Easdale

The Scottish Islands Typology (2024): Visual summary

What was the aim of this research?

- To create a better understanding of Scotland's islands by producing a classification which compares islands to each other based on some of the key factors which affect daily life.

- To provide a methodology that can be adapted, with components which can be used separately.

Which factors did we look at?

Population
The number of people potentially available to provide services or fulfil volunteer roles, and the consumer base for service providers based elsewhere.

Local services and amenities
Access to schooling, GPs and hospitals, grocery stores and vehicle fuel outlets.

Access to mainland Scotland
How an island connects to mainland Scotland via fixed links or ferries.

Small Isles Primary School, Jura

This typology is just one of the resources provided by the Scottish Government to help those working in, with, and for Scotland's islands understand their diversity, challenges, and potential.

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What island types did we identify?

Connected Independent Islands
Arran; Bute; Great Cumbrae; Mainland Orkney & connected isles; Mull.

Independent Hub Islands
Islay; Lewis, Harris & connected isles; Mainland Shetland & connected isles; Uist & connected isles.

Independent Outer Isles
Barra & Vatersay; Bressay; Jura; Tiree; Unst; Whalsay; Yell.

Mainland-Connected Islands
Seil; Skye.

Outpost Islands
Canna & Sanday; Fair Isle, Fetlar, Foula, Papa Stour; Skerries (Housay & Bruray).

Reliant Inner Isles
Easdale; Iona; Kerrera; Lismore; Luing; Raasay; Ulva & Gometra.

Reliant Outer Isles
Coll; Colonsay & Oronsay; Eday; Egilsay; Eigg; Flotta; Graemsay; Muck; North Ronaldsay; Rum; Wyre.

Semi-Reliant Isles
Gigha; Hoy & Walls; Papa Westray; Rousay; Sanday (Orkney); Shapinsay; Stronsay; Westray.

Unserviced Islands
Auskerry; Eilean dà Mhèinn; Eilean Shona; Eilean Tioram / Dry Island; Erraid; Gairsay; Holm of Grimbister; Holy Island; Inner Holm; Isle of Danna; Isle of Ewe; Rona / Ronaigh (Skye); Scalpay (Skye); Shuna (Luing); Soay; Tanera More / Tannara Mòr; Vaila.

Previously Inhabited Islands
71 islands which were previously inhabited, but which reported no permanent residents at the 2011 census. (See main report for list).

Scalloway, Mainland Shetland

These categories are not intended to act as a hierarchy or a scale. Instead, the categories and accompanying descriptors in the report provide context for those wishing to think about the differing needs and opportunities across Scotland's diverse islands.

The names of the categories are largely based on work carried out on Gow's Typology of Scotland's Islands and were developed in consultation with islanders.

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What are the main highlights?

- Scotland is home to a diverse range of islands which have varying levels of access to people, goods and services. This is affected by what is available in the island and by the island's connections to mainland Scotland.

- Islands within the same region or local authority area can be very different from each other in this regard.

- There is value in understanding the differences between islands in close proximity and the connections that can be made between similar islands which are geographically distant from each other.

What data did we use?
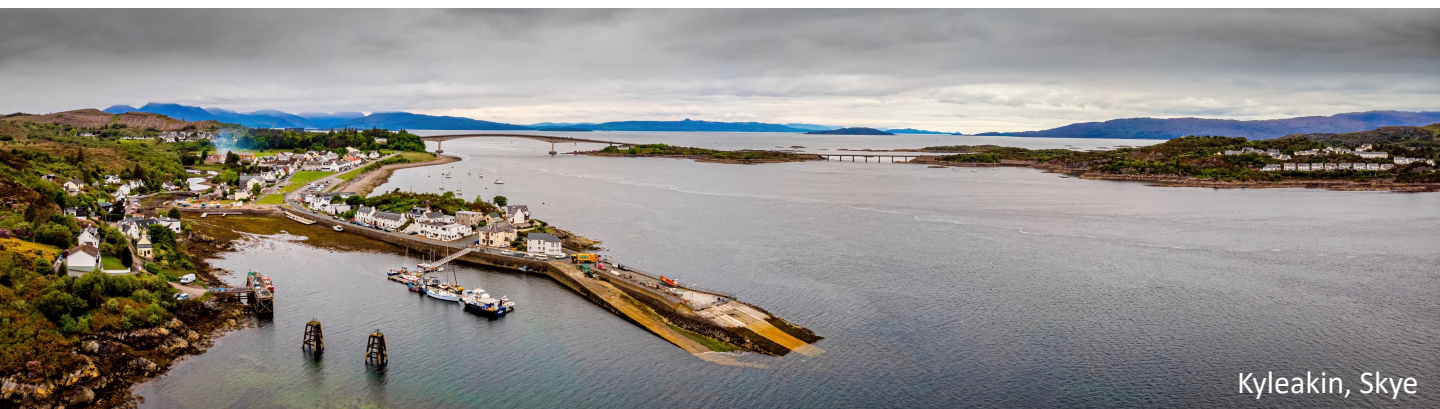
Population – 1981 and 2011 census data.

Services and amenities – websites of local authorities, the NHS, GP practices, schools, island organisations, and businesses.*

Access to Mainland Scotland – websites of ferry providers.

* Where necessary, extra data was gathered using phone calls and emails to relevant organisations.

Other data on islands

- Scottish Islands Typology (2024) Excel datasheet

- Scottish Islands Data Dashboard (2023)

- Scottish Island Regions 2023: Overview, Scottish Government (2023)

Kyleakin, Skye

For more information contact the Scottish Government Islands Team at info@islandsteam.scot

The Scottish Islands Typology was based on work carried out for Gow's Typology of Scotland's Islands.

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