropriately island proofed.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We work in close partnership with COSLA in the delivery of the early learning and childcare expansion programme, and more broadly to support delivery of high quality ELC services across Scotland, to help ensure that the needs of remote areas and islands are met.

The Scottish Government has provided £476 million of capital funding to local authorities over the last four years to refurbish, re-purpose and extend existing nursery settings, as well as providing over 120 new facilities across Scotland. Individual local authorities have been responsible for deciding how this funding is used, ensuring that their capital programmes have been both appropriate and responsive to local need.

The childcare sector representative bodies, including Care and Learning Alliance, are a key to our consultation and implementation of Early Learning and Childcare, and contribute through, in particular, the Childcare Working and Working Group to the development of our Funding Follows the Child policy framework. They have an integral part in our response to needs of the childcare sector brought about by the global COVID pandemic through the work of the Sector Recovery Group. That has involved implications and considerations for rural and island communities alike.

Impact assessments have been carried out throughout the programme to expand the provision of funded ELC to 1140 hours per year for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds, including an islands impact assessment that can be found online. The most recent of these were carried out when the proposed legislation to bring in the statutory duty was laid in Parliament – see [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Modification\) Order 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk). An agreed principle of ELC funding is to acknowledge regional differences and seek to support local authorities to make decisions that support evidenced need within their own communities.

We committed to ensure that opportunities to develop the wellbeing of the Gaelic language and to increase the number of speakers and users are considered as part of sustainable economic development.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Additional support for the Cnoc Soilleir community and educational project is now in place . A number of Gaelic initiatives and bodies such as Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Storlann are located in island areas with positive economic results. Support is also available for community trusts which combine economic development with support for Gaelic.

There are a number of Gaelic projects and initiatives such as MG ALBA that contribute to economic development and this emphasis has been central to the Deputy First Minister's Faster Rate of Progress and Community Engagement initiatives.

We committed to support women in agriculture on Scottish islands to succeed, including encouraging their participation in the leadership development programme, addressing unconscious bias by organisations and businesses and breaking down cultural barriers.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Government has committed £300,000 to support women in agriculture until 2024/25 including the wider roll-out of the personal development programme 'Be Your Best Self' and the development of Skillseeder – a skills sharing app which provides an easy to use one-stop shop to find training and skills development opportunities across the country, particularly for those in rural and island areas.

The Women in Agriculture Development Programme (WiADP) was developed for women across all parts of Scotland and as part of this, the Women in Agriculture Practical Training Fund has provided £12,423 in support for practical training to women from island communities. Of the 460 successful applications to the fund, 4% were from women on islands. This year also saw an element of funding ring fenced specifically for applicants living in island communities.

A new series of courses begins in October with online and in-person provision to make it as inclusive as possible. We will continue to promote these courses to women on Scottish islands.

Additionally, we are funding a project with Mull and Iona Community Trust, to trial innovative, flexible and sustainable models of childcare, which might be applicable on other islands and in other rural and remote areas. Childcare was identified as a major barrier to women's full participation in agriculture.

We committed to work with relevant local authorities to develop regional food and drink action plans to support growth of the sector on islands, including a focus on the vital Whisky sector.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government made links with industry leaders at a roundtable for labour/skills shortages with Ministers. As a result of this work, a Working with Business Action Plan was developed to help identify actions that could be taken to help mitigate the effects of labour market shortages on businesses and to help stimulate economic recovery. We will continue to engage with sector leads across Scottish Government and their industry stakeholders and will continue to feed this information for consideration as part of the ongoing development of the Talent Attraction and Retention programme.

We committed to work with relevant local authorities to encourage take up of Food For Life accreditation to help stimulate local sourcing in public sector settings.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We continue to support the delivery of the Food for Life Programme with a focus on school meals and the Soil Association are targeting all Scottish local authorities to encourage them to apply for accreditation through the scheme. Through a process of education, and relationship building, delivery of the program is progressing steadily, and there are currently 18 councils who now hold FFL accreditation – this includes Orkney and Shetland who achieved bronze level accreditation in 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively. We are also discussing with the Soil Association the potential for expanding our support for the programme into other public sector settings.

Transport

Strategic Objective 3 – To improve transport services

We committed to ensure that existing and future transport-related policies, strategies and services are fully island proofed so that they truly meet the needs of island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In October 2021, we published the [NTS2 Delivery Plan – Island Communities Impact Assessment \(ICIA\) Screening Report](#).

To inform the development of our Aviation Strategy we carried out an online public consultation from the 18 October 2021 to 21 January 2022, giving people, including island communities, the opportunity to have their say. Transport Scotland officials visited airports in the Highlands and Islands to raise awareness of the consultation amongst local residents, and to encourage their participation. Local authorities from the Highlands and Islands also took part in stakeholder workshops, which we held to help develop our strategy.

The [consultation document](#) on the aviation strategy also contained a series of detailed questions on air services in the Highlands and Islands, and how they could better meet the needs of residents and tourists. Finally, we will complete an ICIA for any relevant actions which we are considering including in the strategy and undertake further consultation with Highlands and Islands stakeholders on specific topics where required.

We committed to engage with local authorities, island communities and transport operators in developing regulations and guidance for the bus services provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which aim to enable local authorities to better respond to local needs.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union and associated resource constraints for local authorities, has impacted on the development of guidance and regulations and the related consultation processes and consequently delayed the implementation of the Act.

A virtual workshop was held on 17 March 2021 to involve stakeholders in developing materials for a consultation on implementing the Bus provisions of the Act. The consultation launched in July and closed on 6 October 2021. Following this, regulations and associated guidance are being developed to implement the provisions which include the ability for local authorities to run their own services, a new bus partnership model, franchising and provisions for information relating to services. Each local authority can determine which of these tools (or a combination of them) can help improve local bus services. <https://consult.gov.scot/transport-scotland/part-3-bus-services-transport-scotland-act-2019/>

We committed to produce a long-term plan and investment programme for new ferries and development at ports to improve resilience, reliability, capacity and reduce emissions to give confidence to island communities on our ongoing commitment.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In 2019, Transport Scotland commenced the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) to help inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years. STPR2 will help to deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes for transport set out in the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and will align with other national plans such as the National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the Climate Change Plan.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, STPR2 has a two Phased approach, with Phase 1 reporting to the original timescale of winter 2020/21. An [Update and Phase 1 Recommendations](#) report was published in February 2021. Within this report, [Intervention 19](#) refers to investment in ferries and ports.

This package includes the production and maintenance of a long-term plan and investment programme for new ferries and development at ports. The long-term plan would help address and improve resilience, reliability, capacity, accessibility, increase standardisation, and reduce emissions across the Clyde and Hebrides ferry service (CHFS) and Northern Isles ferry service (NIFS) network, to meet the needs of island communities. This measure was identified in the draft Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) for Scotland 2021/22 to 2025/26 and is supported by investment of at least £580 million during the next five years.

The Scottish Government's [Infrastructure Investment Plan](#) (February 2021) reinforced the NIP commitment to a "long-term plan and investment programme" which will be taken forward in 2022 with the aim of publication by the end of the year.

A further Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan report for 2020 for the Clyde and Hebrides network was produced and discussed with key stakeholders. A summary of that report was shared with the key stakeholders through the CHFS Ferry Stakeholder Groups in June 2021.

During 2021, the Scottish Government approved the procurement by CMAL of the modern second-hand vessel MV Utne to serve on the Craignure-Oban route to Mull and bring additional resilience to the CalMac fleet as a whole. Ministers also approved the start of procurement of two new vessels for Islay, with shipbuilding contracts expected to be awarded around March 2022.

We committed to develop a new Ferries Plan that will meaningfully contribute to delivering the outcomes of wider Scottish Government strategies as set out in the National Transport Strategy and the National Islands Plan.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The [NTS2 Delivery Plan](#) (17 December 2020) stated that: “We will also prepare the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) as the successor to the Ferries Plan 2013-22. We will develop objectives based on supporting delivery of NTS2 and the National Islands Plan and develop proposals to meet those objectives which represent value for money. The ICP will be closely linked to the outcomes of the STPR2, in order to consider island connectivity more broadly having regard to aviation, ferries and fixed links, and to connecting and onward travel.”

Work in earnest of the Islands Connectivity Plan has been further delayed by the need to prioritise our operational response to COVID-19 and the majority of the work will now be undertaken in 2022 and beyond. We have been able to undertake some initial work on some topics including fares, emissions and investment planning. Our aim remains to publish a draft Plan for consultation, with supporting documents, in December 2022.

We committed to review the impacts of Road Equivalent Tariff and to consider future ferry fares policy options that will meet the needs of islanders and support island economies.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

As outlined above, the majority of the work on the Islands Connectivity Plan will be undertaken in 2022 with an aim of publishing a draft Plan for consultation in December 2022.

Also as part of the Ferries Plan, we committed to review and promote integration between ferries and other modes of transport on the mainland and islands, with a view to better facilitating the use of active, public or shared transport for all or part of journeys to and from islands in an affordable and accessible manner.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

This will be a strand of work undertaken as part of the Islands Connectivity Plan and the Strategic Transport Projects Review.

As part of the STPR2 two phase approach, an [Update and Phase 1 Recommendations](#) report was published in February 2021. Within this report, [Intervention 11](#) concerns supporting integrated journeys at ferry terminals. This intervention would involve undertaking a detailed review of key ferry terminals to consider physical integration, timetabling, signing, ticketing, and other facilities required to deliver a seamless service.

For the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services, we committed to develop and introduce a new booking, reservation and ticketing system, with Smart Ticketing capability, to replace the existing system.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

A project has been initiated to procure and implement a new booking and ticketing system for the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services. The procurement phase was completed and a contract awarded in 2021. Calmac Ferries Limited are now working with the supplier on implementation.

The Calmac Ferries Limited run Ar Turas project (funded by Transport Scotland), will be introducing a modern ticketing and booking system, anticipated for 2022, offering customers an improved booking and travel experience, maximising the use of car deck capacity and improving communications with customers.

Further information can be found: [Ar Turas | Latest News | CalMac Ferries](#)

We committed to use the feedback from the NTS consultation to inform the NTS Delivery Plan which will seek to address the different transport challenges faced across Scotland's different areas and regions including islands.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to determine strategic transport investments from our island communities through STPR2 – which will also inform Transport Scotland's Ferries Plan 2.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In February 2021, the [Phase 1 recommendations and associated impact assessment progress reports](#) were published. These are the first STPR2 recommendations for transport investment, focusing on recommendations for transport projects or interventions that significantly contribute to STPR2 objectives, align well with NTS2 priorities, and can be progressed or delivered within the current spending period and will help support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A series of impact assessments have been undertaken on STPR2, including an [Island Communities Impact Assessment \(ICIA\)](#). On 26 March 2021, an ICIA specific workshop was held with representatives of island communities, organisations and local authorities. An ICIA specific workshop was also held with representatives from Orkney Islands Council on the 27 April 2021 at request from the Council.

We committed to work in partnership with local authorities and communities to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, the design of place and access to bikes, facilities, promotion and education to make walking and cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys including as part of multi-modal journeys.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Transport Scotland funds Sustrans Scotland over £50 million each year to deliver the Places for Everyone active travel infrastructure programme. Local authorities can bid into this fund to create a range of active travel infrastructure schemes in their areas. Whilst match funding is requested for these schemes, local authorities also receive direct funding from the Cycling, Walking, Safer Routes grant to develop local infrastructure initiatives to promote active travel.

We continue to improve and expand work on our behavioural change programmes, such as increasing the uptake of child and adult cycle training, and driver awareness training for HGV and bus drivers.

At the end of 2021 we launched pilot projects as part of our commitment to provide free bikes to school age children who cannot afford one. Our island communities pilot is operated by Shetland Council who have partnered with the voluntary led Shetland Bikes Project, the Shetland Transport Partnership ZetTrans, and Ability Shetland. The pilot aims to assist 50 young people between the ages of 5-17 throughout the Island communities of Shetland. The pilot has made its first purchase of 25.

We continued to explore the potential to reduce the need to travel by using the planning system to promote places which bring people and services together.

We also grant fund Cycling UK £656k to run the Rural Connections programme which supports people in Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles, Argyll and Bute and other rural mainland areas to cycle, walk and wheel for everyday journeys, leisure and adventure. The programme offers a wide range of cycling and walking activities for all abilities.

Transport Scotland also funds the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places annual programme funded, managed by Paths for All, with a total of £9 million in grants awarded to sustainable travel behaviour change projects across Scotland. This includes the £5 million pro-rata Local Authority Fund and The £2 million Open Fund which is open to all third sector organisations and community groups.

Through the Island Communities Fund, £80,920 was provided to support Point and Sandwick Coastal Community Path SCIO in delivering the fourth phase of a coastal path linking the crofting townships of Shulishader and Flesherin with an accessible path that will improve access around the peninsula.

We continued to explore the potential to reduce the need to travel by using the planning system to promote places which bring people and services together.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The [draft National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) was laid in the Scottish Parliament and published for public consultation in November 2021.

It includes a new policy on local living, requiring plans and proposals to support the principle of 20 minute neighbourhoods. The focus of a 20 minute neighbourhood is on creating places of short distances for walking, wheeling or cycling that can connect people to a range of amenities and services close to home.

The characteristics of each 20 Minute Neighbourhood will need to reflect the circumstances, opportunities and aspirations of individual places. 20 minute neighbourhoods are not a template, but rather they are a flexible approach, that can vary across the country and across settlement scales to suit context. As part of this, creating local hubs that meet local community needs with good accessibility will help to reduce the need to travel longer distances and provide local employment opportunities for rural and island communities.

Draft NPF4 states that improved digital connectivity is a priority to sustain current businesses and create 'smart' communities, helping to unlock opportunities for rural businesses and remote working, and make future community growth more feasible.

Draft NPF4 also includes an updated policy on sustainable transport and active travel. This aims to reduce the need to travel unsustainably as well as actively encouraging the provision of sustainable transport.

Our approach aims to be clear but also flexible enough to reflect the different priorities and challenges for placemaking across Scotland. Local development plans, prepared by planning authorities, will also work within this framework to bring forward place-based solutions.

Subject to requirements as set out in the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service and the Northern Isles Ferry Service contracts, we will always strive to improve, where necessary and possible, issues relating to freight and will engage proactively with operators, communities and stakeholders as appropriate.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

During 2021, the Scottish Government provided funding to CalMac for two short-term charters of the freight vessel MV Arrow to support freight services on the Stornoway-Ullapool route (the most popular route for freight on the Clyde and Hebrides network).

Our ferry operators also continue to work very closely with the freight sector to manage demand and utilise capacity as effectively as possible.

Housing

Strategic Objective 4 – To improve housing

We committed to ensure that Housing to 2040 truly reflects the distinct needs of island communities.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

[Housing to 2040](#), Scotland's long-term strategy for housing, was published in March 2021. It is the culmination of extensive engagement with the housing sector, wider stakeholders and the public to co-produce a vision for what we want Scotland's homes and communities to look and feel like by the end of 2040. Feedback received from those living in and working with island communities, as well as the findings from the National Islands Plan consultation, helped to inform the vision and strategy.

The distinct needs of island communities are reflected across the policies and commitments set out in Housing to 2040 and are summarised in part 1E of the strategy. Since publication of Housing to 2040, the Scottish Government has made a commitment to develop a Remote, Rural and Islands Housing action plan to meet the housing needs of, and retain and attract people to, those communities.

We committed to ensure that the regulation of short-term lets takes account of the unique circumstances of island communities and make special provision for them where required.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government laid legislation to establish a new licensing scheme in November 2021, following careful consideration of responses to our consultation on the draft licensing legislation. The Licensing Order was approved by the Scottish Parliament in January 2022.

The principal component of our licensing scheme is a set of mandatory safety standards which will apply to all short-term lets across Scotland, including those on island communities. Licensing authorities must have a licensing scheme open to receive applications by 1 October 2022, and existing hosts and operators must apply for a licence before 1 April 2023 in order to continue operating. The final deadline for all hosts and operators to have a licence is 1 July 2024.

Additionally, legislation allowing councils to establish short-term let control areas, the [Town and Country Planning \(Short-term Let Control Areas\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#), was approved by the Scottish Parliament came into force in April 2021.

We committed to explore how the rural and island housing fund might be adapted in the future to expand the range of options to support housing development in remote and island communities.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

An extension to the Rural and Island Housing Fund (RHIF) beyond March 2021 with up to £30 million of funding was announced in November 2020. A stakeholder engagement survey provided overwhelming feedback that the fund should continue, and this has already been announced. While there were no suggestions from respondents to expand the range of housing options that the RIHF currently provides that have not been previously considered, the review of RIHF was helpful in informing relevant sections of Housing to 2040 strategy and policy areas that impact rural and island communities that will be taken forward following publication of Housing to 2040.

We committed to continue to provide grants to crofters to build and improve croft houses.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

Since the Croft House Grant scheme was launched in 2007, more than £23 million has been awarded to 1,067 families and individuals in rural and island communities. Approximately half of which has been awarded to island crofters.

Since March 2020 we have awarded over £2 million in grant funding to help build and improve homes for 73 crofters and their families.

We committed to make best use of all housing stock including derelict properties and options for compulsory purchase.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The statutory housing authority local authorities remain responsible for assessing housing requirements in their areas and setting out in their Local Housing Strategy, housing investment and service delivery requirements. This includes making best use of existing housing stock (i.e. bringing empty homes back into effective use or balancing the negative impacts of second homes) as well as the delivery of new housing.

Tackling empty homes remains a priority for Scottish Government and we continue to fund the [Scottish Empty Homes Partnership](#) to work with local authorities, and owners, to return them to productive use. The work of the Partnership has helped to bring more than 6,000 homes back into use since 2010 and we are keen to see this figure continue to grow. Dedicated empty homes officers are fundamental to this approach and we want to see them working across all of our island communities.

We committed to improve access to homes for people looking to settle in, or return to, island communities. In collaboration with local authorities and relevant stakeholders, we will examine the full range of options to do this, making best use of our existing homes and new supply.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Through [Housing to 2040](#) we committed to take action so that rural and island communities have access to high-quality, affordable and market housing which has been planned alongside the economic and physical infrastructure and helps people to live, work and thrive – and we will help to stem rural depopulation.

Many of the actions in the route map will bring benefits to rural and island communities as well as to urban ones. For example, our plans to:

- extend the use of modern methods of construction;
- to scale up opportunities for self-provided housing;
- to regulate short-term lets;
- to give local authorities powers to manage the numbers of second homes where they see this as a problem in their area; and
- to establish a new fund for local authorities to apply to in order to bring empty homes and potential empty homes back into residential use.

As the statutory housing authority local authorities are responsible for assessing housing requirements in their areas and setting out in their Local Housing Strategy, housing investment and service delivery requirements. This includes making best use of existing housing stock (i.e. bringing empty homes back into effective use or balancing the negative impacts of second homes) as well as the delivery of new housing. Revised Local Housing Strategy guidance was issued in 2019.

Since publication of Housing to 2040, the Scottish Government has made a commitment to develop a Remote, Rural and Islands Housing action plan to meet the housing needs of, and retain and attract people to, those communities.

We committed to ensure that the impact on Gaelic speaking communities is considered as housing policies are developed.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

It is expected that Local Housing Strategies will evidence how the development of outcomes have been influenced by community engagement and consultation to deliver national priorities, plans and targets, and how the Place Principle is being used to deliver change within communities and achieve desired outcomes.

The Place Principle aims to promote a shared understanding of place, and the need to take a more joined-up, collaborative approach to services and assets within a place to achieve better outcomes for people and communities in which they live. The Place Principle is not prescriptive – rather, it encourages and enables local flexibility in responding to issues and circumstances in different places.

Fuel Poverty

Strategic Objective 5 – To reduce levels of fuel poverty

We committed to review how delivery schemes can work better locally and review funding for island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We continue to target areas and communities with higher levels of fuel poverty through our Area Based Schemes. Local schemes are designed and delivered by councils, in conjunction with utility companies and local delivery partners, targeting fuel poor areas to provide energy efficiency measures to a large number of Scottish households and help reduce fuel poverty. ABS funding enables local delivery partners to offer energy efficiency measures at no cost or a reduced cost to owner occupiers and private landlords with fewer than four properties.

Scottish Government funding for Area Based Schemes reflects the higher levels of fuel poverty need in some communities. Allocations to councils are based upon a needs-based funding model agreed with COSLA. In 2020 we reviewed and updated the model to reflect the new definition of fuel poverty in Scotland. We also agreed with councils that levels of extreme fuel poverty should be included as a new weighting in determining ABS grant funding.

Regular updates to the ABS funding model has helped to ensure that our funding has continued to be targeted effectively each year since 2013. Every council in Scotland was offered more funding in 2021/22 than in 2020/21 and the average funding per fuel poor household increased across Scotland. For example in 2021/22, the six ‘island local authorities’ were allocated just under £12.2 million in ABS funding. This compares with £11 million in 2020/21; £9.6 million in 2019/20; and £9.5 million in 2018/19.

We continue to recognise that the costs of delivering energy efficiency measures are higher in remote rural and island areas. Councils serving remote rural/island communities can provide grant-in-aid worth up to £14,000 for those in extreme fuel poverty. In 2021/22 we expanded the scope of ABS projects to include funding for zero/low carbon heating measures. This includes a £2,000 uplift to reflect the greater delivery costs in remote rural areas and island communities.

We continue to target households across Scotland most likely to be in fuel poverty through our Warmer Homes Scotland scheme. The scheme is designed to help those living in, or at risk of, fuel poverty through installing insulation and heating measures to individual homes. The scheme recommends low-carbon measures first, alongside a package of fabric measures, to increase the energy efficiency of the property and decrease carbon emissions. These include High Heat Retention Heating Systems, Air Source Heat Pumps, Ground Source Heat Pumps, Micro-hydro and Micro-wind. Some of these measures may be of particular benefit to households living in rural and island areas that are not served by the gas grid.

The scheme is being delivered on a regional basis by Warmworks (including a separate Islands region) to ensure that all households in Scotland receive the same level of service. Grant levels within the scheme have been increased to encourage the installation of air source heat pumps and external wall insulation together to cover the cost of these high cost measures. Warmer Homes Scotland operates a national pricing mechanism, meaning that rural and island homes aren't disproportionately affected.

The successor to Warmer Homes Scotland is currently undergoing procurement, to go live 2023. As part of scheme design, and eligibility working group has been formed which is reviewing ways in which eligibility levels and processes could be changed to better target support at fuel poor households. This will take cognisance of the particular issues affecting households in remote and island communities.

We committed to develop a remote rural, remote small town and island Minimum Income Standard uplift, with the uplift for island areas to be determined separately.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

Scottish Government have published a [report](#) from Loughborough University on the cost of remoteness when measuring fuel poverty. The report establishes the uplifts to the UK Minimum Income Standard which will apply to households in remote rural, remote small town and island areas when measuring fuel poverty.

We committed to produce an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) on the final Fuel Poverty Strategy, ensuring that representatives from island local authorities are fully involved in its development.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The proposed Fuel Poverty Strategy was laid in Parliament on 9 November 2021. The [Fuel Poverty Strategy](#) was published in December 2021. We have undertaken a further Island Communities Impact Assessment specifically on the Strategy and this will be published in due course.

We committed to carry out research and analysis to meet the requirements of the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 that will also enhance our understanding of the costs of living faced by families living in island communities.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

Scottish Government have published a [report](#) from Loughborough University on the cost of remoteness when measuring fuel poverty. The report establishes the uplifts to the UK Minimum Income Standard which will apply to households in remote rural, remote small town and island areas when measuring fuel poverty.

The published research excludes housing (rent, council tax and water rates), childcare and fuel costs since these are not required for fuel poverty measurement and so is not a direct comparison to the UK MIS.

The final report concludes that the findings confirm those of the 2013 Minimum Income Standard research for remote rural Scotland (on which current uplifts are based), showing that the extra costs in these areas are of broadly the same magnitude to what the research team originally anticipated although there is some variation by household-type to the uplifts we are currently applying in fuel poverty monitoring.

Digital Connectivity

Strategic Objective 6 – To improve digital connectivity

We committed to deliver a step change in the quality of digital connectivity across the islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

As outlined in last year's report, BT were required to update their implementation plan for the £384 million R100 North contract to take account of changes in commercial build plans. These revised plans were finalised in summer 2020 with the online address checker updated to reflect the new build plan.

A further £8 million of funding was secured from UK Government which was used to 'flip' around 3,600 premises due to receive a fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) connection to fibre to the premises (FTTP). This means that all of the R100 North contract build will now be FTTP, capable of delivering gigabit capable speeds – over 30 times faster than the superfast commitment.

Survey work for delivery of 16 new subsea cables has completed with build expected to take place during 2022 (weather dependent).

We committed to mandate the delivery of gigabit-capable connectivity to selected island locations, through the R100 programme, with many other island communities to benefit once contracts are finalised.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Through the R100 North contract, delivery of gigabit capable infrastructure was mandated in South Mull, Uig/Timsgarry, Sanday, Stronsay, Yell and Unst. However, many more islands are also benefiting from build through the R100 contracts.

We committed to call on the UK Government to prioritise early investment in Scotland's islands as part of their plans for full fibre roll-out by 2025.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The UK Government has indicated that £1.2 billion will be made available across the UK to deliver 85% gigabit capable connectivity by 2025 through 'Project Gigabit'. We continue to work closely with the UK Government to ensure that Scotland receives its fair share of Project Gigabit funding and to ensure early investment in Scotland's islands.

We committed to call on Ofcom to address the issues faced by island communities when designing telecoms regulation and policy. We also committed to convene a meeting with Ofcom and island representatives to explore how regulatory levers (such as spectrum auctions) could improve both mobile and broadband coverage on the islands and ensure that the needs of islands are represented to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in UK national policy development.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government works closely with representatives of OFCOM to ensure that Scotland's interests are represented and any issues raised. Scottish Government responds to OFCOM consultations and recently provided a response to the DCMS consultation on connectivity for 'Very Hard to Reach Premises' as part of their planning for Project Gigabit. We anticipate that Scotland will have a disproportionately high number of premises considered 'Very Hard to Reach' for the purposes of Project Gigabit and await with interest the publication of UK Government's findings.

Through the Scotland 5G Centre, building on the 5G RuralFirst trials currently taking place on Orkney, and working with partners including Ofcom, we committed to develop rural 5G use cases to address the rural digital divide using 5G technology.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Led by the University of Strathclyde, the [Rural Testbed project](#) is delivering a 5G testbed in two locations (Orkney and Loch Lomond), which is backed with £1.9 million funding from the Scotland 5G Centre.

In the first quarter of 2021, fibre backhaul was deployed at Westray to support the delivery of a pan-island testbed 5G network and key use cases of 5G fixed wireless access, IoT (internet of things) and energy, and mobile/roaming access.

We committed to work with local resilience partnerships and telecoms providers to encourage them to focus on resilience of data links to and from the islands.

Work has yet to be progressed in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government Islands Team will be engaging with relevant resilience partnerships in 2022 to understand challenges to resilience of data links to and from the islands, and ensure these are considered.

We committed to develop a digital skills programme designed by island communities to meet their needs.

Work has yet to be progressed in relation to this commitment.

We committed to extend the availability of coding clubs and community-based digital inclusion programmes across the islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Engagement was undertaken in 2021 to understand models for delivering coding clubs and digital inclusion programmes in island communities, including examples such as [Silicon Croft](#) in Shetland. Work will be undertaken in 2022 to explore how learning from such models could be implemented across the islands.

Health and Social Care and Wellbeing

Strategic Objective 7 – To improve and promote health, social care and wellbeing.

We committed to work with NHS Boards, Local Authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships to ensure that there is fair, accessible health and social care for those on islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

All of the islands are attached to Integration Authorities which serve the specific needs of those island communities. Integration Joint Boards continue to work closely with Health and Social Care Partnerships to ensure each island is recognised within their unique circumstances.

An additional £250 million is being invested over the lifetime of this Parliament to reduce the number of drug-related deaths in Scotland and improve lives. A significant portion of this funding has gone directly to local areas via local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships. Island Boards have received around £686,000 of this investment and are also benefitting from additional funding to implement the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards via the MAT Standards Implementation Team (MIST). MIST have been in contact with all ADPs, including Island ADPs, to offer tailored support based on their needs. Local organisations can also apply to the Corra Foundation operated grant funding schemes. This funding is to expand and improve availability of all types of drug treatment, including residential rehabilitation.

Scottish Government has funded community pharmacy test of change pilots in three NHS boards (NHS Forth Valley, NHS Highland and NHS Tayside) to enhance early detection and early intervention in diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. Two of the boards (NHS Tayside and NHS Highland) have procured ‘roaming’ blood testing machines that can move between sites, supporting remote and rural healthcare delivery. The NHS Highland roaming analyser is currently on the island of Tiree and will move on to other neighbouring islands in the health board area to provide point of care testing.

We committed to identify and promote good practice, especially as regards the improvement of services in islands and other remote areas.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Islands Integration Authorities are represented on the Strategic Planning and Performance Officers Group (SPPOG), the Chief Officers’ Network for sharing good practice. There are also regular updates with Scottish Government, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and monthly meetings with the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care.

ADPs were given £3 million from the Drug Deaths Taskforce to implement improvements in line with the Taskforce's six evidence based strategies. Information on what proportion of this funding went to each area and where it was spent is available at <https://drugdeathstaskforce.scot/about-the-taskforce/funding-and-key-projects/>. This page also includes the projects funded through the innovation fund.

ADPs are encouraged to share learning and all projects will produce an evaluation which will inform future Taskforce recommendations. The Taskforce is producing a thematic evaluation which will feed in to their final report in December 2022.

Work is ongoing to implement the recommendations from the '[Shaping the Future Together: Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group](#)' report, including scoping work for a Centre for Excellence for remote and rural health and social care.

We committed to support the extension of NHS Near Me/Attend Anywhere, and other digital health initiatives, to reduce unnecessary travel and enable more care to be delivered on Islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

NHS Near Me has been implemented and is being utilised across every Health Board in Scotland with upwards of 1.3 million appointments undertaken using the platform since early 2020. This continues to provide greater flexibility, whilst supporting remote working, reducing the need to travel and promoting greater access to specialist services. We also continue to support people to manage their condition from home with a new digital platforms established for things like blood pressure and COVID-19 monitoring being rolled out across the country.

Procurement of a 'once for Scotland' digital solution for the education and management of type 2 diabetes is being considered. This will improve equity of access to type 2 diabetes services in remote and rural areas, ensuring consistency in type 2 diabetes education across Scotland and promoting self-management of the condition, as patients will have regular digital access to the content available. NHS Highland are using the digital programmes 'Second Nature' for weight management, 'MyDesmond' for type 2 diabetes and Momentum from Beat for support for those with binge eating disorder. The feedback from patients is excellent in that it reduces travel, provides immediate high quality care and avoids the specific challenges of remote and rural life which often mean it is difficult to maintain confidentiality due to small communities and how well people tend to know each other. Digital self-management is completely confidential as is not group based.

SG Digital Transformation Service (DTS) will undertake a research and service design project into type 2 diabetes and weight management services. This will identify patient needs, the gaps in current services and how these can be addressed. The focus will primarily be on those living with overweight or obesity (including those with type 2 diabetes) in areas of higher deprivation (SIMD1 and SIMD2) to focus on how we avoid further widening existing health inequalities. This project would provide evidence of what people need throughout their care journey to co-produce new ways of working. This would help us to identify the change required in a way that ensures equality of access by putting the patient at the centre of the co-production and service design journey. Further, it would provide us with vital knowledge and understanding of the current landscape and provide recommendations for next steps to transform the pathways of care to effectively meet the needs of individuals, including those in remote and rural areas. This project is a first step in understanding how we create our own services which can be tailored to meet the needs of the Scottish population.

We committed to work with stakeholders to develop propositions for a national centre for excellence in remote, rural and island health and social care.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government continues to build on the work of [Shaping the Future Together: Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group](#) report to establish a formal proposal for a National Centre for Remote, Rural and island Healthcare in Scotland that is inclusive of the needs, opportunities and models of excellence from the whole remote and rural health and care workforce. The Primary Care Division of Scottish Government is currently developing a proposal for how a centre for excellence should look, and will be engaging with stakeholders shortly.

Additionally, the Programme for Government states that ‘We will also ensure that our islands and rural areas are not left behind as we work to improve health services by creating a centre of excellence for rural and remote medicine and social care, with scoping work starting this year.’ We will continue to scope and engage with stakeholders for this Programme for Government year and beyond.

We committed to work with stakeholders to ensure that we develop a plan to adequately support the ageing population of island communities so that they remain active, connected, engaged and have access to suitable, quality opportunities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Integration Authorities continue to work closely with their communities to develop strategic plans for the delivery of health and social care services most suitable to the specific needs of their communities.

Additionally, funding provided via the Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Framework contributes towards resource in local leisure centres focused on long-term condition management which often affects those in older age groups.

We committed to support relevant local authorities to plan and develop sports facilities on the islands that respond to the needs of communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We continue to work with colleagues in **sport**scotland who engage strategically with local authorities (through their capital planning processes) and island communities with regards to opportunities to deliver improved local facility provision for sport and physical activity.

In April 2021, **sport**scotland made an award of £30,000 to Shetland Golf Club to support the development of an indoor three bay practice facility providing a quality training facility which will allow the local population to learn, develop and participate in golf all year round. In particular, the facility will support and improve coach education and increase training opportunities on the islands, during winter months and inclement weather.

In December 2021, **sport**scotland made an award of £20,000 to Orkney Amateur Weightlifting Club to support the development of a quality weightlifting training facility. The facility development will significantly improve the Club's offer to members, both in terms of time and equipment available to train and develop. It will allow the Club to work with targeted groups including young people, women and girls, as well as those with disabilities. In addition, this facility will provide better access to a gym facility in a rural area where access to this type of facility is a challenge.

sportscotland are currently engaged in conversations with regards to cycling facility projects in the Western Isles, Orkney, Argyll and Bute and North Ayrshire as part of the national Cycling Facilities Fund which will potentially see applications for investment into Island communities.

We committed to promote participation in sport and physical activity by ensuring national programmes such as Active Schools and Community Sport Hubs are serving island communities, and continuing the Island Athlete Travel Award Scheme.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

Furthermore, **sport**scotland have worked with local partners to support sport to restart safely as COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. With restrictions easing more quickly for Scotland's islands, more sports activity was able to resume earlier in island communities than on the mainland. More Active Schools activity resumed in terms one of 2021/22 academic year, although the pace of restart was considered against local needs including the wider educational requirements of school settings.

Additionally, **sport**scotland invested £70,184 into the three islands authorities to deliver sport and physical activity opportunities to children and young people during the summer of 2021 as part of Scottish Government's Get into Summer programme. Islands in other local authority areas also benefitted through this programme, although with funds distributed through the local authority it is not possible to provide a financial value for these other islands.

The Athlete Travel Award Scheme (ATAS) also resumed following the lifting of travel restrictions, with up to 32 athletes from across the four Highland and Islands local authorities benefitting from support in 2021/22.

We committed to work with Orkney Islands Council and other partners to use the hosting of the 2023 Islands Games by Orkney to strengthen sports development on the island.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

sportscotland are working with Orkney Islands Council and the Orkney Island Games Organising Committee to look at a two-day planning summit with the 13 Governing Bodies of Sport that will be involved in the Orkney 2025 Games. This summit will begin the process of ensuring that Orkney have in place, the right facility infrastructure, well trained people and the volunteers, coaches and athletes that will not only host and contribute to a successful Games but will also inspire and provide a sustainable infrastructure for the people of Orkney to thrive and lead active lives.

Additionally, Orkney Islands Council and **sport**scotland presented a joint approach to strengthening the role of sport and physical activity in terms of reaching out to the less active and supporting physical and mental health initiatives in Orkney to the Living Well Community Planning Partnership sub-group. This was well received by elected members, the NHS Director of Public Health and other key stakeholders and has opened up opportunities for further engagement. **sport**scotland have also held strategic discussions with local partners to develop a capital programme that will deliver improved local facility provision for sport.

sportscotland also continue to support the development of a Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy for Orkney which is aligned to local and community priorities. There has been strong stakeholder engagement and input from key partners including Orkney Islands Council, NHS Orkney Pickaquoy Trust, **sport**scotland and third sector organisations. An initial draft has been completed with the final document progressing to final sign off by Community Planning Partnership partners in early 2022.

We committed to work with our partners to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take steps to assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We remain committed to investing in interventions which provide evidence of being able to change the attitudes of offenders. We will expand the availability of the Caledonian System, and increase our investment to £10 million over the next two years. This is an internationally recognised behavioural change programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse which involves working with the whole family to reduce the risk of harm to women and children. We will progress work over the next two years to support the national roll-out of the system, with the aim of making it available to all 32 Scottish local authorities by the end of the parliamentary term.

Further, as highlighted in [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22](#), we aim to ensure that all eligible children who are victims or witnesses to abuse or violence will have access to a 'Bairns' Hoose' by 2025. That means the services they need will all be available via a coordinated approach designed to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences to different professionals. Children below the age of criminal responsibility, whose behaviour has caused harm, will also have access to the services it will provide.

Bairns' Hoose – based on an Icelandic model Barnahus – will bring together services in a 'four rooms' approach with child protection, health, justice and recovery services all made available in one setting. A key aim of the model is to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences to different professionals. A new National Bairns' Hoose Governance group is currently being established and will consider issues around implementation in rural and island settings.

The new Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviews is being introduced nationally from 2021 to 2024 and will be seen as the 'justice room' of the Bairns' Hoose. The National JII Governance Group has established the Remote and Islands Joint Investigative Interviewing Implementation Subgroup in recognition that a particular focus on the implementation challenges in remote and island contexts will help realise our shared ambition that all children in Scotland have access to the Scottish Child Interview Model for joint investigative interviewing where this would best meet their needs.

We committed to address any equality, health and wellbeing related data gaps that exist in respect of, for example, women and girls, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government has committed to an independent strategic funding review to look at how national and local specialist services for women and children experiencing gender based violence are commissioned and funded across Scotland, which will commence in spring 2022.

Additionally, we are currently in the process of developing a First Data Strategy across health and care, with delivery expected later in 2022.

Furthermore, the Delivering Equally Safe Fund helps to implement Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, by supporting frontline organisations and projects that broaden access to support survivors. A priority area of the fund is working with those in remote or island communities. The fund will run from October 2021 to September 2023.

We committed to consider our consultation on out of school care through which we have gathered views from parents on the challenges of accessing childcare and range of activities for school age children in island communities. Responses to our consultation will, together with continued engagement, inform development of a future strategic framework which will be published before the end of this parliamentary term.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In March 2021, we published our [School Age Childcare Progress Report](#). The report captures what has been learned from our public consultation and sets out the steps we are taking to move closer to our vision for school age childcare in Scotland.

The Progress Report announced a number of school age childcare pilot projects, including a project with Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT). MICT are working to test new models of childcare provision on Mull, utilising local partnerships and existing community resources where possible. MICT will look to develop and deliver childcare provision using, but not limited to: regulated out of school care; organised children's activities, and; the establishment of a network of childminders, nannies and babysitters to offer flexible childcare solutions. Crucially, as well as helping us develop our policy, MICT will produce a resource in an appropriate format which can be used to share the learning from this project, thus enabling other communities to learn from the approaches taken.

Additionally, impact assessments will be carried out throughout the programme to deliver a system of school age childcare, including an islands impact assessment.

We committed to ensure that health, social care and wellbeing services are available through the medium of Gaelic to support Gaelic speaking island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

NHS Highland commitments to Gaelic are outlined in its [Gaelic Language Plan, 2017-2022](#). NHS Western Isles is currently revising its Gaelic Language Plan, with the understanding that it will soon be submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which will outline its commitments to Gaelic when approved. Both NHS Gaelic plans contain a number of commitments to the use of Gaelic within the functions of the NHS trusts, with both trusts operating in island areas. The aim is both to encourage and increase the use of Gaelic in health, care and wellbeing services.

There is no additional funding for these services, however small project funding could be applied for through the Bòrd's GLAIF stream.

We committed to align our ambition to eradicate child poverty with the Plan by continuing to work with island local authorities and health boards to build on their understanding of child poverty in their areas – helping to focus efforts on lifting families out of poverty and mitigating against its damaging impact.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

During the course of 2021/22, the Scottish Government has continued to work with island local authorities, as part of the national Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, in order to ensure successful delivery of key commitments. This includes delivery of 1,140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare and support delivered through the Parental Employability Support Fund.

Together with national partners, including the Improvement Service, Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, the Scottish Government have worked with island authorities and others to support development of Local Child Poverty Action Reports and development of effective action to tackle child poverty in our islands communities – where poverty can often be hidden in national level statistics due to the higher cost of living experienced.

Key Scottish Government investment in new support, including the Scottish Child Payment – which is already supporting 106,000 children under the age of 6 – and the Parental Employability Support Fund, is helping local areas to tackle poverty and enhance the support available for parents and families. We have already made up to £23 million available for our Parental Employability Support Fund between 2019 and 2022, and have committed a further £15 million in the next two years.

To support the tailoring of action on child poverty in island communities, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Ms Gougeon MSP, instructed Rural and Island officials in August 2021 to commission a ‘deep-dive’ into current child poverty data, evidence and research, specific to rural and island communities. Ms Gougeon has instructed officials to be bold and ambitious in their work to tackle child poverty – where every effort will be made to ensure that future projects and interventions align with, and form part of, the work being led by the Scottish Government’s Tackling Child Poverty Unit.

These approaches align with our wider child poverty responsibilities and have strong synergies across four key COVID-19 Recovery themes:

- person centred services;
- creating good jobs;
- tackling poverty; and
- improving wellbeing of children and young people.

Collectively, and as part of a government-wide focus, our work on child poverty across rural communities and on our islands will support:

- the next Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2022-2026);
- our PfG commitments on child poverty;
- COVID-19 Recovery; and
- the identification of future interventions to tackle child poverty.

We committed to work alongside national partners, continuing to share good practice identified across Scotland which could be applicable to child poverty in our island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In 2021, Rural and Islands officials commissioned a ‘deep-dive’ research project, which will be published in March 2022. This will help Scottish Government to improve our understanding of child poverty in rural and island areas and will establish what we can learn from existing evidence, in addition to identifying where data and information gaps might exist so that they can be addressed.

This piece of work will help us understand what support and interventions will most effectively meet the particular needs of children and young people across all our unique rural and island communities. It will also establish whether we have the correct mechanisms in place to hear and capture the stories and evidence from children and young people regarding their specific needs, and if those mechanisms are not in place we will work collaboratively to establish how we can deliver this more effectively in coming years.

Other workstreams that we know will impact on child poverty in the longer-terms include:

- the Mull and Iona Community Trust Out of School Care Trial;
- Accessing School Age Childcare in Scotland’s Rural and Island Regions research; and
- feasibility and software development work with ZetTrans and HiTrans to develop our understanding of how we might utilise Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

We committed to work with islanders to contribute, where we can, to the creation of a fairer, healthier, happier nation for all of Scotland by supporting the work of the group of Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo).

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We continue to learn and collaborate with other countries and organisations to create an economy that supports our island communities, aiming to ensure that they have access to opportunities that deliver local growth and wellbeing through tackling inequalities.

The Community Wealth Building (CWB) model of economic development acts as a tool or framework against which our local authorities can work with the private, third and community sectors to deliver a genuine, tangible wellbeing economy. The model is a strategic one – designed to add value and influence the activities of the landscape of partnerships we already have in place.

At the heart of the CWB approach and our ethos is a recognition that redistribution of wealth, while necessary to tackle poverty head on and in the short term, only goes so far. The model seeks to ‘pre-distribute’ wealth by growing the number of Scots who have a greater ownership stake in the Scottish economy, and in so doing tackle structural inequality. We are taking a broader view of what it means to be a successful economy, society and country and putting people and the planet at the heart of our economy – moving away from more traditional attitudes and measures of growth.

Our new 10-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation will build on the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy to create a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy, and allow us to address some of the longstanding issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, such as child poverty. Mainstreaming the CWB model as a practical model to deliver a tangible Wellbeing Economy at a grassroots level will lay the groundwork for a more equitable and resilient economy for the future – on our islands and across all parts of Scotland.

We committed to work with our partners to consider a range of options to ensure that adequate mental health care is available, whilst taking into consideration the uniqueness of our island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We are committed to reviewing the [Mental Health Strategy 2012-2027](#) at its halfway point in 2022. Since the publication of the Mental Health Strategy in March 2017, we have accumulated a significant number of additional commitments and actions relating to mental health. Several of these commitments overlap significantly, some have been completed outright, and some have been superseded by more recent or relevant commitments. Reviewing the Strategy also provides us with an opportunity to systematically review all of our other existing commitments and make sure that our policies around rural mental health are current and appropriate for those living throughout rural and island areas in Scotland.

Scottish Government is supporting GP Practices across Scotland to increase mental health support within primary care settings. We are working with Primary Care partners to introduce Mental Health in Primary Care Services. These services will support GPs by providing mental health assessment, treatment, care and support. This builds on examples of good practice already implemented through the Primary Care Improvement Plan, and through our work on Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy both initiatives have increased the mental health workforce within primary care.

In February 2021, we announced an additional £120 million for a Recovery and Renewal Fund to ensure the delivery of the commitments set out in the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan. A portion of the Fund will support development of an integrated culture of mental wellbeing and prevention within local communities and across Scotland, and promote the capacity of community organisations and grass roots groups as supported by the third sector. We are keen that this benefits communities across Scotland, including our island communities. Supporting those living in remote and rural communities is one of the fund criteria.

Additionally, via the Framework for Type 2 Diabetes prevention, funding has been provided to health boards to enhance psychology provision in type 2 diabetes and weight management. This has allowed NHS Highland and NHS Western Isles to commission Beat to provide remote guided self-help for binge eating disorder. NHS Highland and NHS Orkney have placed two health psychology trainees within the weight management and type 2 diabetes prevention services working together with NES to meet the needs of the respective populations and to enhance psychological knowledge and education across NHS teams.

Environmental Wellbeing and Biosecurity

Strategic Objective 8 – To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity

We committed to protect island biodiversity.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Projects have been undertaken across our island communities to improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity:

- The MarPAMM project aims to pilot a co-management approach to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Outer Hebrides marine region. We have completed Phase 1 of community engagement, identifying key issues and priorities for MPAs and their management, with project completion expected in March 2022.
- Agri-Environment and Climate Scheme (AECS) was open for applications in 2021, with a restricted round. 874 applications were approved on islands with a total sum of £6.63 million awarded to deliver benefits for protected areas management, corncrakes, waders and organics over 225,212 ha.
- Species on the Edge is a partnership of NatureScot and seven nature conservation charities remains, all dedicated to improving the fortunes of 40 priority species found along Scotland's coast and islands. It continues to progress through its four and a half year programme of work to tackle the impacts of environmental change on wildlife to benefit both nature and people. Work towards a Phase 2 NHLF bid has taken longer than expected, but submission is now planned for March 2022.
- Agreements remain in place to manage land in Islay, Uist, Coll, Tiree and South Walls for the benefit of Greenland barnacle geese and/or Greenland white-fronted geese, whilst supporting farmers whose land and crops are affected by the birds. Funding is in place to support the schemes to 2023.
- Agreements are in place to support land managers who are experiencing difficulties with white-tailed eagles. There is a national policy for white-tailed eagles, but there are concentrations on islands – particularly Mull, Skye and the Outer Hebrides.
- The Northern Isles Landscape Partnership Project continues to progress, with aims of improving and managing habitats for key native bird species on a number of non-connected Orkney Isles.
- The Orkney Native Wildlife Project is designed to remove the invasive non-native stoat from Orkney and prevent catastrophic decline in native wildlife (Orkney vole, Short-eared owl, Hen harrier and various wader and seabird species).

- Support remains in place to maintain a viable red-billed chough population on Islay, whilst a long-term approach to population management is developed and agreed. A decision on the long-term approach will be informed by the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, which is due in autumn 2022. The population is at risk of extinction without intervention. NatureScot have provided funding for supplementary feeding of chough at key nursery sites on Islay and Colonsay, and we are continuing to utilise AECS/NatureScot Management Agreements to support chough habitat management on the islands. Funding, through the NS Biodiversity scheme will be used to restore the largest chough roost site on Islay in March 2022. We continue to work very closely with our partners on the Islay Chough Study Group and the Scottish Chough Forum and further work, including analysing chough habitat variabilities and potential genetic reinforcement will be looked at over the coming months. A review of the biotic and abiotic factors affecting all British and Irish chough populations has been instigated and will be complete by February 2022. This study will provide a context of factors influencing all regional populations, which will inform NatureScots considerations.

- NatureScot commissioned three reports evaluating the impact and intervention options for mammalian invasive non-native species on island protected areas (Rum, Noss and Hermaness on Unst). Following the Rum report, we have installed a weather station to help us understand the impact of weather on impacts of rats on seabirds, and the impacts of weather on breeding success of seabirds. We are also trialling new rat tracking techniques (to improve efficiency and accuracy) and incorporating winter monitoring to our programme of monitoring.
- The project to remove non-native rhododendron from Kinloch Village on Rum remains ongoing, with significant removal of rhododendron this year. The final phase aims in 2022 will aim to tackle cotoneaster.

We committed to address biosecurity in a holistic and integrated manner as a means not only to contribute to environmental wellbeing, but also to contribute to sustainable economic development on Scottish islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Orkney Native Wildlife Project has biosecurity plans in place to prevent spread of stoats to the non-linked isles. Once the eradication is successful, this will include biosecurity to prevent re-invasion. These plans interlink with the Biosecurity for LIFE project.

We committed to establish an islands forum, through Zero Waste Scotland, as part of the implementation of the Deposit Return Scheme, to ensure that key considerations for islands (and rural communities more generally) are reflected. This Forum will support, not only, input into our legislative plans for the scheme but also ensure that key considerations for islands communities are integrated into the implementation planning process.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to work with island communities to explore how they can contribute to the circular economy through small-scale pilots for example supporting local food production.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise entered into a partnership in February 2020. Through the appointment of a Regional Engagement Partner, this initiative is designed to support a more circular economy in the Highlands and Islands, adopting a place-based approach. A circular economy reduces waste to a minimum by recovering and reusing as many products and materials as possible, over and over again. It's a make, remake and reuse economy.

The partnership provides a direct referral service for specific projects where ZWS can support local communities or businesses.

The Islands Green Recovery Programme (IGRP) delivered for Scottish Government by Inspiring Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Energy Savings Trust and Highlands and Islands Enterprise delivered investment last year that supported projects including: energy performance improvements of community-owned housing on Shapinsay in Orkney; decarbonisation of a community facility (former school) on Bressay, Shetland; the main community building by the pier on Eigg, and the Armadale Store on Skye run by the Sleat Community Trust.

IGRP also funded a significant horticulture study for seven of the Orkney islands, looking at the potential for enhanced horticulture methods at the community scale, including aspects of vertical farming and hydroponics.

See [case studies of these and other projects](#) on the HIE website.

More information on [IGRP investment and outcomes](#) is available on the Inspiring Scotland site.

We committed to continue and refresh the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, which has benefited island communities through provision of infrastructure to mitigate the impact of increased tourism benefiting islands' communities and environment.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to develop work with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy's Non-Native Species Action Group to increase public information around minimising particularly highrisk invasive species movements on islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The ongoing island eradication projects listed below are run by NatureScot or RSPB. All of these projects engage with island communities to raise awareness of invasive predators and, in particular, to help prevent them from spreading onto adjacent islands:

- The Hebridean Mink Project is now in its biosecurity phase, having virtually completed the task of eradication. Trapping effort has been maintained at a low level throughout the Outer Hebrides during COVID-19 restrictions, with only a small number (14) of mink trapped. Work will continue, focused on tracking and removing the last remaining individuals. Benefits to biodiversity – particularly ground nesting birds – are not quantified but are significant.
- Work to assess the feasibility of removing hedgehogs from the Uists in order to protect internationally important bird populations is in progress in partnership with RSPB Scotland. Work on the feasibility studies has made good progress, and will be complete by March 2022. Next steps will be to decide how to move forwards taking account of the feasibility study recommendations.
- Work is ongoing to secure access permission in Orkney to allow the work to remove non-native stoats to proceed as planned. A schools programme is currently in place. Due to COVID-19, community outreach has been restricted to social media and radio interviews. However, the first island biosecurity plan is being finalised, and the project has secured a year's additional funding, meaning that COVID-19 delays have been significantly mitigated. Additionally, the eradication operation is on track, whilst the volunteering programme has been altered to be more 1:1 rather than group outings. Finally, a biosecurity officer is now in post.

We committed to work with island partners to design solutions that address climate change through nature based solutions with multiple benefits including, for example the protection and restoration of peatlands and salt marshes.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Government continues to support collaboration with island partners to ensure nature based solutions are used to tackle the continued threat of climate change. Several key updates are noted below:

- The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership's (CCP) Climate Change Group is developing plans and actions to integrate into the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- Adaptation Planning work continues to make good progress, with community engagement work in North Uist now completed. This will inform a wider community engagement strategy – with ‘lived experience’ being factored into adaptation planning. Additionally, the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership’s Climate Change is also scoping out how to approach net-zero by 2045.
- The Highland Community Planning Partnership delivers biodiversity and climate change action on the ground through the Highland Environment Forum. The Highland Adapts Partnership is a new regional initiative that will focus on enabling the Highlands to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.
- The Orkney Partnership has mainstreamed climate mitigation and adaptation as part of its Sustainable Recovery Delivery Group which will co-ordinate action to help Orkney move to a NetZero future ahead of 2045 and implement an Adaptation Strategy.
- On Rum, the restoration of habitats continues with further reductions of red deer and feral goats. Extractions routes across peat bogs are now protected through use of bog mats following a successful trial.

- Since 2013, Peatland Action has invested almost £2 million in peatland restoration. The breakdown of this across our island communities is provided below:
 - Islay £41,625.50 restored 81.55 ha.
 - Isle of Arran £168,518.05 restored 430.4 ha.
 - Isle of Lewis/Eilean Leodhais and Harris/Na Hea £62,434.76 restored 32.03 ha.
 - Isle of Mull £69,472.77 restored 54.5 ha.
 - Isle of Skye £398,876.60 restored 146.8 ha.
 - Mainland of Shetland £1,061,456.29 restored 323.73 ha.

Climate Change and Energy

Strategic Objective 9 – To contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and promote clean, affordable and secure energy

We committed to work with island communities to support their climate change aspirations.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We are building a new model to support community climate action via a developing network of regional climate action hubs, providing a vehicle for communities to come together and engage in collective climate action. Two pathfinder hubs were launched in September 2021, with one hub covering the North Highlands and Islands (Orkney and Shetland). Development officers based across the area will work with communities to identify the actions that are most appropriate to their needs, support them to develop solutions, promote collaboration between projects and help groups to take advantage of funding opportunities.

We continued to work with island communities to look at alternative solutions to managing waste, particularly in respect of Scotland's Circular Economy Strategy.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

This year's Programme for Government committed us to the development of a route map to achieving our recycling and waste targets for 2025 and beyond. This is in development for consultation later this year which will include consideration of the impact on island communities. We are also committed to bringing forward a Circular Economy Bill which will also consider the impact on island communities.

We are also working to deliver the UK and Scotland's first Deposit Return Scheme. It will be among the most environmentally ambitious and accessible in Europe, including tens of thousands of return points for plastic, metal and glass containers, as well as pick-ups for online deliveries. We are working together with the retail industry to start phasing in the use of this infrastructure on a voluntary basis from November 2022 which will include a return scheme in Orkney that will benefit the community as we recognise that the needs of rural and island areas may be different from other more populated parts of the country.

We committed to work with local authorities to help them work towards their statutory targets.

Work has yet to be progressed in relation to this commitment.

We committed to work towards creating net zero emission islands and providing global climate change leadership.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) (HIBS) published October 2021 sets out a pathway to net zero emissions for Scotland's buildings by 2045. HIBS details a series of near-term actions and longer-term commitments to accelerate the transformation of the nation's building stock, as well as the principles we will apply to ensure our zero emissions heat delivery programmes support our fuel poverty objectives.

HIBS recognises that transforming Scotland's homes and buildings by making them more energy efficient and installing low and zero emissions heating will need us to carefully consider local surroundings and resources, and subsequently the transition to zero emissions buildings may look different within different communities, and will require approaches tailored to place, for example for our island communities. We will further develop our approach to heat decarbonisation, and resilience and sustainability of island energy systems in our Island's Energy Strategy due to be published in 2022.

The Island's Energy Strategy will support the delivery of actions outlined in our [Heat and Buildings Strategy Island Communities Impact Assessment](#) published November 2021, including our Carbon Neutral Island's commitment, and review of the evidence base and options for an 'islands uplift' across our delivery programmes as part of our commitment to provide additional support for rural and island homes for heat and energy efficiency.

Additionally, Local Energy Scotland (LES) continue to deliver the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) supporting community groups and organisations and rural SME's to explore their renewable energy options. CARES advice and funding support is available to communities across Scotland, including our island communities.

We have also began development of the Carbon Neutral Islands Project. The Programme for Government states that we will identify at least three of our islands to progress towards becoming fully carbon neutral by 2040. We are taking this ambition even further, aiming to support six islands to progress towards being fully carbon neutral by 2040.

We are still in the early stages of development in relation to the project however, we are engaging with relevant stakeholders and policy colleagues to ensure the voices of islanders are fully considered. We have developed an external technical working group made up of local authority colleagues and members of socioeconomic wide groups to co-produce criteria that will inform the selection of the islands that will be part of the project.

The project will take place within the wider context of Scotland's journey to net zero by 2045. It is important to note that while we will directly support six islands, the project is intended to benefit all Scottish islands. This will be through knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices stemming from implementation of the Carbon Neutral Island project. Directly supporting islands in their journey towards carbon neutrality by 2040, will not only benefit the environment but support local economies, facilities and general wellbeing through investment in communities.

By summer 2022, we will publish a report setting out the steps we will take to support the islands included in the project as well as how the latter will benefit all other Scottish islands.

We committed to put in place resilient adaptation plans on islands that are at greater risk from climate change linking these strongly with development plans for those islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In addition to provision of funding to local authorities to support delivery of statutory for protection of the environment, the Scottish Government has also been progressing implementation of Scotland Climate Change Adaptation Programme which outlines actions and underpinning research at the national level to benefit all areas including islands. The Scottish Government also provided input to the following specific initiatives in the islands either through direct involvement or via the Adaptation Scotland programme which it funds. Scottish Ministers also held a National Climate Resilience Summit in October which included representatives from the islands and discussed local as well as national solutions.

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) set up a Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) in June 2019 tasked with improving understanding of climate change, building collaboration across organisations and developing actions to embed in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. Adaptation Scotland, a capacity building programme funded by the Scottish Government, is working with the CCWG to deliver an adaptation project which is gathering evidence on how the Outer Hebrides are being impacted by climate change, planning an effective approach to involving communities, and assessing climate risks and opportunities to inform the development of adaptation actions. Since July 2020, the Climate Change Working Group has progressed work on adaptation through the following activities:

- Conducting climate impact interviews with multiple OHCPP partner organisations to understand how climate change is affecting organisational priorities across the Outer Hebrides.
- Developing a draft climate risk list from the climate impact interview data to inform an outline risk assessment process.
- Partnering with arts and cultural organisations to successfully apply to Creative Carbon Scotland's Climate Beacons for COP 26 initiative, to form the Outer Hebrides Climate Beacon partnership ([Làn Thìde](#)). The partnership has a vision of: working with the arts to explore climate impacts and vulnerabilities; generating qualitative data to feed into an inclusive climate change adaptation plan; and celebrating and protecting the islands' unique cultural heritage.
- Working with the Climate Beacon partnership to run a community engagement pilot in North Uist during summer 2021. 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 changing climate and identify local adaptation priorities. As part of the pilot a combined community and scientific ArcGIS map was created comprising data sources on flooding, drainage, coastal erosion, preparedness, natural resources, and community assets/infrastructure, which were added as layers on the map alongside community inputs in order to present scientific data/evidence alongside local knowledge and lived experience of climate hazards and impacts.

Adaptation Scotland has also secured specialist input from the Met Office to develop climate storylines for the Outer Hebrides. This will focus on communicating climate trends and projections in a way that is accessible and engaging for communities, and is the first project of its kind in the UK. Adaptation Scotland is currently supporting local partners to commission a creative practitioner to develop the storyline piece by combining Met Office analysis of future changes to frequency and intensity of winter storms in the islands with local lived experience of climate impacts. The storyline will then be used to engage communities across the Outer Hebrides through a series of events/workshops during early 2022.

Adaptation Scotland has also supported the CCWG through a period of reflection and learning and identifying priorities for adaptation moving forwards. Nature Scot, who chair the CCWG, previously recruited a graduate student placement until September 2021 to support the adaptation planning work. The graduate student placement has now finished, and the group is exploring options to continue to resource its work, potentially through the recruitment of a dedicated Climate Change Coordinator who would coordinate work on both adaptation and mitigation, if funds can be secured.

Orkney Islands Council has recruited a climate change officer with responsibility for climate change adaptation. Adaptation Scotland has supported a link with the [SUNRISE](#) project which is investigating experiences of climate change impacts, coping and adaptation strategies in the Orkney Islands and Islands around the world.

Adaptation Scotland has met with colleagues from the Shetland Islands Council and provided advice and templates to support development of a business case for a Shetland wide adaptation initiative. Discussions are ongoing with the Shetland Islands Community Planning Partners.

Adaptation Scotland has met with the Climate Change Working Group of Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership to discuss development of an area wide climate change adaptation plan. The group is in the early stages of considering their approach

[Dynamic Coast 2](#), which identifies lengths of coastline at risk of erosion from the sea, was published in August 2021. This work considers how future sea level rise could further exacerbate coastal erosion and erosion enhanced coastal flooding. We are encouraging councils to prepare coastal change adaptation plans using evidence from Dynamic Coast. A new budget to help councils plan for and take action to adapt to coastal change will be distributed to councils in their general capital grant settlement from 2022/23.

We committed to work closely with island partners, the network owner and all other key stakeholders to deliver existing proposals for electricity transmission links to mainland Scotland.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Scottish Government believes that the progress of energy generation developments on our islands, and their influence on the delivery of transmission links to the Scottish mainland, will help stimulate economic growth as the economy recovers from COVID-19. Developing these abundant resources can also help unlock the islands' potential to supply low cost renewable electricity for the benefit of consumers across Scotland and Great Britain, as well as many social, community and economic benefits.

Scottish Government has continued to work with stakeholders including BEIS and Ofgem to remove barriers to deployment and have responded to Ofgem consultations on Transmission Network Use of System Charges and the Access SCR highlighting the need for regulatory reforms to take fully into account the effects on renewables project costs, ensuring that these do not present barriers to investment and progress in Scotland.

We continue to engage closely with island councils and industry to assess the risks and opportunities as Scottish island wind projects approach this year's Contract for Difference (CfD) allocation round. Scottish Ministers have made clear to Ofgem that its decisions on island links must take the net zero imperative more fully into account, and incorporate a more flexible approach to what are vital strategic investments.

We committed to work with Resilience Partnerships and energy providers to encourage them to focus on the resilience of islands' energy supply networks.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Increased demand and applications for connection to the electricity distribution network will also increase our reliance on the electricity system. We need to ensure that our electricity networks are upgraded to serve that demand, and that our capacity to generate zero carbon electricity continues to grow. Achieving our targets will undoubtedly rely on strong and resilient networks supported by technologies such as long duration electricity storage to provide vital services currently provided by fossil fuel and nuclear generators. Scotland continues to make excellent progress in areas such as renewable electricity generation.

We have worked closely with Scotland's Distribution networks owners to ensure their business plans reflect the scale and pace of change required to meet our targets. The draft plans submitted to Ofgem in December, if approved, would unlock over £3 billion of investment in our local networks.

As part of this investment, SSEN who provides essential services to communities and businesses on 59 remote islands through 111 subsea cables, has included provision for:

- £35.7 million investment is planned for new subsea cables.
- £43.3 million is proposed for maintaining and operating standby diesel generation for island communities at seven sites. This includes replacing the engines at Battery Point on the Isle of Lewis to improve its environmental impact and uprating the capacity of Bowmore Power Station on Islay.

The Scottish Government Energy Networks Strategic Leadership Group continues to provide a knowledgeable and influential forum for discussing the ways in which the development of Scotland's energy networks can recognise and deliver Scottish energy and climate change policy objectives.

We committed to work with transport-related stakeholders to have the most energy efficient and climate-friendly transport services possible across the islands.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We recognise that future transport networks must be powered on clean, green energy and are working with a range of stakeholders on a ‘whole-system’ approach to assessing and planning for the energy demands of Scotland’s future transport system.

A sustainable investment hierarchy remains embedded in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) which is considering future transport investment plans. The Review will cover the strategic road and rail networks, and national infrastructure investment to support active travel and island connectivity. Phase 1 was published on 3 February 2021. Consultation on Phase 2 commenced in January 2022 with the publication anticipated later in the year. Together, Phase 1 and Phase 2 will set out Scottish Government’s transport investment priorities for the next 20 years.

Through 2021 we worked with the Energy Savings Trust and a diverse range of stakeholders to develop guidance to support the planning and delivery of electric vehicle infrastructure investment. This guidance will be published early 2022 and covers four themes, including charging networks for island communities. Additionally, funding is provided to all local authorities in Scotland to enable them to grow and develop zero carbon transport infrastructure such as EV charging.

In relation to aviation, we remain committed to decarbonising scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040, whilst aiming to create the world’s first zero emission aviation region in partnership with Highlands and Islands Airports. We also remain committed through the [Climate Change Plan update](#) (CCPu) to ensuring that 30% of Scottish Government owned ferries will be low emission by 2032. As part of the Islands Connectivity Plan, we are also exploring and consulting on pathways to zero/low emission ferry transport.

We committed to continue working to unleash the potential of renewable energy as both a way to mitigate climate change and as a driver of sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

As set out in our initial response to the recommendations to the final report of the Just Transition Commission (see [Just Transition - A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Scottish Government response - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)), the refreshed Scottish Government Energy Strategy will be our first specific Just Transition Plan and has informed the development of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET). The Energy Strategy Just Transition Plan will be published in 2022 and will consider how, for example, the islands’ abundant renewable energy resources can further contribute to meeting Scotland’s climate commitments whilst supporting strong local economies, and addressing existing social and economic inequality. Details of our current and new policies are set out in the [Climate Change Plan update](#) (CCPU).

We published our [Energy Strategy Position Statement](#) in March, ahead of the pre-election period, which set out our key priorities for the short and medium term. Next year, we will be publishing our draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. This will take a whole systems view of how the energy sector must evolve to drive our transition to net zero. The document will also set out what is needed to deliver a just transition for the sector, in line with the principles laid out in our National Transition Planning Framework, published in September 2021.

We committed to work with communities, crofters, farmers and landowners to expand forests and woodlands on the islands, recognising wider land-use objectives.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Forestry continues to support sustainable woodland creation on the islands through the Forestry Grant Scheme.

It has also continued to work with a range of partners including the Woodland Trust and Point and Sandwick Trust to deliver the Croft Woodlands Project, which covers all islands, including Argyll and Arran, providing advice and support for crofters.

In 2021, 18 woodland creation projects were completed across the Islands, creating a range of woodlands types including new native woodlands on the Islands of Lewis, Harris, Islay, Arran and Eigg. A further four tree planting projects were approved in 2021 on Orkney and Skye.

We committed to put the themes of meeting emissions targets and adapting to the effects of climate change at the heart of the preparation of National Planning Framework 4.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was laid in the Scottish Parliament and published for public consultation in November 2021. It sets out how a new approach to planning and development that will help achieve a net zero, sustainable Scotland by 2045, in a way which also tackles longstanding challenges and inequalities.

It is clear that we must embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change. The draft national spatial strategy sets out a vision for more sustainable locations and types of development in Scotland to achieve net-zero, and includes five action areas across the country.

One Action area, 'North and west coastal innovation', covers the island communities of Shetland, Orkney, the Western Isles and parts of Highland and Argyll and Bute. It is clear that our north and west coast and islands will be at the forefront of efforts to reach net zero.

The national spatial strategy is particularly supported by radically improved planning policies, including:

- a requirement to give significant weight to the Global Climate Emergency in plans and decisions;
- ensuring we adapt to future climate impacts by considering flood risk, infrastructure resilience, temperature change and coastal vulnerability;
- promoting local liveability through 20 minute neighbourhoods; reducing the need to travel unsustainably; prioritising walking, wheeling and public or shared transport; and an infrastructure-first approach; and
- enabling the infrastructure we will need including green energy, heat networks, facilities for a circular economy, and sustainable transport.

We committed to support the adaptation of Scotland's aquaculture and fishing industry.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

Island fishing representatives have had a direct line into the development of annual fisheries negotiations strategy and priorities. Additionally, they have formed part of a group that received real time updates and provided real time views and advice to negotiators.

Work is underway to develop a blue economy vision and action plan which will support sustainable economic development of our marine sectors, ensuring that they are resilient and able to respond to the climate and biodiversity crises. The impacts of climate change on fish farming is being explored through our Farmed Fish Health Strategy Group.

We committed to work with a range of stakeholders to develop an action plan to improve resilience to properties at flood risk.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

We published the [Living with flooding: action plan](#) in 2019, which recommends actions for a range of stakeholders to take to help promote property flood resilience in Scotland. We have continued to work with a stakeholders to deliver the action plan, which was reviewed in 2021.

We committed to work with local authorities to strengthen recycling and food waste services in island communities.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

We continue to support island local authorities and communities to increase the quality and quantity of recycling.

This year, the first of our landmark investments from the £70 million Recycling Improvement Fund included £784,458 for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This investment will allow the council to redesign kerbside collection services to increase the quality of material collected, and to extend services to areas where kerbside recycling collections are not currently available.

In addition, the funding will provide a zero emissions, electric Refuse Collection Vehicle to service collection routes in Stornoway and the surrounding areas. This investment will make it easier for households to recycle more, and will contribute to meeting Scotland's ambitious climate targets.

With our partners, work continues to support all local authorities to assess opportunities and develop project proposals for future infrastructure investment through the Recycling Improvement Fund. We remain committed to consulting on the current rural exemption for food waste collections and to review the food waste separation requirements, which were included in our Programme for Government 2019/20.

We committed to work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that the voices of islanders are fully heard, achieving a just transition to net-zero, and that islands benefit from the many opportunities associated with a green and sustainable economy.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

In line with the recommendations of the Just Transition Commission, we committed in September 2021 to delivering a [National Just Transition Planning Framework](#) to ensure an orderly and managed transition to net-zero, and a fair distribution of costs and benefits. Just Transition Plans will be prepared for all sectors that will have an important role to play in a transformed net-zero economy. The Plans will be developed in an inclusive way where those that are likely to be most impacted by the transition will be placed at the heart of the process. The islands' characteristics will mean specific consideration will need to be given to the social and economic impacts of the net-zero transition. We will ensure that our engagement framework allows the voices of islanders to be fully heard, particularly in regard to sectors such as energy where there is a clear and specific islands' interest.

Empowered Island Communities and Strong Local Partnerships

Strategic Objective 10 – To empower diverse communities and different places

We committed to take forward the Local Governance Review with COSLA in order to create a system of local democracy that will be inclusive and improve people's lives.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The review is an important opportunity for national and local government and the community sector to thoroughly explore how best to transform local democracy. PfG 2021/22 confirms that we will conclude the review and introduce a Local Democracy Bill within this parliament. We will shortly agree next steps with COSLA. This will involve further work with partners in local government, the wider public sector and communities to agree new arrangements which devolve more power to more local spheres of democratic decision-making.

Our approach will build on material we jointly published which outlines how ambitious new community decision-making arrangements could work in Scotland's towns, villages and neighbourhoods. In addition, we also made available an International Review of Systems of Governance and How Citizens Participate which looks at the experiences of six highly functioning democracies, with Scotland provided as a foundation for comparison.

We committed to support participatory processes aimed at providing island communities with a strong voice in the implementation of the Plan.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

We have continued to regularly engage with island communities to inform the implementation of the National Islands Plan, including through the National Islands Plan Delivery Group.

The National Islands Plan Delivery Group was established in June 2021. It supports implementation of the National Islands Plan (NIP), and ensures that work is driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities. The Group stems from Strategic Objective 13 of the National Islands Plan and from the Scottish Government's commitment to establish a group to closely monitor the delivery of the Plan and the accompanying Implementation Route Map. Membership of the group comprises Scottish Government, local authorities, Third Sector representation, community groups, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, COSLA, Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, relevant academics and subject experts. The group meets regularly to examine progress and help to identify critical priorities in order to work towards meeting the commitments within the National Islands Plan. Delivering a fair, integrated, green and inclusive plan requires strong collaboration and partnership and the NIP Delivery Group provides this collaborative working space.

In the [2021/22 Programme for Government](#), we committed to introducing a new £5 million Islands Bond fund, providing up to £50,000 each for up to 100 households by 2026, by providing financial support for island residents to remain in their community, or to encourage people to move there. As part of this work, we launched a 12 week online consultation in August 2021 to gather views and feedback from the public and crucially from island communities. We received over 1600 responses to this consultation and the information from this will help to shape the Islands Bond policy ahead of it launching in summer 2022.

Scaling up of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Scotland over the last few years has seen it go from a handful of events in 2015 to thousands of people engaging in PB activity by 2021. Supported by the Scottish Government's £7 million Community Choices Fund, since 2016 this has enabled over 122,000 voters to have a direct say on the dispersal of more than £6.6 million, with around 47,000 people attending events across the country.

We are continuing to work with the National Participatory Budgeting Strategic Group in supporting the implementation of PB and building capacity across Scotland to ensure best possible practice. We will work with the group to deliver on the new PB Strategic Framework with a particular focus on health and wellbeing, education, housing and climate justice guided by the Framework's indicators for success.

The National PB Strategic Group is also helping inform the role PB can have as we adapt to the challenges of COVID-19 and how it fits within broader reform of democracy and community empowerment. The Group has produced a Framework for the Future of PB in Scotland which established a shared ambition and intentions for PB to contribute to existing efforts to improve people's lives by being developed in areas of policy and place following key principles of co-production and equality.

Whilst the target to allocate at least 1% via PB remains, there is a degree of flexibility available to councils as to when they can practically meet it, and the local authorities report their progress annually.

We committed to explore ways to strengthen the voice of island communities whilst capturing the differences between islands in local and national decision-making.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Scottish Government acknowledge that in order to ensure that the National Islands Plan leads to meaningful, positive and sustainable change, there needs to be ongoing collaboration with our island communities for the duration of the Plan.

The implementation of the National Islands Plan is supported by both the [Islands Strategic Group](#) and the [National Islands Plan Delivery Group](#). The Islands Strategic Group was established to ensure greater involvement of the relevant councils in helping design solutions to the challenges islanders face, whilst the Delivery Group ensures that work is driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities. We will continue to work closely with both of these groups on delivery of the National Islands Plan.

We have introduced participation request legislation which is helping enable local communities to have more control over the decisions that affect them to develop their own economies, wellbeing, and environments. Since coming into force in 2017, 69 participation requests have been made to public service authorities, with improvements agreed for pier safety issues; local road improvements; the future of local police offices; and decisions on community halls.

Work has started to review the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – a 2021 Programme for Government commitment – where we will be consulting people on community empowerment mechanisms, and explore how communities can be more actively involved in public sector outcomes.

North Ayrshire Islands Recovery and Renewal pilot

Scottish Government are participating in an ambitious three-year Islands Recovery and Renewal Pilot in partnership with North Ayrshire Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support an inclusive and green economic recovery and renewal of North Ayrshire's island communities in line with their unique needs. As part of this pilot, a new post of Senior Officer (Islands) has been created within North Ayrshire Council to contribute to the ongoing development and delivery of islands' policy, working across the public sector with island communities, businesses and with a range of external stakeholders to tackle long-standing place-based issues relating to island communities.

The pilot has facilitated the development of Local Island Plans for Arran and Cumbrae, which are aligned to the delivery of the National Islands Plan and Community Wealth Building principles to maximise the potential of North Ayrshire's islands. North Ayrshire Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Government will continue to support and work with the island communities and stakeholders as the plan is implemented, delivering actions that result in improved outcomes for the community, economy and environmental wellbeing of Arran and Cumbrae.

We fully committed to working with island communities and local authority partners in the development and introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy Bill.

Work has yet to be progressed in relation to this commitment.

We reported last year that work around the implementation of a Transient Visitor Levy was put on hold whilst Scottish Government prioritised the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work on the Visitor Levy will resume this year as confirmed in the [Scottish Budget 2022-23](#), published in December 2021. We will therefore carefully review the previous policy development work on this and undertake further stakeholder engagement before the Scottish Government makes a firm decision on the next steps.

We committed to explore ways in which to empower and support island communities to enhance their resilience by developing local initiatives and plans in partnership with Scotland's Emergency Responder organisations.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The resilience of Scottish communities, including those in the islands, demonstrates a significant contribution to the resilience of the country as a whole. In recent years, working alongside the statutory responder community, they have shown themselves to be immensely resilient in responding to many adverse situations, including COVID-19, recent storms and challenging weather events.

Where it works best, community resilience work is driven by local priorities and builds on local assets and is supported by local public service providers. It can be about having a specific local community resilience group, physical assets like a village hall and emergency generator, but can also involve voluntary sector groups some of which will be specifically focused on emergencies, like mountain rescue teams, and others will have a different primary focus, but will be able to play a role in an emergency. Connections within communities, and between communities and resilience structures, particularly the way they are integrated into resilience arrangements, are also critical.

Community resilience can also be about fundamentals such as good housing and jobs for people so that they can indeed turn to help others when needed. There are many ingredients that go to this, and the capacity and need will vary across the diversity of Scotland's communities. National guidance is applicable to diverse local communities including island communities.

The SG Resilient Communities team recently carried out a series of workshops with local stakeholders including several from island communities to identify and share good practice in terms of working across sectors to build community resilience and respond to and recover from emergencies. Current research, commissioned by the SG Islands team and supported by the Resilient Communities team is looking at good practice in the island communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and aiming to disseminate lessons. The resilient communities team is currently scoping a project to establish a baseline of community resilience activity and is working with island stakeholders to ensure that the perspective of island communities is built into the project design. The National Volunteer Coordination Hub (operated by the British Red Cross), which was established in 2021 to complement local arrangements for linking local need and demand for volunteers in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, but has since encompassed a range of COVID-19 and other health and social care related programmes, has also included island communities in the areas that have been involved.

We committed to introduce regulations which enable island local authorities, in consultation with their communities, to request that Scottish Ministers promote legislation devolving a function to them, or that the Scottish Ministers transfer an additional function, duty or responsibility to them. These regulations acknowledge the uniqueness of each of our island communities and that one size does not always fit all.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to ensure that policies and plans relating to the Scottish Crown Estate are appropriately island proofed and that any manager of a Scottish Crown Estate asset supports implementation of the National Islands Plan as appropriate.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The powers and duties in the Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019 provide further opportunities for island communities. The Act allows for the transfer and/or delegation of management of Scottish Crown Estate assets to other eligible bodies. This Act is designed to encourage and support local management decisions and control of assets by communities, and should be considered by community organisations and authorities in situations that recognise the public benefits that island local management of these assets will bring. The legislation and future transfer and/or delegation acknowledge the uniqueness of each of our island communities and that one size does not always fit all.

A local pilots scheme designed to give communities more say on what happens in their area, involves three island authorities. In March 2021, Orkney Islands Council signed a landmark agreement which will involve the local community in managing the seabed around their islands. Agreements are still being confirmed with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn and Shetland Islands Council. The pilots scheme has assisted with testing and putting in place practical arrangements for enhanced local management of Scottish Crown Estate assets ahead of the first transfer and/or delegation.

We committed to ensure that Gaelic speakers in island communities are encouraged and supported to represent themselves through the medium of Gaelic.

Work in ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Gaelic and Scots team has prepared the new Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plan. The Plan has an open offer to engage through the medium of Gaelic. In addition, Scottish Government communications remain happy to take written requests in Gaelic. The Scottish Government's manifesto commitments also include providing more services through Gaelic and extending opportunities to use Gaelic in everyday situations and formal settings.

As part of the process for developing the next iteration of the SG Gaelic Language Plan, the Gaelic and Scots team is liaising with various island based SG offices to discuss what further provision they can make for Gaelic. The three local authorities of CnES, HC and Argyll and Bute all have Gaelic language plans in place, have Gaelic medium education and have Gaelic development officers to promote and support the use and learning of Gaelic.

In March 2022, Education Scotland will publish a revised Gaelic Language Plan, 2022-2027. This is part of HM Inspectors' five-year strategy for Gaelic Education, which also impacts on islands. As part of this, HM Inspectors will continue to provide specialist evaluations of how well establishments and settings are performing in a range of key areas. We provide this specialist evaluation for Gaelic Medium Education and for island contexts. We will also take forward new high-level aims to support Gaelic.

Arts, Culture and Language

Strategic Objective 11 – To support arts, culture and language

We committed to invest in our cultural and historic resources, to ensure that islanders are encouraged to engage with, and participate in, arts and culture.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Working with partners, EventScotland aims to raise Scotland's reputation as the perfect stage by supporting and securing a portfolio of events and developing the events industry. EventScotland maintains constant awareness/alignment with wider Scottish Government and VisitScotland initiatives that focus on the islands.

2021 supported events in island locations include:

- Mull Rally
- Small Halls Festival – Isle of Skye
- Tiree Music Festival (digital)
- HebCelt (digital)
- Ultra Tour of Arran
- Skye Live (digital)
- Orkney Science Festival

Other projects being planned for 2022 include the Shetland Folk Festival, Tiree Music Festival and HebCelt.

2022 will also be a key preparation year for the organising committee of Shetland's Tall Ships Race Series, which is scheduled for summer 2023. This is a major event that will bring significant opportunities to promote Shetland, support the tourism sector in its recovery from COVID and provide a strong hook and content for wider VisitScotland led island campaign activity. Orkney will also host the International Island Games in 2025.

Themed Years

Scotland's Themed Years have been running since 2009 as a way to celebrate a particular side to Scotland that deserves recognition, deliver sustainable economic development in the linked tourism and events sectors and also present unique collaborative platforms for a number of relevant stakeholders to work in closer collaboration to achieve shared goals and generate stronger partnership working. In 2020 we began celebrating the Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters and, in light of the impact of COVID-19, this Themed Year was extended across 2021. SEALL's Summer Programme, The Isle Martin Seaweed Festival and Stornoway on the Ocean were strong island event contributors to the Year of Coasts and Waters.

The next Themed Year is Scotland's Year of Stories in 2022, a year in which stories inspired by, created or written in Scotland will be celebrated and showcased. The year was formally launched by the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development on 14 December 2021. Following feedback from the EventScotland-led Scotland's Year of Stories Steering Group members, there are five inter-linked strands for the year and these are:

1. Iconic Stories and Storytellers
2. New Stories
3. Scotland's People and Places
4. Local Tales and Legends
5. Inspired by Nature

Scotland's Year of Stories Open Events Fund, administered by EventScotland, has been designed to support new, creative event proposals and programming that will provide high profile content created especially in response to the 2022 Themed Year opportunity. Organisers could apply for individual grants of between £15-60,000 and 21 Open Events will be supported across Scotland during 2022.

Scotland's Year of Stories Community Stories Fund, administered by Museums Galleries Scotland, in partnership with EventScotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund is a £300,000 fund from which community groups could apply for any amount between £500 and £5,000. This fund has been designed to support organisations and community groups to take part in and celebrate Scotland's Year of Stories 2022, spotlighting the unique stories that matter to them with new, creative events, activities and programming. The first funding round was for activity taking place in the first half of 2022 or throughout the year and successful Round 1 applications will support 47 events across 27 local authorities, spread across both physical communities and also communities of interest. The second funding round will be for activity taking place in the second half of 2022 and opened for application from 24 January to 18 March 2022.

Scotland's Winter Festivals

Scotland's Winter Festivals run between 30 November and 25 January and mobilise the people of Scotland and those with an affinity to Scotland to join in the St Andrew's Day, Hogmanay and Burns celebrations, providing an immediate boost to the post-COVID recovery of the tourism and events sectors and the wider economy, enhancing community engagement and raising Scotland's international profile as we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic.

There are a number of initiatives and actions within the overall Winter Festivals Programme. Key components of SWF are:

- Scottish Government funding via EventScotland National events programme (led by VisitScotland's Events Directorate);
- St Andrew's Fair Saturday (led by the Fair Saturday Foundation);
- BEMIS Multi-cultural celebration of SWF; and
- St Andrew's Day Schools Debating Tournament (led by the English Speaking Union Scotland).

2020/21

The headline impacts of SWF 2020/21 were:

- around 120 events delivered; over 8 million views of SWF funded event activity;
- 66 events joined St Andrew's Fair Saturday 2020 reaching across Scotland, the wider UK and also to over 30 countries internationally; and
- 56 events joined the multi-cultural celebration of SWF, including a record 41 events celebrating Burns Night.

2021/22

In 2021/22 there were over 100 events right across Scotland for St. Andrew's Day (including online and hybrid), including participation from SEALL Small Halls Festival (Skye and Raasay) and final evaluation reports are in the process of being collated.

Alison Miller was appointed to the role of Orkney Scriever by the National Library and Creative Scotland in July 2021. Working in partnership with Orkney Library, the Scriever has worked with local writers to celebrate Orcadian writing through book launches, public events and local media such as regular contributions to BBC Radio Orkney Arts programme.

Bringing Orcadian to a global audience through a collaboration with Historic Environment Scotland saw the Scriever write and perform a poem for the winter solstice inside the neolithic chamber of Maeshowe. This event was filmed and later streamed to an audience of 5,000 viewers from around the world.

The launches of two new books of Orcadian writing were hosted by the Scriever, a volume of poetry titled Toonie Void by Kevin Cormack and the anthology Gousters, Glims and Veerie-orum edited by Alison Miller was launched at a virtual event run by the National Library of Scotland and streamed to a global audience.

Going forward, the Library is in the early discussion and planning stages to develop a pilot a programme of events and activities with Orcadian partners which would run over the course of a year. This pilot programme might include online and in-person events, readings, workshops and talks, as well as podcasts and blog posts. They would be co-curated with Orcadian partners and run in partnership with Orcadian communities and organisations. The aim is that this pilot could then serve as a model for collaboration with other island communities. At the same time, we hope that the programme, once in place, might continue to run annually as an ongoing collaboration between the Library and Orkney communities: <https://www.creativescotland.com/what-we-do/latest-news/archive/2021/07/orcadian-scriever-appointed>

Museums are an important aspect of the culture offering in the islands. The core function of museums is to hold, interpret and exhibit collections on behalf of the public. This work is intrinsically linked to local culture, identity and sense of community. In many parts of the islands museums may be the only, or the primary, cultural infrastructure.

Due to emergency COVID-19 support funding, MGS distributed grants worth £1.61 per capita across Scotland in 2020/21. This spending disproportionately reached island and large rural local authorities, which reflects the importance of these cultural venues to their communities. Total funding breakdown of Museums Galleries Scotland to island museums in 2020/21, broken down by local authority areas is:

MGS funding to island museums (split by local authority area)	Amount (£)
Argyll and Bute (island museums only)	33,825
Eilean Siar	245,639
Highland (island museums only)	43,025
North Ayrshire (island museums only)	35,936
Orkney Islands	115,080
Shetland Islands	28,453
Total	501,958

The sector's health and dynamism is central to our islands attraction as a visitor destination as well as having a significant impact on collective wellbeing, education and sense of identity. Museums and galleries also have major economic impacts as employers and drivers of tourism, and will play an important role in Scotland's, and the islands post-pandemic recovery.

Beyond the core responsibility of caring for and exhibiting collections, museums have a significant impact in supporting learning, wellbeing and sense of community.

A literature review commissioned by Museums Galleries Scotland found that engaging with museums services brought a range of measurable benefits, including: positive impacts on attainment; children and young people from disadvantaged areas benefit most from visiting museums; positive impacts on mental wellbeing; reduced isolation and an increased sense of identity.

We committed to support, develop and promote the creative talents of islanders, and ensure that the culture of Scotland's islands has a wide audience both nationally and abroad.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) was introduced in 2020 as a specific response to the economic impact of COVID-19. Although unemployment has thankfully not risen as rapidly or to the levels we initially feared, some sectors have been disproportionately impacted and need continued assistance to address skills shortages and gaps.

The £322,000 Treòir | Voar | Virr programme is funded jointly by the National Transition Training Fund and through the Islands Programme, which supports delivery of the National Islands Plan. Minister for Higher and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn, MSP launched the programme on Monday 27 September. We know how challenging the pandemic has been for our artists and that while recovery has begun, with more creative and cultural opportunities opening up, there is still a long journey ahead and incomes are still affected. This programme helps artists, particularly those living on our islands, to contribute to the wider economic and social recovery for communities, which have been impacted by COVID-19 and Brexit.

This transformational and innovative new programme supports re-training and employment opportunities for creative freelancers through a programme of live, progressive arts-based cultural workshops, offered to all our primary schools on islands. Treòir | Voar | Virr has enhanced access to upskilling and retraining opportunities in relation to the Future Skills Action Plan and contributes to the delivery of outcomes in the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23.

The programme has been named in Gaelic, Shetlandic and a term known to have been familiar in both Scots and Norse: Treòir (Gaelic) | Voar (Shetlandic dialect) | Virr (used in Scots and Norse).

The programme delivers classroom lessons that support various aspects of Scottish culture, including Scotland's indigenous languages and dialects, music, drama, dance and visual art. It creates opportunities for children living on our islands to learn more about their culture and heritage, and crucially, have fun at the same time!

The unique delivery model operates through a paired tutor scheme, where tutors work with a primary school class and their teacher. A natural 'on-the-job' training occurs as tutors share their different skill sets with each other and there is also the opportunity of a more formal training, accredited by West Highland College UHI.

We committed to support all of Scotland's indigenous languages and dialects in ways that are relevant to the communities where these are spoken.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Continued support for cultural projects and organisations operating through Gaelic and Scots is widening access to the languages. Many projects such as Ceolas, Feisean nan Gaidheal, An Comann Gaidhealach, the Heritage Forum and centres such as Lanntair, Kildonan Museum, Taigh Chearsabhagh, Sabhal Mor Ostaig Urras Oighreachd Gabhsainn contribute to this objective.

We continue to make available translated resources from which practitioners and learners in Gaelic medium education in the islands benefit. We have offered professional learning sessions through the medium of Gaelic, focused on numeracy and particularly aimed at Early Careers teachers, and have also provided opportunities for networking across Scotland.

Education Scotland has recruited an Education Officer, with support funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who has a remit for developing the secondary Gaelic Medium Education curriculum and involves supporting the expansion of the secondary. Island schools contribute to and benefit from this work in building capacity in the island schools.

As part of the development of the Measaidhean Coitchean Naiseanta airson Foghlam tron Ghaidhlig (MCNG) Education Scotland has responsibility for the quality assurance of the assessment content. We continue to ensure there is representation from the islands on the Quality Assurance panel which ensures the needs and contexts of the islands are reflected in the assessments.

We committed to ensure that the commitments in this plan are informed by and aligned with the commitments in the National Gaelic Language Plan, working closely with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Gaelic and Scots team has prepared the new Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plan. This is currently out for public consultation after which the final draft, outlining the Scottish Government's alignment with the [National Gaelic Language Plan](#), will be prepared.

Quarterly meetings take place between the SG Gaelic and Scots Team, SG Islands Team and Bòrd na Gàidhlig, to support information sharing and collaboration with regards to synergies across the delivery of our [National Gaelic Language Plan](#) and the [National Islands Plan](#).

We committed to ensure that the effect on Gaelic language development is considered from the outset in island-specific policies and initiatives and that these link to statutory Gaelic language plans.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

A number of authorities and bodies build Gaelic into their early thinking in taking forward new initiatives and developments. This is encouraged by positive policy initiatives such as Gaelic language plans and the Gaelic priorities in the National Islands Plan. Discussion and support for this priority emphasis also results from attendance at gatherings such as the Convention of the Highlands and Islands or the Gaelic Faster Rate of Progress initiative. This progress is welcomed and the Scottish Government would like to support increased momentum with this commitment from bodies and authorities.

We committed to work with public authorities and community groups in increasing the use and visibility of Gaelic in Gaelic speaking island communities.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The Gaelic and Scots team has prepared the new Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plan. This contains corporate service aims to ensure the equal prominence of Gaelic in SG logo and branding, the prominence of Gaelic signage in SG offices, and encouragement to use Gaelic in our public communications and corporate publications. Other SG agencies, such as Social Security Scotland, provide bilingual material relating to their services and discussions are ongoing with island based SG offices to increase their Gaelic provision. A number of Gaelic development officers are located in island communities with the aim of increasing the use and learning of Gaelic.

We committed to work with relevant authorities to improve Gaelic provision for Gaelic speaking island communities in delivering their functions and services.

We committed to support approaches that promote the sustainable management of the historic environment.

Work is ongoing in relation to both of these commitments.

Our Place in Time: Scotland's 10 year strategy for the Historic Environment, sets out a vision of how our heritage can be understood, valued, cared for and enjoyed. The Strategy is being reviewed in 2022. The Strategy has four priorities:

- Cross-cutting strategic priorities – ensuring that the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of our heritage continues to contribute to Scotland's wellbeing;
- Understand – investigating and recording our historic environment to continually develop our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the past, and how best to conserve, sustain and protect it;
- Protect – caring for and protecting the historic environment in order to both enjoy and benefit from it, and to conserve and enhance it for future generations; and
- Value – sharing and celebrating the richness and significance of our historic environment.

Climate and sustainability

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has been researching climate change mitigation, impacts and adaptation in Scotland's historic environment for many years. This includes publishing their findings and advice in INFORM Guides and Short Guides (for planners, owners and contractors), Refurbishment Case Studies and Technical Papers, HES guidance to Planning Authorities in their Managing Change series, comprehensive climate impact risk analysis of the Properties in Care HES look after on behalf of Scottish Ministers, the sector guide on climate change impacts, and their first adaptation plan, [Climate Ready HES](#). HES will also be shortly releasing a Green Recovery Statement, which sets out how the historic environment delivers as part of a 'Green Economy'.

HES leads the sector in climate change innovation and has pioneered the Climate Vulnerability Index, which has gained international recognition, to measure and assess the impacts on our world heritage sites. This means that Scotland will be the first country in the world to have a Climate Vulnerability Index assessment for each of our world heritage sites.

Conservation of our Heritage

Our historic buildings are vulnerable to climate change, especially those without roofs, which is accelerating. The level of decay we are seeing now, and the remedial work needed are beyond traditional routine visual inspection from the ground.

This means that HES now need to reassess the condition of a number of properties throughout Scotland and how we care for them in the future. This is a bold step and we believe HES are one of the first heritage bodies addressing this issue that will be faced over time by most/many owners of older buildings across the world.

Communities

Historic Environment Scotland have a range of Community initiatives such as the HES Community Connections Programme which is a programme that delivers a range of exciting, collaborative projects showing how the heritage that matters to you has a vital role to play in supporting your community's recovery and renewal.

The programme spans the whole of Scotland.

HES have created a short visitor leaflet on the Orkney Islands, outlining the main sights including breathtaking landscapes and World Heritage Sites. Other leaflets have been created for other island heritage attractions such as St Kilda.

Engine Shed

The Engine Shed is Scotland's dedicated building conservation centre, based in Stirling. Part of Historic Environment Scotland, it serves as a central hub for building and conservation professionals and the general public. Our historic built environment is a finite and unique resource, yet its care calls for conservation skills that are in short supply. The learning and visitor resource is helping to encourage a greater understanding of traditional building materials and skills – and inspire future generations to continue to care for Scotland's built heritage. Much of the Engine Sheds resources are available online and accessible for all. As part of the 'Scottish 10' the Engine Shed has undertaken detailed 3D scanning of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney monuments which has given us incredible recordings of the Viking graffiti at Maeshowe and of faint Neolithic artwork at Skara Brae.

Education

Strategic Objective 12 – To promote and improve education for all throughout life

We committed to work with UHI, the University of Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University and other education providers to ensure a broad range of options are available to young people.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Skills Development Scotland is working to support the development of the Islands Growth Deal TalEntEd Islands programme in partnership with UHI, Robert Gordon University, Heriot-Watt, the three Island authorities and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The TalEntEd Islands programme will create opportunities for education, skills, entrepreneurship and commercialisation, which will help respond to demographic challenges and the outmigration of young people from the Islands, drive an increase in sustainable green jobs, and fast-track Island decarbonisation.

Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements ask colleges to remove barriers and support full participation and successful outcomes for all groups of learners in their local community. Colleges plan their course provision in line with the economic needs of their regions, and through working closely with employers, are able to respond flexibly to the skills demands of the region and communities they serve.

Through the UHI Islands Forum, which oversees delivery of [UHI's Islands Strategy](#), SG officials collaborate with a broad range of key stakeholders to ensure that a broad range of options are available to young people; utilising UHI's strengths in delivering further education, higher education, research and knowledge exchange, both within and outwith the islands and against the Key Themes and Key Objectives of the [Islands Strategy](#). The Forum takes a place-based, challenge-led and research-driven approach to key issues such as repopulation, workforce development in key sectors, the impact of climate change and talent attraction.

We committed to support UHI as it deepens collaboration with island partners to promote learner pathways, innovation and industry/employer engagement.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The UHI Islands Strategy Director works closely with the Scottish Government Islands Team through a collaborative, solution-focused approach that seeks to maximise the opportunities that arise through overlapping work streams, such as UHI projects associated the Islands Growth Deal and Islands Programme investment. Critically this work interconnects as a result of shared priorities, identified through both the [Islands Strategy](#) and the SG's [National Islands Plan](#).

The Scottish Government has committed to developing a Talent Attraction programme and a Migration Service for Scotland. Brought together, this will improve Scotland's ability to attract and recruit workers from outside of Scotland with the skills that our economy will need in the future, and support international workers in the migration and relocation process. An effective service takes the pressure away from the employer to provide relocation support, both initially and in the longer-term, linking in with relevant experts and other services.

As part of the wider Talent Attraction programme, we are developing an Student Retention pilot to encourage students to stay in Scotland post-qualifying. The flow of students and younger workers in the 20s and 30s are the two main 'peaks' in rest of UK migration, with relatively high education levels. The percentage of individuals with degrees is 10-20% higher among migrants than non-migrants.

We continue to support the Skills Recognition Scotland project, supporting workers with qualifications gained outside the UK to overcome unemployment and underemployment and support employers to recruit talent and help address skills shortages.

The Talent Attraction programme of work will support stakeholders, including agencies and local authorities, to encourage intraScotland migration to meet skills gaps, address the west to east challenge, support migrants who have made Scotland their home to remain here, and encourage Scottish young people to stay in Scotland

We committed to ensure that young people are given the same opportunities to access education as young people on mainland Scotland.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

From October 2020, Education Scotland and e-Sgoil have been delivering Scots language education sessions for children and young people who are shielding long term from coronavirus. There have been sessions delivered thus far as part of an offer e-Sgoil extends to all of Scotland. Throughout the 2020/21 lockdown there have been Scots language lessons included in the Education Scotland 'Scotland Learns' offer for remote learning. This material, as well as other Scots language material is available on the National Improvement Hub, where resources have been tailored to suit individual dialects of Scots language including, Shetlandic, Orcadian, Caithness and Doric.

Education Scotland's Scots Language Co-ordinator's are engaging with UHI to support delivery of their PGDE Teacher training course through the development of course materials and lectures on Scots language for student teachers, similar to work done in other Universities across Scotland promoting the educational benefits of Scots language to student teachers as part of the core course and to support delivery of [Language learning in Scotland: a 1 + 2 approach](#) and the Scottish Government's Scots Language Policy.

[e-Sgoil](#) deliver a national e-learning offer with the islands at its heart. The Head Teacher is based in Stornoway, the Depute Head in Shetland and the teaching compliment can deliver from anywhere in Scotland, or indeed, the world.

HM Inspectors produced national overviews to support the quality and effectiveness of the delivery of remote learning. Evidence was gathered on Gaelic and English Medium Education through engagements with local authorities, schools, parents, children and young people. The purpose of the national overviews was to learn what was working well; surface challenges; and identify what further assistance was required. Findings on Gaelic Medium Education were shared with local authority networks and teachers through the university partnership arrangement, Eòlas, which includes the University of the Highlands and Islands.

HM Inspectors are engaging with establishments to gather evidence for national thematic reports on recovery education, wellbeing and outdoor learning. Island schools, including those that deliver Gaelic Medium Education are part of these thematics. HM Inspectors also undertook quality assurance and improvement activities in colleges on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council. This included a national overview of practice of remote learning in colleges, which has supported practitioners' understanding of the quality and effectiveness of remote learning in colleges across the country.

We committed to work with young people across all Scottish islands to ensure that they are able to contribute to the implementation of the Plan from an education perspective and to ensure that their voices are present.

This commitment was fulfilled in 2020. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

Youth Scotland are supporting delivery of the Young Islanders Network, which will be co-created and led by our young islanders, ensuring that the interests and priorities of this cohort are carefully considered and reflected in the development of this new forum.

Youth Scotland's island-based YIN lead was recruited in November 2021 and will build on the success of the YIN pilot and is responsible for coordinating the development and delivery of the YIN in partnership with interested children and young people.

Through the Young Islanders Challenge, (YIN pilot) young islanders articulated a desire to engage with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, and contribute to the governance of the NIP. This vision aligns closely with the original aspirations for the YIN - to provide grassroots youth representation that delivers tangible, positive outcomes for young people in our island communities.

Youth Scotland continue to engage with partners at local islands and national levels to identify a pathway through a mapping exercise, and to ensure that the YIN will be most productive and effective, while avoiding gaps or duplication.

The next stage for the YIN will be to work with identified Young Island Champions to develop the YIN Implementation Plan and for the Young Islanders to support the planning and preparations for the official YIN launch – which is scheduled to take place in 2022.

We committed to continue to support and promote Gaelic medium education at all levels.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

By March 2022, Education Scotland will publish a revised Gaelic Language Plan, 2022–2027. This is part of HM Inspectors' five-year strategy for Gaelic Education, which also impacts on islands. As part of this, HM Inspectors will continue to provide specialist evaluations of how well establishments and settings are performing in a range of key areas. We provide this specialist evaluation for Gaelic Medium Education and for island contexts. We will also take forward new high-level aims to support Gaelic.

We committed to work with all island authorities to scope potential projects that could benefit from successive phases of the new £1 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme which runs until 2026.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

The £2 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme prioritises schools in need of updating, as identified by local authorities, to ensure rapid progress where most required and will benefit around 50,000 pupils across Scotland. All projects will be announced and funding allocated by 2026.

The first phase of projects to benefit from the Learning Estate Investment Programme was announced in September 2019. This includes Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Barra and Vatersay Community Campus project to replace Castlebay High School, Castlebay Primary School and Eoligarry Primary School.

The second phase of projects to benefit from the Learning Estate Investment Programme was announced in December 2020. This includes The Highland Council's Broadford Primary School project on the Isle of Skye.

On 23 December 2021, we confirmed that Phase 3 of the Learning Estate Investment programme will open to local authorities in 2022, and successful projects will be announced before the end of 2022. Any bids for funding from island authorities, through Phase 3 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme, will be given careful consideration.

We committed to increase our collective efforts to improve the educational outcomes of children living in poverty by continuing to support island authorities/schools plans to raise attainment through Scottish Attainment Challenge programmes such as Pupil Equity Funding.**Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.**

Education Scotland continues to collaborate with island authorities to improve educational outcomes of children living in poverty. Five Attainment Advisors work with local authority central staff and individual schools to continue to improve the use of data, identify need and develop appropriate interventions to close the poverty related attainment gap. Joint cross-island professional learning has taken place to developed skills in data use and how to make best use of the Pupil Equity Funding.

HM Inspectors continue to share practice using social media campaigns, dedicated sections within Scotland Learns newsletters, webinars and inclusion within thematic reports and other publications. Sketchnotes and accompanying blogs, written by senior leaders in schools remain very popular. Four sketchnotes have been developed to support with the Scottish Attainment Challenge, two for the Equity Audit in December 2020 and a further two for the report outlining progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap in March 2021.

We committed to consider the needs of adult learners in our island communities as we develop our adult learning strategy for Scotland.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Adult learners from island communities have taken part in consultation exercises to identify the barriers that they face in learning in order for the strategy to work towards removing these barriers. Further consultation is being planned to take place in February/March 2022 and an Island Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken ahead of the publication of the new Adult Learning Strategy.

CLD HM Inspectors have also worked closely with CLD policy colleagues to update and refresh guidance to local authorities on regulations for CLD planning 2021-24.

Implementation and Measurement of the National Islands Plan

Strategic Objective 13 – To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan

We committed to establish a robust process to ensure the timely publication of a detailed Implementation Route Map setting out clear actions with defined responsibilities for action and timescales to support the delivery of the National Islands Plan.

This commitment has been fulfilled.

Following consultation with local authority colleagues via the Partnership Working Group and Islands Strategic Group, and with island communities and Scottish Government policy colleagues, the [National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map](#) was published on 24 March 2021.

The Implementation Route Map details how Scottish Government are delivering our priorities over the lifetime of the National Islands Plan. It is designed to be a living document that will be continually updated and adapted, in recognition of the fact that priorities for island communities can change, enabling it to respond to fresh challenges as they arise.

Whilst the original 2021 iteration of the Route Map gave us a vision for what success would look like when all the commitments in the National Islands Plan were delivered, the 2022 revision has allowed us to take a more forward looking and action focused approach, with specific actions attached to each as yet unfulfilled National Islands Plan commitment. The 2022 Implementation Route Map will be published alongside this Annual Report.

We committed to develop indicators applicable to each Strategic Objective in collaboration with Scottish Government agencies, local authorities, island communities and relevant island socio-economic actors based on the SMART criteria and building on the National Performance Framework and Sustainable Development Goals.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

Research continues to be undertaken to gather relevant islands data in order to set the baselines for our measurable outcomes. Additionally, work remains ongoing to develop a consistent and replicable approach to utilising data from multiple sources to estimate an island's "share" of a data zone.

We are currently forming a Research Working Group to ensure that relevant data from our systems of measurement is captured and informs the monitoring of the National Islands Plan. This will include working in collaboration with our policy colleagues across Scottish Government, our local authority partners and island community stakeholders to identify pre-existing island statistics to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Additionally, we will shortly launch a virtual National Islands Plan Progress Dashboard that will allow for real-time progress towards both our Strategic Objectives and commitments to be displayed in an accessible and transparent manner.

Published research to date includes the [National Islands Plan Survey report](#) and its accompanying [interactive tool](#). Further research has been carried on the results of the survey, with the intention to commission another survey at the end of 2022 to allow comparative analysis to be undertaken.

We committed to host a series of island-based focus groups workshops, to discuss and agree the specific actions linked to each of the 13 Strategic Objectives in the Plan.

This commitment has been fulfilled. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

We committed to review the availability, usefulness of, and the wider barriers to, island level data both at an individual island level, groups of islands and consider the creation of a “Scottish Islands” data level in order to better understand the challenges faced by island communities.

This commitment has been fulfilled. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

SDS have provided in-depth skills assessment data for Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Eilean Siar to assist skills planning in response to the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. SDS has also provided skills assessment to support the development of the [Islands Growth Deal](#).

We committed to create a Young Islanders Network constituted by young people from all Scottish islands that will have a consultative role in the implementation of the National Islands Plan to ensure that the delivery of the Plan fully considers the interests and priorities of young people.

This commitment has been fulfilled. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

The National Islands Plan commits us to “Create a Young Islanders Network constituted by young people from all Scottish islands that will have a consultative role in the implementation of the National Islands Plan to ensure that the delivery of the Plan fully considers the interests and priorities of young people”.

SG is continuing to support the emergence of a new Network to provide children and young people from across all of Scotland’s islands with the opportunity to participate and have their say in the delivery of the National Islands Plan (NIP).

A key commitment in the NIP is that young people from all our islands will have a consultative role in the implementation of the Plan. Therefore, the development and delivery of a Young Islanders Network (YIN) is critical to the delivery of our NIP.

Delivery partner, Youth Scotland are supporting the project, while the YIN will be co-created and led by our young islanders, ensuring that the interests and priorities of this cohort are carefully considered and reflected in the development of this new forum.

The YIN is not intended to supersede or replace any existing youth organisations and networks already operating in our island communities. Its role will be to help build on these and facilitate engagement and collaboration across our islands. Youth Scotland have engaged with partners at local islands and national levels to identify a pathway that ensures that the YIN will be most productive and effective and to avoid any gaps or duplications.

The YIN continues to work alongside the Message in a Bottle project led by Strathclyde University that included Young Islanders. The project featured heavily at COP26 with four events over the two weeks of the conference.

Youth Scotland’s island-based YIN lead will build on the success of the YIN pilot and is responsible for coordinating the development and delivery of the YIN. Youth Scotland are currently working with their Anchor organisations in each local authority with inhabited islands to build a network of Young Island Champions and Participants. The next stage for the YIN will be to work with the Young Island Champions to develop the YIN Implementation Plan and to include the Young Islanders in planning and preparations for the YIN launch – which is scheduled to take place in spring 2022.

We committed to establish a National Islands Plan Governance Group to ensure close monitoring of the Implementation Route Map. This group will oversee the delivery of the National Islands Plan and feedback on progress to the Islands Strategic Group and other interested parties.

This commitment has been fulfilled. Please see the [National Islands Plan Annual Report 2020](#) for further details.

The National Islands Plan Delivery Group was established in June 2021. It supports implementation of the National Islands Plan and ensures that work is driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities. The Group stems from Strategic Objective 13 of the National Islands Plan and from the Scottish Government's commitment to establish a group to closely monitor the delivery of the Plan.

Delivering a fair, integrated, green and inclusive plan requires strong collaboration and partnership and the Delivery Group provides this collaborative working space.

Membership

Membership of the group brings together representatives from island communities, local government, the third and independent sectors, community groups, relevant academics and Scottish Government officials:

- Argyll and Bute Council
- Bord na Gaidhlig
- Calmac Community Board
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- COSLA
- Development Trusts Association Scotland
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Highland Council
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Inspiring Scotland
- Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
- North Ayrshire Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Scottish Futures Trust
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Islands Federation
- Shetland Islands Council
- Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance
- University of the Highlands and Islands

The group meets regularly to examine progress and help identify critical priorities in order to work towards meeting the commitments within the National Islands Plan.

The Delivery Group also holds a key role in reviewing the Implementation Route Map on a quarterly basis, including offering guidance on any significant issues which would require changes to be made and ensuring the proposed actions are genuinely delivering on their associated commitments.

We committed to work with island communities to ensure that the Plan is widely promoted and understood by all sectors of society.

Work is ongoing in relation to this commitment.

The implementation of the National Islands Plan continues to be supported by both the Islands Strategic Group and the National Islands Plan Delivery Group. The Islands Strategic Group was established to ensure greater involvement of the relevant councils in helping design solutions to the challenges islanders face, whilst the Delivery Group ensures that work is driven forward in a collaborative way that truly involves island communities.

The Islands Strategic Group (ISG)

The ISG was established in 2016 to consider issues affecting the inhabited island communities of Scotland, and to ensure greater involvement of the relevant councils in helping identify and design solutions to the unique needs and challenges these communities face. Membership of this group comprises the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Council Leaders and Chief Executives across all Local Authorities with islands.



Scottish Government
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