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The Proposed National Islands Plan Am Moladh Plana nan Eilean Nàiseanta



THE
ISLANDS
SCOTLAND ACT 2018
ACHD
NAN EILEAN
ALBA 2018

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

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Contents

Foreword from our Minister	02
Summary of Strategic Objectives	03
1. Introduction	05
2. A Fair, Integrated, Green and Inclusive Plan	11
3. Population Levels	15
4. Sustainable Economic Development	17
5. Transport	23
6. Housing and Fuel Poverty	28
7. Digital Connectivity	33
8. Health and Social Care and Wellbeing	37
9. Environmental Wellbeing and Biosecurity	41
10. Climate Change and Energy	44
11. Empowered Island Communities and Strong Local Partnerships	47
12. Arts, Culture and Language	53
13. Education	56
14. Implementation and Measurement of the National Islands Plan	59
15. Global Leadership	62
Annex A Duties in Relation to Island Communities: Relevant Authorities	64



Foreword from our Minister



As the Minister responsible for Scotland's islands, I have had the privilege of overseeing the development of Scotland's first National Islands Plan. This Plan, the production of which marks a historic milestone, has been created with the input of many of our islanders and I am extremely grateful to you all for your contributions and ideas.

Our islands are profoundly important – not just to Scotland, but to the whole world and their contribution is valued and acknowledged through the introduction in 2018 of the Islands (Scotland) Act and the development of this Plan. The extraordinary natural diversity and cultural importance of our islands deserve to be promoted and protected, and it is my hope that this Plan will help us to do just that.

From April to July 2019, we consulted widely on what was important to islanders and through that process, we have identified a range of issues that we need to address in order to achieve our objective of improving life on our islands. The consultation process highlighted where we need to step up our efforts and focus our energies over the next five years. Thank you to everyone who took part. I hope that you can see your views and goals incorporated here in the Plan.

The Plan sets out 13 practical, common sense Strategic Objectives in relation to housing, population levels, sustainable economic development, transport and a host of other areas which are critical to improving the quality of life for our island communities. Clearly, climate change is one of the most pressing of those issues. Islanders are extremely resilient and we all have an obligation to respond to the climate emergency. I believe that Scotland can be a catalyst for change across all corners of the world – and our islands are at the very forefront of that change.

I, along with my colleagues across government, welcome this opportunity to do all that we can to continue to support our islands. We are committed to protecting our islands and to proudly promoting them as wonderful places to live, to visit, to work and to study. We will continue to work closely with communities as we implement this Plan. With the assistance and involvement of island leaders and all other stakeholders, I truly believe that we have an opportunity to set new standards in island policy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wheelhouse'.

Paul Wheelhouse MSP

Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands

Summary of Strategic Objectives

Population Levels



Strategic Objective 1:

To address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile

Sustainable Economic Development



Strategic Objective 2:

To improve and promote sustainable economic development

Transport



Strategic Objective 3:

To improve transport services

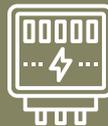
Housing



Strategic Objective 4:

To improve housing on Scottish islands

Fuel Poverty



Strategic Objective 5:

To reduce the level of fuel poverty currently present on Scotland's islands

Digital Connectivity



Strategic Objective 6:

To improve digital connectivity

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing



Strategic Objective 7:

To improve and promote health and wellbeing

Summary of Strategic Objectives

<p>Environmental Wellbeing and Biosecurity</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 8: To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity</p>
<p>Climate Change and Energy</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 9: To ensure that Scottish islands are at the forefront of contributions to our ambition to end climate change</p>
<p>Empowered Island Communities and Strong Local Partnership</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 10: To empower diverse communities and different places</p>
<p>Arts, Culture and Language</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 11: To support arts, culture and language</p>
<p>Education</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 12: To promote and improve education</p>
<p>Implementation</p> 	<p>Strategic Objective 13: To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan</p>

Introduction

One cannot think of Scotland without thinking of Scotland's islands. Islands and island communities are an integral part of Scotland as a nation and they have helped define how many international audiences see Scotland. They are something that all people living in and from Scotland should be immensely proud of. Islanders enjoy a strong sense of community, freedom and safety that contribute positively to living on islands in Scotland. Add to that their important economic role, their spectacular natural environment and rich cultural heritage, and you can start to understand why people from all around the world visit and have a special affection for islands in Scotland.

Islands and island communities in Scotland are not only resilient, but also often innovative. Whether it is in the field of community-based solutions in estate management, energy or digital connectivity, health delivery, or in the arts, in culture or language, island communities in Scotland are often paving the way for ideas and solutions that can be then exported to the mainland.

Against this background, there are 96 inhabited islands in Scotland,¹ and many more that have been inhabited but now only have the remains of what were once thriving and busy communities.²



1 Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 2(1) provides the following definition: “island” means a naturally formed area of land which is— “(a) surrounded on all sides by the sea (ignoring artificial structures such as bridges), and (b) above water at high tide.”

2 St Kilda is just one example of an uninhabited island that has a very strong cultural heritage dimension for Scotland.

While islands in Scotland are great places to live, they have been, and in some cases remain, challenging because of a number of circumstances – not least their geographical location. Most islands in the past experienced a much stronger population. Towards the end of the 19th century, many people from the islands emigrated around the world in search of a better life, although many did not leave through choice. The clearances have also marked the islands and island communities with some scars still not completely healed. What history tells us is that islands and island communities have often felt on the periphery of public policy. Island communities have felt that decisions, which would end up affecting them, were taken by people not living on the island, who were completely detached from the reality of life away from the mainland.

The adoption of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 should be hailed as a historic piece of place-based legislation that carries the promise of improving island governance in Scotland.

The genesis of the Act is a reminder to the many people who have worked hard to reach this historic point. In June 2013, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Western Isles Council), Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council launched the Our Islands – Our Future Campaign,³ with the aim of ensuring that the needs and status of island areas in Scotland were clearly recognised.

In June 2014, on conclusion of the Island Areas Ministerial Working Group’s work, the Scottish Government published the *Empowering Scotland’s Island Communities prospectus*.⁴ This was based on three underpinning objectives:

1. Promoting the voice of island communities;
2. Harnessing island resources; and
3. Enhancing the wellbeing of island communities.

As a result, the UK Government adopted a Framework for the Islands⁵ where it developed ‘island proofing’ as a principle, whereby policy and legislation must take into account islands’ circumstances, although this was not on a statutory footing. Following the Empowering Scotland’s Island Communities prospectus, the Scottish Government consulted on provisions for a future Islands Bill. A key focus of this consultation was the aspect of ‘island-proofing’, with a focus on its inclusion as a principle within any future Island Bills to formalise the approach in legislation. As a result, the Bill for the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on 6 July 2018. The first Commencement Regulations were laid on 20 September and came into force on 4 October 2018.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 introduces a number of measures to underpin our key objective of ensuring that there is a sustained focus across government and public sector to meet the needs of island communities now and in the future. One of the first provisions introduced was a duty on Scottish Ministers to prepare a National Islands Plan (the Plan). *This Plan should set out the main objectives and strategy of Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities that result from, or are contributed to by, the carrying out of functions of a public nature.*⁶

3 Our Islands, Our Future, Joint Position Statement. Available at: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/7964/jointpositionstatement.pdf>

4 Scottish Parliament, Official Report, Island Areas Ministerial Working Group, Prospectus, Empowering Scotland’s Island Communities, June 2014.

5 UK Government and the three Scottish Island Councils, Framework for the Islands, 2014: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/344446/UKG_ISLANDS_FRAMEWORK_-_15_August.pdf

6 Islands (Scotland) Act, section 3(2).

The Plan sets a direction of travel for the Scottish Government and provides a framework for action in order to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities. Development of the Plan has been informed by the legislation itself, by what people told us was important to them, what partners told us, and also by wider Scottish Government policy and strategy. As required by the Act, it includes proposals in relation to:

- increasing population levels;
- improving and promoting sustainable economic development;
- improving and promoting environmental wellbeing;
- improving and promoting health and wellbeing;
- improving and promoting community empowerment;
- improving transport services;
- improving digital connectivity;
- reducing fuel poverty;
- ensuring effective management of the Scottish Crown Estate; and
- enhancing biosecurity.⁷

Reflecting feedback from the consultation that we carried out between April and July 2019, the Plan also includes other issues that are important to our island communities: housing, climate change, energy, education and our cultural heritage.

The Plan has a duration of five years with a requirement for annual reports on progress and a review at the end of the five-year period. In accordance with the Islands (Scotland) Act⁸, we have started the development of appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures to allow us to evaluate our progress against the 13 Strategic Objectives and the short-, medium- and long-term aims provided for in the Plan. From spring 2020, the Plan will be accompanied by an **Implementation Strategy** that will detail the actions and set-out in full, these measures and indicators. The Plan and its indicators will build upon the National Performance Framework (NPF) outcomes and indicators and upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Plan is not the only document that deals with island issues, but it is a means of focusing on islands and considering the opportunities and challenges in the round, drawing in relevant parts of Scottish Government, our partners and agencies and the wider public sector. The Plan also, where relevant, aligns with and provides a distinctive islands communities focus, to existing policies and strategies that affect the lives and wellbeing of islanders. Implementing a Fair, Integrated, Green and Inclusive National Islands Plan will require strong collaboration and partnership between Scottish Government, local authorities, island communities and all other stakeholders involved – including through community planning.

In order to develop the Plan, the Scottish Ministers undertook a wide consultation with island communities. However, this was not simply a way to meet a procedural requirement in the legislation,⁹ but an essential means to properly develop the National Islands Plan in a way that truly responds “to the distinctive geographical, natural heritage and cultural characteristics (*including the linguistic heritage*) of each of the areas inhabited by island communities”.¹⁰

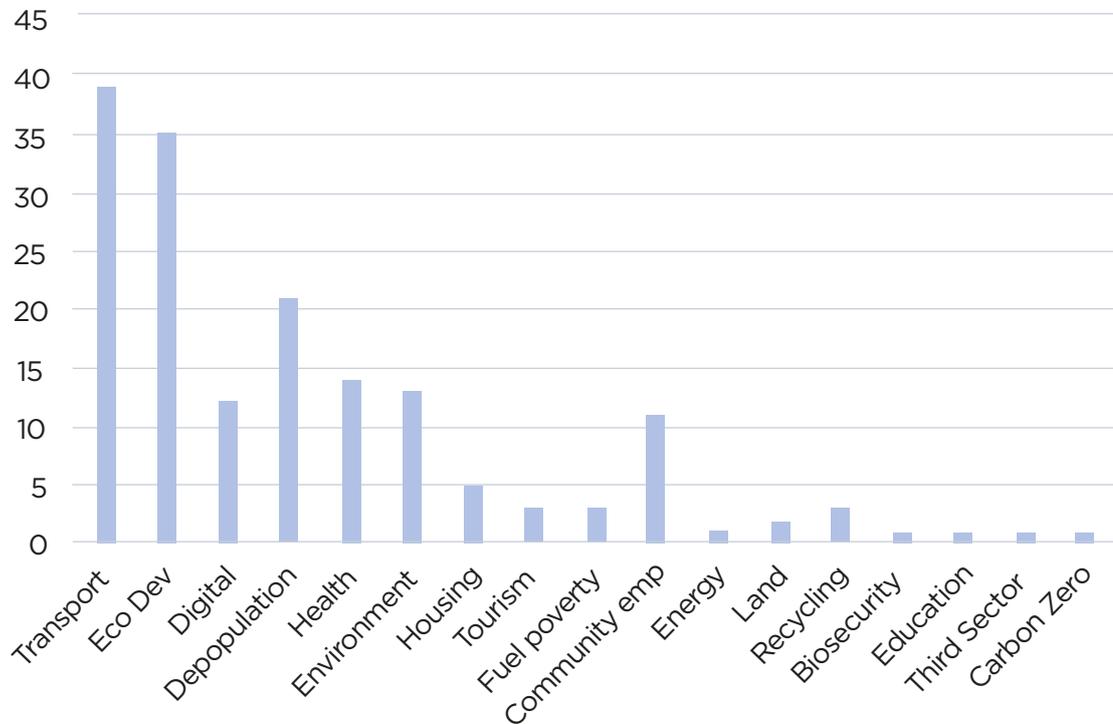
⁷ Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 3(3).

⁸ Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 3(5).

⁹ Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 4 (1) (a).

¹⁰ Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 4(1) (b).

The consultation process was undertaken using a combined World Café and open space technology methodology format that enabled participants to engage in a wide discussion about what works well on their island and what needs to be improved.¹¹ The consultation saw more in-depth discussion on several aspects important for island participants at the events.¹² Below you will find how many times participants discussed specific areas in more depth:



During the consultation, the Scottish Government's Islands Team visited 41 islands and organised 61 events which allowed them to engage face-to-face with almost 1,000 people. The live events were complemented by an online consultation where participants could provide their views electronically. Three-hundred and ninety-four online responses were received. In addition, young people were invited to attend specific events that allowed them to share their input to the development of the National Islands Plan.



11 Methodologies used in the consultation <http://www.theworldcafe.com/> and <https://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/>.

12 Reports from all the islands visited are available here: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/eilean/islandsscotlandact/consultations/>.

ISLANDS VISITED			
1	Arran	22	Mainland Orkney (Kirkwall and Stromness)
2	Barra	23	Mainland Shetland (Lerwick)
3	Benbecula	24	Muck
4	Brae	25	Mull
5	Bute	26	North Ronaldsay
6	Canna	27	North Uist
7	Coll	28	Raasay
8	Colonsay	29	Rum
9	Cumbræ	30	Sanday
10	Easdale	31	Seil
11	Eigg	32	Skye
12	Gigha	33	South Uist
13	Harris	34	Stronsay
14	Hoy	35	Tiree
15	Iona	36	Ulva
16	Islay	37	Unst
17	Jura	38	Vatersay
18	Kerrera	39	Westray
19	Lewis	40	Whalsay
20	Lismore	41	Yell
21	Luìng		

The Plan outlines how objectives and strategies to improve outcomes for island communities are underpinned by four key values: **fairness, integration, environmental protection (green)** and **inclusiveness**. With this approach at the forefront, the Plan then highlights **13 Strategic Objectives** of the Scottish Ministers. The last two chapters refer to the implementation of the Plan and the role it should play in relation to Scotland's global reputation.

Strategic Objectives

The creation of the Plan is taking place in the context of continuing uncertainties around Brexit and a growing body of evidence, which suggests that there could be potentially damaging impacts for our rural and island communities. Brexit casts a shadow of uncertainty on the application of the EU cohesion policy to Scotland. However, the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Plan align themselves with the spirit that has driven the EU cohesion policy over the last decades.¹³ Hence, the approach and policies to rural regions in Scotland and to island communities, as envisioned in the Plan, will not change dramatically. Understandably, our island communities are already anxious about what the future holds and whilst the Scottish Government will do what it can, the continuing uncertainties over funding streams may well have implications for what can be delivered in the future.



13 Island communities have benefited from the EU Cohesion Policy and its related funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The goal of the policy and of the funds was to ‘reduc[e] disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the least-favoured regions.’ The Lisbon Treaty went one step further and maintained that “cohesion policy should also promote more balanced, more sustainable ‘territorial development’”. Membership of the EU has also promoted long-term national spatial planning and creating growth in multiple regions based on their inherent strengths. See European Commission, European Spatial Development Perspective, 1999: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/sum_en.pdf

A Fair, Integrated, Green and Inclusive Plan



Our National Islands Plan is based on the principles that it is fair, integrated, green and inclusive.

The principles of fair, integrated, green and inclusive stem from the consultation and underpin the Plan and its implementation by guiding Scottish Government and all relevant stakeholders in meeting its ultimate objective – which is to improve outcomes for island communities.

Fair

Fairness reflects our commitment to equality and human rights. The Plan recognises that every member of society has a right to live with dignity and to enjoy high quality public services wherever they live. That commitment is now an explicit National Outcome within Scotland's refreshed **National Performance Framework**.



We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.¹⁴



The challenges faced by island communities are shared with much of rural Scotland, and often have similarities with other communities that suffer disadvantage, for example in accessing public services or high quality employment. However, the consequences of geography (including higher costs and environmental factors) can create particular problems for island communities and people have felt abandoned and disadvantaged by central-based governance systems. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 was the first step in remedying the challenges felt by island communities. However, the Plan and its supporting Implementation Strategy will go a step further in this direction through a place-based approach aimed at working towards fairness across the whole of Scotland.

Compliance with Scotland's human rights obligations is a central component of that approach. The geographic, demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other particularities of the Scottish islands mean that many issues of significance to island communities are of such a fundamental nature that they are likely to interact with a range of human rights. For example, the transportation of people and goods to and from the islands, or issues related to digital connectivity, may have a direct impact on the ability of individuals to access health, education, work, and to achieve an adequate standard of living for 21st century lifestyles. Issues with regard to access to affordable housing and land may impact on the right to adequate housing, family and private life and the right to food, and challenges of this nature may, in turn, be further compounded by the effects of fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty.

14 <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

By taking a human rights approach for all islanders – including young people, the Plan aligns with ongoing policy developments in Scotland in this field.¹⁵ The practical value of a human rights approach includes the potential it offers to support island communities and deliver greater empowerment – not just across the public sector, but also in relation to private sector provision of services of a public or quasi-public nature.



A fair Plan will strive towards equality across Scotland and its human rights approach will support greater accountability and help ensure that rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Integrated

Integration and sustainability are not only about bringing together environmental, social and economic considerations into policy. It is also about moving away from the risks of governing in silos and embracing an integrated approach to policy. The Scottish Government has adopted the Place Principle which will enable a more joined-up and collaborative approach to services, land and building to maximise the impact of collective energy and resources to deliver the outcomes on the National Performance Framework. The Plan and its implementation takes sustainability forward by promoting joined-up services based on an integrated and holistic approach to policy that captures economic, social and environmental considerations.

This supports what we heard in the consultation where islanders clearly referred to the way society operates on an island as integrated. No single aspect, be it transport, housing or health operates in isolation. They are all reliant on one another and need to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes. They also need to be resilient to disruption, and able to cope with and recover from emergencies. Indeed, the Place Standard has already been used effectively by island communities to assess and plan improvements across a range of infrastructure and services.

In some cases, when one aspect of island life starts improving, a ripple effect is created and can have transformational effects. For example, improving housing simultaneously supports economic development by providing affordable accommodation for the island workforce and helps reverse depopulation. These kind of interdependencies on outcomes already feature as part of the decision-making process around the creation of Local Development Plans which are prepared by the relevant planning authority for the island with the opportunity for significant input from communities.

¹⁵ The First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership reported in December 2018 and recommended, *inter alia*, the development of a new statutory human rights framework for Scotland. This proposed legislation would, for the first time, bring internationally recognised human rights into domestic law – including economic, social, cultural and environmental rights covering areas such as education, health, housing, food and cultural rights. The Advisory Group's report can be found here: <https://humanrightsleadership.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/First-Ministers-Advisory-Group-on-Human-Rights-Leadership-Final-report-for-publication.pdf>. In June 2019, the Scottish Government announced that the Advisory Group's recommendations will be taken forward by a new national task force.

A focus on sustainability in the Plan also aligns with Scotland's global leadership when it comes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁶



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.

Green

A green Plan is not just about protecting our beautiful islands, their biodiversity and dealing efficiently with biosecurity. A green Plan is about focusing not only on the challenges, but also on the opportunities that Scotland's islands have because of their environment and natural resources and assets. Our islands have a plethora of outstanding natural resources, from unique ecosystems such as machair – which is one of the rarest habitats in Europe, to powerful winds and tides. The Plan and its implementation provides an opportunity to harness the potential of a green and blue economy¹⁷ in times of climate emergency.

A green Plan recognises the concerns of people on the islands that we met during the consultation. It talks in particular to those people living on islands who understand, probably better than others due to the threat it poses to them, the dangers of climate change. At the same time, a green Plan aligns with Scotland as a global leader in its wider efforts to tackle climate change. Not only will islands play their role in the Government's Climate Change ambition to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045,¹⁸ the Plan will enable islands to become hubs of innovation when it comes to renewables and electricity generation. Islands will also lead the way in terms of adaptation by relying often on good governance and management of land and biodiversity.



A green Plan will harness and unleash the potential of a green and blue economy in times of climate emergency.

¹⁶ Scotland and the SDGs.

¹⁷ The European Commission defines blue economy as all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts.

¹⁸ Government's Climate Change Plan or cross reference to relevant chapters.

Inclusive

An inclusive Plan is one where island communities feel that they can have a say in decisions that directly affect them. It was clear from the consultation that islanders feel that this is often not the case, and that decisions are regularly taken by institutions that do not fully understand the reality of life on the island. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the provisions therein, (like the obligation to undertake island communities impact assessments), are the first step in addressing islanders' concerns. The Plan and its implementation also have an important role to play in promoting genuine community empowerment by ensuring that the needs of affected communities are fully taken into account in decision-making, as close as possible to where the effects of such decisions will be felt.

Therefore, an inclusive Plan responds to a clear demand stemming from the consultation. It will also align with ongoing efforts that include the implementation of the relevant parts of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the ongoing Local Governance Review,¹⁹ which also aim to enable a better balance of power, responsibilities and resources between national and local government, and with communities.



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.

A **fair** Plan will strive towards equality across Scotland and its human rights approach will support greater accountability and help ensure that 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 and unleash the potential of a green and blue economy in times of climate emergency; and

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.

¹⁹ Community Empowerment Act and the ongoing Local Governance Review or cross reference to relevant chapters.

Population Levels

Depopulation is a real threat to the sustainability of many, although not all, of Scotland's island communities. Over the last 10 years, almost twice as many islands have lost populations as have gained. Future population projections suggest that islands are at further risk of depopulation with Orkney and Shetland are each projected to lose 2.2% of their population by 2041 and Eileanan Siar 14%.²⁰

A trend towards urbanisation is being experienced globally. Tackling the drivers of this is complex, but provides an opportunity to consider innovative approaches. Depopulation has an adverse effect on community confidence and service sustainability, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. The key demographic issue for sparsely populated areas is not an excess of older people, but the relatively small number of children and young people, which in the years to come will translate into a shrinking working-age population. This will have serious implications for the workforce, the economy, and the capacity for demographic regeneration. The relatively small cohorts in the child-bearing age group seem likely to lead to a spiral of decline, unless counterbalanced by substantial net in-migration.

Having lived away for a few years and maybe wanting to come back with my boyfriend later on, we would have to realistically consider what it would do to our careers to have no opportunity for growth in a job – or to maybe not even get a job in that field.

(Consultation participant, Lewis). 

We recognise the valuable contribution that older people make to our island communities and the wider island economy, whether that be through caring roles, volunteering or simply by continuing to work. However, depopulation, and more particularly, altering the currently aging demographic on many of Scotland's Islands, is evidently intertwined with ensuring sustainable economic development. Island communities need to attract and retain families. Many of our island communities are projected to see significant decreases in the numbers of children and working-age people. Eileanan Siar, for example, is projected to see a 20% decline in the working-age population and a similar level of decline in the proportion of children between 2016 and 2041.

The Isle of Kerrera has seen positive improvements in its demographics. The population has grown by 100% in the last seven years from 34 to 68, including 19 children: 25% of the population is under 16, with an increase in the number of multi-generational families living on the island. The feeling of vitality is being supported by the recent purchase of the old school (funded by the Scottish Land Fund) which is to be turned into a multi-purpose community centre.

<https://www.isleofkerrera.org>



²⁰ 2016-based subnational population projections for Scottish areas

National Records of Scotland report on analysing the data from the 2011 census:

- There were 93 inhabited islands in Scotland at the time of the 2011 Census. Their total population was 103,700, which was 2 per cent of the population of Scotland.
- In 2011, half (50 per cent) of all island residents aged 16 and over were married. While this was slightly lower than the 2001 figure of 52 per cent, it was higher than the 45 per cent reported for Scotland as a whole.
- In 2011, just over a fifth (23 per cent) of island residents aged 3 and over had some knowledge of Gaelic, a decrease from the 26 per cent recorded in 2001.
- The proportion of island residents aged 16 to 74 who were in employment increased from 63 per cent in 2001 to 67 per cent in 2011.



Depopulation was the top priority issue identified by respondents to the consultation. Respondents from some Scottish Islands, such as North Ronaldsay, said that they had suffered such extensive population decline that the survival of the island community is at risk. This issue is also challenging in terms of employment levels and workforce availability on islands with limited population. Although most of those who contributed to the consultation highlighted current population trends – both depopulation and an aging demographic, as being a key challenge to ensuring the sustainability of island life, some islands feel that they are at capacity in terms of population as they do not (for example) have enough available housing.

Ensuring that legislation and policy affords a supportive environment to encourage economically active people either to stay, return or move to an island, and is developed with input from local communities, is of the utmost importance. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires the National Planning Framework to include a statement on how the long-term development strategy will contribute to six outcomes, including increasing the population of rural areas of Scotland.

Strategic Objective 1

To address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile

In order to help address population decline and to ensure a healthy, balanced population profile, the Scottish Government will:

- 👤 Identify islands where depopulation is becoming a critical issue in order to ensure that these islands have their needs addressed;
- 👤 Understand the impact of Brexit on islands and island communities;
- 👤 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 with young islanders to identify actions to encourage them to stay on or return to islands; and
- 👤 Fully consider policy developments, such as the findings of Scottish Government research “rural planning to 2050” when ensuring that the needs of Scotland’s islands are taken into account by the Ministerial Task Force on Population.

Sustainable Economic Development

The consultation process indicated that sustainable economic development is a common goal across all Scottish islands. While there is not a one-size-fits-all solution, all islands will benefit from more jobs and higher quality opportunities for the people who live there. Sometimes, a small increase in jobs or income generating opportunities can have a huge impact on an island community. Business Gateway opportunities and economic development agencies were identified by respondents to the consultation as positive approaches for the islands. However, they said that they felt there should be even more support for economic development on islands, with many citing a lack of investment in relation to the retention and/or increase of on island job opportunities and available business space.



Employability support – piecemeal, patchy and inconsistently supported. Too much reliance on volunteers for economic development activities – 3-5 year funding needed for personnel to deliver growth plans.

(Consultation Participant, Bute). 

Participants highlighted specific economic drivers such as marine activities, agriculture and crofting, fishing, tourism and the food and drink industry (including island abattoirs) during the consultation process as playing an important role in promoting and delivering sustainable economic development. Tourism was highlighted as a positive, but with some caveats around the need for environmental protection and capacity of services to meet demand. Many other factors, with transport, housing and digital connectivity high on the list, were stated as being key enablers for sustainable economic development.

The current and potential value of marine and coastal tourism has been a key factor in 2020 being designated as a year in which Scotland's Coasts and Waters will be showcased and celebrated with a programme of activity designed to support the nation's tourism and events sectors. The Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 will sustain and build upon the momentum of the preceding Themed Years. In addition, the broad scope of the Year of Coasts and Waters provides the opportunity to highlight the social, rural, environmental and economic policies and projects in development of delivery across the Scottish Government and wider public sector. 2020 will spotlight, celebrate and promote opportunities to experience and enjoy Scotland's unrivalled Coasts and Waters, encouraging responsible engagement and participation from the people of Scotland and our visitors and be based around four cross-cutting strands:

- Our Natural Environment and Wildlife
- Our Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage
- Activities and Adventure
- Food and Drink

The Plan focuses elsewhere on these specific enablers as well as other sectors, such as renewable energy and energy storage, which could play a strong transformational role for islands. However, the Plan acknowledges that all sectors that drive or enable sustainable economic development are integrated. There is an urgent need for joined-up policies informed by a solid understanding of these relationships. The connections across the themes already made by the relevant Development Plans for islands are a useful starting point.

Finally, “sustainable” economic development implies that jobs and opportunities should not come at a cost for the environment. In fact, “going green” is a pre-condition for sustainable economic development and a key element for many sectors, such as tourism, marine and land-based economic activities. Nor should it be the case that economic development and job creation comes at a cost to job quality. The quality of jobs and work are crucial to economic growth, and it will be vital therefore, to ensure that Fair Work is at the heart of this inclusive and sustainable growth agenda. Employers who treat their workers fairly benefit in a number of ways, including from improved morale, staff loyalty, better retention and reduced recruitment and training costs. This can boost both individual performance and wider productivity.

Against this background, the implementation of the Plan will build on and align, where possible, with relevant plans and strategies including the National Marine Plan, the 2020 Infrastructure Investment Plan that will be informed by the work of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, Scotland’s Economic Action Plan, Energy Strategy, and the Islands Growth Deal²¹ – in relation to the islands to which it will apply. It will also link closely to the National Planning Framework and Local Development Plans for the islands to ensure change and growth happens in a responsible manner.

Bute Island Alliance runs “The Bank” at the former Clydesdale Bank property on High Street to create an enterprise space for its island community. The first year of the space was delivered in collaboration with Rothesay Townscape Heritage which is focusing on the regeneration of historic buildings as well as traditional skills training and community engagement. Argyll and Bute Council recognised the need for greater economic development and regeneration in Rothesay and the Townscape Heritage Programme is being designed to make an improved and lasting difference to the town centre.

<https://www.buteislandalliance.org.uk/the-bank-enterprise-hub/>



²¹ The Islands Growth Deal has been developed by Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles following extensive consultation across a wide range of stakeholders and with the aim of driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It is important that the Plan and the Islands Growth Deal be implemented in a mutually supportive manner and of a sufficient scale of ambition and value to deliver real differences in order to retain and attract talent to the islands to which the Islands Deal applies.

Our National Infrastructure Mission has committed us to increase overall infrastructure spending to deliver a long-term boost to Scotland's economy. The coming year will see the publication of the recommendations of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland in advance of the next Infrastructure Investment Plan and Capital Spending Review. Whilst the Infrastructure Commission is independent of Scottish Ministers, we have encouraged and welcomed the Commission's efforts to visit and engage with islanders from all of our island groups on the specific infrastructure requirements for those communities.

The next Infrastructure Investment Plan will cover the next five-year period and will build on recommendations from the Infrastructure Commission. It will consider the impacts on our island communities and set out our commitment to delivering infrastructure projects which support our transition to a net zero emissions economy while delivering inclusive economic growth and creating sustainable places.

SG Policy

New arrangements for land-use planning include a requirement for planning authorities to produce Regional Spatial Strategies. To support this, early work to inform National Planning Framework 4 will explore how this can be achieved in a collaborative way. Depending on the approach authorities wish to take, future spatial strategies arising from this new duty could be designed to help to deliver on the wider aims of the National Islands Plan.

The Scottish Government's National Marine Plan contributes to delivering our vision for the marine environment – for clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas, managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people. The National Marine Plan also specifies a core set of General Policies and objectives, which apply to all plan making and decision-making in the marine environment. These apply to all existing and future use and development of the marine environment and include a presumption in favour of sustainable development and use of the marine environment as well as encouragement of sustainable development and use, which provides economic benefit to Scottish communities. The Marine Plan promotes an ecosystem approach, putting the marine environment at the heart of the planning process to promote ecosystem health, resilience to human-induced change and the ability to support sustainable development and use. It adopts the guiding principles of sustainable development, to ensure that any individual policy, plan or activity is carried out within environmental limits.

Aquaculture contributes to sustainable economic growth in rural and coastal communities, especially in the Highlands and Islands. Many communities depend on the employment and revenue it provides and, as a growing industry, it has potential to contribute to future community cohesion by providing quality jobs in rural areas and helping to maintain community infrastructures such as schools, ferries and other services. The sector currently delivers £620 million of added value (GVA) to the Scottish economy, supporting 12,000 jobs, often highly skilled and many in our remote rural and coastal communities, where the majority of fish farming takes place, as well as downstream processing jobs throughout Scotland.

SG Strategy

The Scottish Government is supportive of the continued growth of aquaculture but we are clear that growth must be sustainable, with due regard to the marine environment and alongside other marine users. In March 2017, the Scottish Government published a joint Ministerial aquaculture policy statement reaffirming that an appropriate balance is struck between the continued growth of the aquaculture industry and regulating the potential environmental impacts. This policy statement sets out how the Scottish Government and its agencies will work constructively with the sector and others with a direct interest to operate a policy and regulatory framework that enables sustainable growth while maintaining the right balance across our economic, environmental and social responsibilities.

Lack of childcare provision was raised by island communities during the consultation process, and this is a key obstacle to encouraging young families to the islands, and, in turn, to promoting sustainable economic development. It impacts on people living on islands because it can prevent them from actively returning to work. It can also have a negative effect on efforts aimed at increasing population since families will be reluctant to move to an island if childcare provision is not available.

The Scottish Government and local authorities have committed to the near doubling of the funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement from 600 to 1140 hours per year from August 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds. Each local authority has developed a detailed expansion plan setting out how they will deliver 1140 hours in their communities. These plans reflect local demand from families regarding the nature, and type, of provision that they require. Local authorities also have a duty, placed on them in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to consult with families in their area about how they should make early learning and childcare available.



Strategic Objective 2

To improve and promote sustainable economic development

In order to improve and promote sustainable economic development, Scottish Government will:

-  Work with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and other key stakeholders, including Business Gateway, to identify key actions to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth on islands, including community-run businesses, e-commerce and digitally-enabled island-based businesses;
-  Work with HIE, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and other internal and external stakeholders 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);
-  Collaborate with HIE and other key stakeholders 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 in partnership with UHI, HIE and others to support strategic projects which deliver sustainable economic growth in the islands, e.g. Orkney Research and Innovation Campus and Stornoway port developments;
-  Work with HIE 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;
-  Showcase leadership in the public sector demonstrating that jobs and careers can be successful on islands;
-  Promote a thriving business environment that allows individuals to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities on islands;
-  Create and promote apprenticeships and job opportunities for young islanders;
-  Ensure that skills provision is agile and responsive to future demand and enables individuals to take up opportunities;
-  Build on Scotland’s National Marine Plan to ensure that fishing and 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;
-  Ensure that sustainable land use including agriculture and forestry continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities;
-  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;

Strategic Objective 2

To improve and promote sustainable economic development

- 
 Ensure that crofting continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities;
- 
 Take forward the delivery of the Islands Passport initiative, which will promote the opportunities to tourists of 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 together with the food and drink industry to leverage its economic potential and explore options for sharing some of its benefits with island communities;
- 
 Seek to expand the range of economic, social and environmental benefits that island communities derive from forestry;
- 
 Review Scotland's National Planning Framework to ensure sufficient flexibility for island interests;
- 
 Reflect the National Islands Plan and relevant regional perspectives in the review of the National Planning Framework and preparation of National Planning Framework 4;
- 
 During the preparation of the 2020 Infrastructure Investment Plan, consider the implications of the National Islands Plan on future infrastructure requirements;
- 
 Recognising the services that island abattoirs provide to their communities, we will work with relevant partners to deliver sustainable and economical viable operations; and
- 
 Ensure that legislation and policy relating to childcare is appropriately island-proofed.



Transport

Transport (air, road, ferry, bus, active travel and mainland rail services) is of great importance to island communities and is a key factor in the ability of individual residents to, for example, access services and enjoy fundamental human rights. Respondents to the consultation have stressed that island communities face many different transport challenges when carrying out their daily lives compared to those living in less rural areas of the mainland and urban areas.

Currently, the cost of transport on islands is much higher, relative to income, than in the rest of Scotland. Journey times are often long and can require multiple interchanges, including an overnight stay, adding further costs. In addition, integrated ticketing is not always available, meaning that multiple tickets are required, further adding to price and complexity.

Without adequate transport links to and from an island and between islands, the island community will be in a disadvantaged position compared to similar mainland communities. Transport links within an island are also essential to allow the island community to be mobile within the island. Transport links between the mainland ports that serve the islands and Scotland's urban centres are also important in enabling access for the islands to services and markets. A fair, low carbon transport system is needed so that island communities are put on an equal footing with people on the Scottish mainland, and in order for transport to fully enable the fulfilment of basic human rights. It also enables the growth of sustainable tourism, allowing those who want to visit our islands to do so.

Improved transport links will enable more activities on an island, leading to increased opportunities for sustainable economic development.²² Transport is, hence, a key part of an integrated and sustainable approach to island policy. Transport also plays a part in the environmental footprint of an island. Future transport systems on islands will have to play their role in reaching net zero emissions and contribute to the Scottish Government's other climate change obligations. Finally, transport is a key sector where island communities want to have an even greater voice so that they can genuinely inform decisions that will affect them day in day out.

²² Some island communities face the challenge of residents currently being unable to travel to and from Scotland's cities in the same day while undertaking a day's work. Research has shown that the minimum income that households require for an acceptable standard of living in Scotland's island communities is well above that required in the rest of the UK, and in many cases higher than in other areas of rural Scotland. The distribution of deprivation is also different in rural areas. Factors resulting in additional costs for households in island communities compared to the rest of the UK include longer commuting distances compounded by higher fuel prices; the additional cost of occasional trips to the mainland; additional ferry/air costs for inter-island travel. Longer commutes to work combined with more expensive fuel typically adds £30 to £40 per costs when compared to rural England. When people need to travel between islands to access work, ferry trips can incur additional costs. Island communities can also face additional freight costs, such as to get goods to market or importing energy sources or building materials and labour. Additional charges for deliveries can be a challenge.



The major stress for living in Shetland is the cost and difficulty in travelling to and from the mainland. It means separation from friends and family. It means the cost of a holiday for people on low or median incomes is very difficult.

(Consultation participant, Shetland). 

A range of community transport services were highlighted in the consultation process as providing essential services for island communities. However, transport issues were most frequently mentioned by respondents to the consultation as being a specific challenge of island life. These included both the lack of availability of transport services as well as the cost of transport to and from the island. The need to align timetables when more than one ferry or mode of transport is needed for a journey, the lack of capacity on ferries and the decreasing availability but increasing cost of flights were all mentioned.

Since 2007, the Scottish Government has invested over £1.9 billion in our ferry services, vessels and infrastructure that provide a lifeline to our island communities. That includes over £113 million in ports and harbours and £255 million in vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles networks.

Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has brought significantly lower fares for passengers, cars, small commercial vehicles and coaches. These significant fare reductions have led to an 11% increase in passenger numbers on Clyde and Hebrides services, providing a boost to tourism and island economies, and improving access to the mainland for islanders. We intend to extend RET to Northern Isles routes when we are able to do so.

In 2012, Transport Scotland produced the first comprehensive Ferries Plan (2013-22) based on the needs of communities. This set out the Scottish Government's ambitious plans for Scotland's ferry services up to 2022. Work has now started on developing the next Ferries Plan, which will be an inclusive process and aligned with delivering wider strategic objectives around transport, equality, climate, islands, economy, infrastructure, health and wellbeing.

The Scottish Government has set out its ferry investment plans through successive Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plans, with the latest version to be published this Autumn. Transport Scotland is currently working with CMAL and CalMac to develop investment programmes for vessels and harbours with the aim of increased standardisation and improved resilience. This will also require collaborative working with port owners including local authorities, trusts and private companies. Scottish Ministers have confirmed that the next vessel, following the two currently being built at Ferguson's shipyard, will be for the Islay route and is currently in initial design.

The Scottish Government is committed to dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness. This ambitious programme, one of the biggest transport infrastructure projects in Scotland's history, will bring many benefits to road users, communities and businesses who live along this vital route between central Scotland and the Highlands and Islands.

However, physical transportation of people from place to place is only one means by which lack of access can be overcome. It is clear that the more infrastructure that is constructed, the more it is used. Therefore, we have a responsibility to consider how we move about to satisfy our daily and community needs in a low carbon and increasingly zero-emissions manner.

National Planning Framework 3²³ already highlights the opportunity for islands to capitalise on their size as an asset when considering de-carbonising transport options as well as highlighting the importance of digital fibre/broadband connectivity. There are also other ways in which we might bring people and services closer together to avoid the need to travel in the first place. This may be more achievable under a re-populating scenario for the islands. National Planning Framework 3 is clear that there are towns in coastal areas which can act as hubs for services and transport and will be a focus for new development.

This Plan and its supporting Implementation Strategy will promote a fair, integrated, green and inclusive approach to transport, which will sit alongside Transport Scotland's review of the National Transport Strategy (NTS) that will set the strategic direction for transport over the next 20 years.

In taking this work forward, Transport Scotland have adopted a collaborative approach, working with partners, to develop a robust evidence base, and engaging with stakeholders and citizens across Scotland to give them a greater say in the development of transport policy.²⁴ As well as carrying out a public consultation, Transport Scotland have run four Citizens Panels in urban, rural and island locations to test the public acceptability of the draft NTS. The Plan is also aligned with the strategic commitments on transport. Building on the NTS, the update to the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR225) will set out the transport infrastructure priorities for the next 20 years. Moreover, the Ferries Plan 2 will set out future ferries strategy and will be focused on delivering the outcomes of wider Scottish Government strategies – including the new National Planning Framework, the National Islands Plan, the second Strategic Transport Projects Review and the National Transport Strategy.

23 Scottish Government, National Planning Framework 3, June 2014: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-3/>

24 The draft NTS is built around a strategic framework which sets our vision statement: We will have a sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system helping to deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities and visitors. This vision is underpinned by four themes: Promotes Equality; Takes Climate Action; Helps our Economy Prosper; and Improves our Health and Wellbeing. Building on this collaborative approach, 14 policies, which flow from the four themes, have been developed and informed by engagement with stakeholders. Following the NTS consultation, Transport Scotland will share their findings, in relation to island communities, with us and use the information provided to develop a Delivery Plan which will seek to address the different Transport challenges faced across Scotland different areas and regions. This Delivery Plan will be published alongside the NTS at the end of this year.

25 STPR2 will follow Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). It will be evidence-based, objective-led, transport appraisal which will address transport problems in achieving the NTS outcomes and consider what transport investment is required to achieve them. Appraising the options which best perform against objectives and assessment criteria. Stakeholder consultation is also part of the evidence base. This robust process follows the principles of the Scottish Public Finance Manual and HM Treasury Green Book for Government spend. Therefore, it is deemed that STPR2 is the most appropriate route to determine strategic transport investments for our island communities. STPR2 will also inform Transport Scotland's Ferries Plan 2, with respect to strategic investment.

Through the NTS, we intend to increase accountability and participation by establishing Citizen Panels, which is consistent with taking a more human rights-based approach. These panels will enable Transport Scotland to engage with individuals and communities to inform the implementation of transport policies and enablers. It will also be important to consider the role that islands play or could play as gateways or hubs, now or in the future, based on their connectivity. National Planning Framework 3 highlights the important role of islands for their deep-water ports for example.

The Isle of Hoy Development Trust runs the island's only public transport, the hail and ride community bus. Shapinsay Development Trust run the out of hours ferry passenger service after the scheduled service has finished, enabling folk to attend events and meetings in Kirkwall or come over to Shapinsay for the evening. The out of hours ferry is also available for private hire at other times by arrangement. SDT also provide electric car and minibus travel on Shapinsay for anyone wishing to get to places on the island who don't have a vehicle of their own, or for groups.

<http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/iohdt/>

<http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/shapinsay/>

The community fuel station at Sleat on the Isle of Skye is one of the first community owned fuel stations and has been owned by the Sleat Community Trust for over 10 years. The fuel station is run by the Trust as part of the village shop and Post Office. Next door, the motor garage is leased to a local business.

<http://www.sleat.org.uk/sleatcommunitytradingltd.asp>



Air travel continues to be one of the quickest and most convenient ways to travel, not least to and from our island communities. As set out in Programme for Government, we will work to decarbonise scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040. We will support the trialling and introduction of low or zero emission planes operating between airports across the Highlands and Islands, with the first such trials taking place in 2021. In collaboration with Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd, we will also aim to create the world's first zero emission aviation region through a new programme of activity to decarbonise airport operations, infrastructure and flights across the Highlands and Islands.

SG Policy

We remain committed to supporting connectivity between islands and Scotland's major airports. Many respondents to the consultation were concerned with the cost of air fares and the capacity on the aircraft. The Air Discount Scheme continues to provide a discount of 50% of the core airfare for eligible passengers. We are also committed to supporting the lifeline services between Glasgow and Barra and Tiree.

Strategic Objective 3

In improve transport services

In order to improve transport services the Scottish Government will:

-  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;
-  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;
-  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 this National Islands Plan;
-  As part of the next Ferries Plan, review the impacts of Road Equivalent Tariff and consider future ferry fares policy options that will meet the needs of islanders and support island economies;
-  Also as part of the Ferries Plan, review and promote integration between ferries and other modes of transport on the mainland and islands, with a view to better facilitating use of active, public or shared transport for all or part of journeys to and from islands in an affordable and accessible manner;
-  For the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services, develop and introduce a new booking, reservation and ticketing system, with Smart Ticketing capability, to replace the existing system;
-  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;
-  Determine strategic transport investments from our island communities through STPR2 – which will also inform Transport Scotland's Ferries Plan 2; and
-  Explore the potential to reduce the need to travel by using the planning system to promote places which bring people and services together.

Housing and Fuel Poverty

Despite the positive influence of current policy encouraging new and improved housing, the consultation process highlighted that the availability of affordable, fit-for-purpose housing on Scottish islands presents a challenge for island communities. In particular, access to housing affects population decline and influences the decisions of young people to leave island communities. This 'in turn' affects the sustainability of local services, especially schools. Lack of accessible and affordable housing is a barrier to attracting families to island communities too. It is also associated with various manifestations of rural poverty and general inequality, including homelessness and hidden homelessness. Adequate housing is an internationally recognised human right and forms part of the wider right to an adequate standard of living.

The Scottish Government's Rural and Islands Housing Fund has so far approved nine projects on islands which will provide 16 homes, complementing a much larger number delivered through the mainstream affordable housing supply programme. One newly renovated house funded through the Fund on North Ronaldsay has provided accommodation for an essential worker to come to an island where the population had been declining. The island of Rum has started work on four new affordable rented houses supported by the Fund, following on from two private houses built directly by an aquaculture business, Mowi, for their employees. Joint working on infrastructure to provide services to the site has facilitated the building of these six houses.

SG Policy

Many of the consultation participants indicated that house construction on their islands is often more complicated and difficult than in many mainland areas due to transportation costs and distances (adding upwards of 30-40% on the price of building). Regularity and reliability of ferries, weather, availability of workforce, accommodation for workforce and so on can also add to the difficulties. Additionally, participants highlighted that, on some islands, the number of short-term lets or second homes can limit the availability of homes to local residents and workers.

Finally, respondents to the consultation told us that the way housing need is currently assessed through local authority Housing Need and Demand Assessments may not always pick-up on specific local issues. In order to support greater understanding of local needs, communities should be involved and consulted. There is also concern among island communities about poor quality housing stock driving inequality; this is an example of a concern which needs to inform the assessment of local need.



As one of the most sparsely populated places in Europe, it is ironic that so little land is available for housebuilding/business development. This is partly an issue with land management but also partly a planning issue.

(Consultation participant, Jura). 

The Scottish Government has committed to developing a vision for our homes and communities for 2040 and a route map to get there. This will be a vision for all of Scotland, of which thriving island communities play a vital part. Insights from island communities in preparing this Plan will help to inform that work. Our approach to housing to 2040,²⁶ building on this Plan, provides an opportunity to rethink housing provision on our islands by taking a fair and sustainable approach. This includes tailored locally affordable housing solutions that respond to the needs of island communities, including those who work on the islands on a seasonal basis to support tourism.

We are clear that Scotland must respond to the global climate emergency by improving the energy efficiency of all our homes whilst supporting those in fuel poverty to reduce their fuel bills and live in warm, comfortable homes. We are also making sure new homes are environmentally low-impact designed and built using materials and technology that reduce their carbon footprint and lower energy needs.

SG Policy

The approach to housing to 2040 and the implementation of the Plan will evolve from existing housing related initiatives, policies, strategies and actions. Currently, the Scottish Government's More Homes Scotland approach²⁷ supports the right homes in the right places and is informed by local authority priorities. It aims to increase supply across all tenures and supports rural housing, partly through a share of national programmes, including the Affordable Housing Supply Programme; Housing Infrastructure Fund; and Self-Build Loan Fund.

SG Strategy

Mull and Iona Community Trust has been the anchor organisation for the delivery of the successful housing project at Ulva Ferry. By providing secure, affordable, passive houses with low heating costs there will be many wider social and economic benefits for this fragile community as local people can continue to live, work and go to school in the area.

<https://www.mict.co.uk/projects-services/ulva-ferry-housing-project/>



26 www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040

27 www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/

The delivery of housing on islands is supported through specific interventions, tailored to local needs, such as the Rural and Islands Housing Funds and the Croft House Grant Scheme. Crofting plays a vital role in maintaining the population in remote rural areas including islands. Due to the nature of crofting as a form of land tenure and the predominance of self-build as a means to provide housing, it can be challenging for crofters to access conventional forms of housing finance.

The Croft House Grant Scheme part funds new builds and home improvements making croft housing affordable, the More Homes Scotland approach also includes initiatives to support access to home ownership through shared equity schemes, such as the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme (OMSE) and Help to Buy (Scotland).

The Housing and Planning Delivery Framework²⁸ sets out how Scottish Government and local authorities work together to understand and respond to housing demand. As part of this, local authorities are required to prepare Local Housing Strategies setting out how national and local housing policies and priorities will be met. This includes the environmental and energy performance of housing, such as implementation of the Energy Efficient Scotland programme, including the introduction of minimum standards for energy efficiency in private rented housing. In developing their Local Housing Strategies, local authorities need to comply with the requirements of the Island (Scotland) Act 2018 and should work with a range of stakeholders including forestry, land, housing and community interests to address the challenges of delivering houses and housing-related services in rural and island communities.

Although the next National Planning Framework is to set targets for the use of land for housing we note the recommendation from the Strategic Islands Group which advocated some areas such as islands to set targets locally based on their distinct development context and demand profile.

While short-term lets can have a positive impact and help boost the tourism economy across all areas of Scotland, we know that they can also create challenges. We want to ensure that short-term lets are regulated appropriately and we want to give local authorities the powers they need.

28 www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/housing-and-planning-delivery-framework/

We have recently consulted on the need for a registration system for short-term lets, as part of taking an evidence-based approach that will deliver the best solution for Scottish circumstances, including for our island communities. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019²⁹ enables local authorities to designate control areas for short-term lets where planning permission will always be required if owners want to change the use of their property to a short-term let. We will bring forward proposals for regulation of the sector later this year.

Improving the availability and quality of homes for island communities is challenging. With its £3.3 billion commitment for this Parliament, the Scottish Government has made the single biggest investment in, and delivery of, affordable housing across Scotland since devolution. We have also developed tailored interventions to help rural and island communities. However, we have listened to what island communities have told us and this Plan is only the first step in a process of change and improvement.

There are unique challenges and opportunities for tackling fuel poverty within island communities. Extreme fuel poverty rates are higher for most of the island authorities (ranging from 18% in Shetland to 25% in Na h-Eileanan Siar over the 2015-17 period) than for Scotland as a whole (12%). We also know that extreme fuel poverty can be particularly difficult to eliminate in island communities where building types are harder to improve to the required energy efficiency standard and opportunities to reduce fuel costs are more limited. In addition, the hard to treat housing stock can vary between the islands. Such issues combined with the colder climate in the islands means that some of these homes might have the heating on throughout the whole year. Higher living costs on islands, combined with higher fuel costs, for households on low incomes, can create the conditions for extreme fuel poverty.



29 Scottish Parliament, Planning (Scotland) Act 2019:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/13/contents/enacted>

Strategic Objective 4

To improve housing on Scottish islands

In order to improve housing on Scottish islands the Scottish Government will:



Continue to develop our approach to Housing to 2040 and ensure that it truly reflects the distinct needs of island communities;



Ensure that proposals for the regulation of short-term lets take account of the unique circumstances of island communities and make special provision for them where required;



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;



Continue to provide grants to crofters to build and improve croft houses; and



Build on current policy in order to make best use of all housing stock including derelict properties and options for compulsory purchase; Consider how best 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.

Strategic Objective 5

To reduce the level of fuel poverty currently present on Scotland's islands

In order to reduce the level of fuel poverty currently present on Scotland's Islands the Scottish Government will:



Review how delivery schemes can work better locally and review funding for island communities;



Develop a remote rural, remote small town and island Minimum Income Standard uplift, with the uplift for island areas to be determined separately; and



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

Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity is essential to improving the majority of other sectors on islands, including sustainable economic development, depopulation and health and wellbeing. During the consultation, island communities indicated that although the progress with broadband connectivity was a positive, further advancement was needed given the variation of both mobile and broadband connection between, and within, the islands of Scotland. To ensure that the Plan is fair and inclusive, actions must be taken so that those on the periphery are not unfairly disadvantaged.



Fibre broadband roll-out has been quite a success, but there is still a lot to do here. I think that the island plan should include the ambition to make this rollout as good as that of electricity.

(Consultation participant, North Uist) 

Islanders in many cases suffer a lack of reliable digital connectivity³⁰ which can become a barrier to sustainable economic development, both in terms of businesses already in operation and those people who may wish to move to an island and work remotely. Resilient communications are important for the delivery of emergency services on the islands and good digital connectivity is also increasingly vital for education. Additionally, remote health care could potentially be improved if an increased standard of digital connectivity allowed for virtual appointments. Despite the reserved nature of telecommunications legislation, the Scottish Government is driving forward a number of initiatives to help overcome market failure on the islands, closing the digital divide and helping communities to experience the benefits that access to good quality digital connectivity can provide.

Hebnet provides superfast broadband to the Small Isles (Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck) as well as Soay and the remote mainland communities of Knoydart and Elgol through microwave and wireless technology. The digital source comes via microwave radio from the mainland (Mallaig) and uses a combination of wireless point to point relays and full fibre to the premises (FTTP) to connect all the homes and businesses, providing an essential service for these communities.

<https://www.hebnet.co.uk>



³⁰ The Scottish Government's flagship websites provide information about legislation, policy and news (gov.scot) and guidance and signposting to government and public sector transactional services (mygov.scot). These products are tested with users across Scotland to ensure a consistent user experience regardless of where a user is located. Testing of these and other digital products is viewable remotely, to ensure that staff working in the central belt are able to engage with the experiences of users located in the islands and other rural locations. However, if islands experience poor digital connectivity these efforts to communicate properly with remote communities will prove unsuccessful.

The implementation of the Plan will align with, and build on, existing digital strategies, specifically Scotland’s overarching Digital Strategy, the ongoing deployment of fibre broadband through Scotland’s £400 million Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, and the Scottish Government’s “Reaching 100% Programme”,³¹ the £600 million procurement of which is nearing completion. The DSSB programme met its target to extend fibre broadband access to 95% of premises in Scotland by the end of 2017, providing fibre broadband to around 100,000 premises more than originally anticipated. When the DSSB programme began there were no commercial plans for fibre broadband delivery in, for example, Orkney, Shetland or the Western Isles. Now over 80% of premises in these areas can access fibre broadband thanks, in large part, to the DSSB programme.

Percentage of premises with access to broadband³²

LA	Percentage of premises with access to superfast broadband (2014)	Percentage of premises with access to superfast broadband (2019)	Percentage of premises with access to fibre broadband (2014)	Percentage of premises with access to fibre broadband (2019)	<i>Number of premises connected to fibre broadband through DSSB³</i>
Orkney ¹	11.1	65.7	12.0	82.5	9,320
Shetland ²	28.9	74.2	35.1	86.3	10,475
Western Isles	1.3	76.5	1.6	89.8	14,066

1. Data only available from December 2014.

2. Data only available from September 2014.

3. Correct at 30 August 2019.

31 Reaching 100% programme is striving to extend the availability of Next Generation Access broadband infrastructure to meet the Scottish Government’s commitment to deliver superfast broadband access to 100% of premises in Scotland by 2021.

32 thinkbroadband.com

The Reaching 100% Programme, more commonly known as R100, is the Scottish Government's programme to deliver on our commitment to provide 100% superfast broadband access across Scotland, building on DSSB roll-out. The procurement strategy for R100 sees urban premises excluded, reflecting our view that public investment should be focused in areas where it is needed most – rural Scotland. The procurement has been split into three lots – North, Central and South – with delivery of gigabit infrastructure in challenging rural locations a requirement of the North lot. By mandating coverage in key locations within the North lot, and providing additional weighting to others in the scoring of bids, we will drive fibre into some of our most remote rural and island communities, creating a truly national fibre network, providing a platform for a wide range of digital connectivity, including 4G and superfast broadband today; and 5G and ultrafast broadband tomorrow.

Connectivity, however, is not just about broadband; access to 4G is equally as important. We will continue delivery of the Scottish 4G Infill Programme in which we are investing £25 million to deliver 4G infrastructure and services in selected mobile “notspots”, including on the islands, while our 5G strategy published in August 2019 sets out the Scottish Government's commitment and the steps we will take to ensure Scotland realises its potential as a forward-looking 5G nation.³³ We have also established The Scotland 5G Centre whose aim is to be Scotland's national platform for collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing across all aspects of 5G from research to delivery and exploitation. The Centre's work will include further development of the early rural 5G trials already taking place on Orkney.

Emerging digital technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) are highly relevant to islands. Essentially the IoT links remote physical devices, such as sensors and actuators, to the digital world. With SE, HIE and delivery partner Boston Networks, our IoT Scotland Programme is deploying infrastructure to support IoT services across much of Scotland. Complementing this work, our IoT Support Project, delivered by the Centre for Sensor and Imaging Systems (CENSIS) aims to educate, inform and enthuse Scotland's SMEs about the potential of this technology. We are targeting economic sectors with high relevance to Islands such as Tourism, Transport, Food and Drink (including areas such as aquaculture) and Health.

It is vital that our citizens, communities and businesses possess the digital skills to participate in, and take advantage of, the opportunities of a leading digital economy. These opportunities must be distributed fairly and we must connect our most promising sectors, innovators and entrepreneurs with the advice and investment they need to flourish, grow and create jobs.

We have invested £23 million over the past five years in supporting businesses and individuals to develop their digital skills. Over £11 million of this funding has been focused on delivery of the Digital Skills Investment Plan. To further support our SME businesses improve their digital skills and capacity we have invested £7 million in the “Digital Boost” programme and we will extend the delivery of the Digital Development Loan which provides loans to companies who wish to improve their digital capabilities to improve economic productivity.

³³ The First Minister launched *Forging Scotland's Digital Future with 5G* – our 5G Strategy – on 26 August 2019. The Strategy is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/forging-digital-future-5g-strategy-scotland/>



Strategic Objective 6

To improve digital connectivity

In order to improve digital connectivity the Scottish Government will:

-  Deliver a step change in the quality of broadband services available across the islands;
-  Mandate the delivery of gigabit-capable connectivity to selected island locations, such as Yell and Sanday, through the R100 programme, with many other island communities to benefit once contracts are finalised later this year;
-  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;
-  Call on Ofcom to address the issues faced by island communities when designing telecoms regulation and policy. 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 DCMS in UK national policy development;
-  Through the Scotland 5G Centre, building on the 5G RuralFirst trials currently taking place on Orkney and working with partners including Ofcom, we will develop rural 5G use cases to address the rural digital divide using 5G technology;
-  Work with local resilience partnerships and telecoms providers to encourage them to focus on resilience of data links to and from the islands;
-  Consider options to develop a digital skills programme designed by island communities to meet their needs; and
-  Look to extend the availability of coding clubs and community-based digital inclusion programmes across the islands.

Health and Social Care and Wellbeing

Access to health and social care should be as local as possible for the whole population of Scotland, no matter where they live. We recognise that the changing nature of care and the increasing complexity of needs are just some of the challenges that must be met to ensure fair, accessible healthcare for those on islands. By focusing on a more joined-up, anticipatory and preventative care model based in the community, the aim is to improve care and support for people to live active healthy lives in their communities for as long as possible. Whilst health and social care integration requires services to be redesigned so that we can continue to maintain our focus on reforming and improving people's experience of care and achieve better outcomes, this will be done in response to the needs and choices of people and communities, based on real local understanding.

Having access to good quality health and social care services underpins living on Scotland's islands and is important to both maintain population and attract new residents. We recognise that everyone in Scotland, including residents of island communities, has a right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Ensuring that health and social care services are readily accessible and of a high standard, will involve building on the current policy frameworks for health and care services in Scotland which are designed to ensure sustainable services which are safe, effective and person-centred. This includes, but is not limited to, the Quality Strategy, the National Clinical Strategy and the Health and Social Care Delivery Plan and Digital Health and Care.

Many respondents to the consultation highlighted strengths of local healthcare provision including the building of new hospitals and the personalised service given by their community General Practitioners (GPs). A range of good examples of local healthcare initiatives were identified including the Grubby Huts initiative on Shetland focusing on mental health stigma, befriending initiatives on Lewis, Arran and Lismore, and care for the elderly provision on Westray, Barra, Bute, Arran, Lismore and South Uist. However, the consultation also highlighted concerns from islanders about perceived centralisation of healthcare services; both in terms of access to certain services being moved to the mainland or the population centres of larger islands. Some islanders told us that there were a limited number of health and social care professionals whose skills and expertise often needed to be shared if communities are to have local access to the widest possible spectrum of care.



Consultants and surgeries are now all based on the mainland making for a lot of worry and stress especially for families with young children and our older population. Not everyone can afford a car to travel to appointments.

(Consultation participant, Arran)



Permanent and rotating island GPs and community nurses also require different skills from those working in more urban settings. They are likely to do a wider range of work whilst often working in isolation. In addition, on a small island, they can be on call 24/7 for weeks at a time. The 2018 General Medical Services Contract sets out a new direction for general practice in Scotland which aims to improve access for patients, address health inequalities, improve population health, and reduce GP workload through the expansion of the primary care multidisciplinary team. However, the Scottish Government recognise that remote, rural and island communities face distinct challenges in delivering primary care services, particularly in recruiting and retaining clinicians, and in ensuring sustainable service delivery.

The Scottish Government established a Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group, chaired by Sir Lewis Ritchie, in June 2018 to provide advice and develop recommendations on ways to ensure that the views of island-based clinicians and communities are better recognised in primary care policy development. The Group supports a range of initiatives including “Golden Hellos” (which provide financial incentives to work in remote and rural communities), Rediscover the Joy in General Practice, a programme to attract GPs to work across Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles and Highland communities by tailoring posts to suit the candidate, as well as funding digital developments such as Attend Anywhere (also known as NHS Near Me), a programme for supporting the roll-out of technology and training to enable web-based video consultations and access to specialist services without the need to travel.

In its first year, the Group has carried out an extensive programme of engagement across Scotland. This shows that despite significant challenges, rural healthcare providers are delivering high quality care by embracing progressive, innovative solutions and adapting clinical roles to maximise recruitment and retention. The Group is considering opportunities to develop a national centre for excellence in remote, rural and island health and social care, that will build networks and share knowledge with and from other countries who face challenges in delivering high quality, person centred and sustainable care for patients living on Scotland’s islands.

The population demographic on many of Scotland’s islands is shifting to include a much larger percentage of older residents which raises challenges in the delivery of key services. Islanders told us that a lack of available on-island support in terms of both home care and assisted living/care homes can result in older residents having to leave the island in their later years. Consequently, much of the heritage and culture that the older population bring to the community is being lost, whilst family units are also being put under strain due to being separated from their older relatives. We know most older people wish to remain in their own home as they age.

Tagsa Uibhist is a voluntary organisation in the Southern isles of the Outer Hebrides providing support for carers, people living with dementia and vulnerable people, allowing islanders to live well in their own homes for as long as they want and can. The organisation also continues to develop Community Growing hubs across the islands as part of the Government's Climate Challenge Fund project "Grow your own community".

<https://www.tagsauibhist.co.uk>



The health and wellbeing of people on our islands is also a product of their ability to make daily choices that keep them fit and well, both physically and mentally. Whilst the high quality natural environment on our islands is acknowledged in National Planning Framework 3, our approach to new development and improving our places remains strongly supportive of the provision of places for children to play safely, places for recreation and high quality design which makes places attractive to be in and well connected by walking, cycling and public transport.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 will require, once the relevant section is commenced, planning authorities to prepare and publish open space strategies. These will set out a strategic framework of the planning authorities' policies and proposals for the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their area. They will have to include an audit of existing open space provision, and an assessment of current and future requirements. The Act also introduces a new duty on planning authorities to undertake an assessment of the sufficiency of play opportunities in their area for children, to inform their local development plan.

SG Strategy

During the consultation, islanders told us that in many instances sports centres act as community hubs, which improve both the physical and mental health of island residents. The Community Sport Hub programme brings together sport clubs and community organisations to develop and grow sport at a local level. There are already established Community Sport Hubs on many islands. The Scottish Government believes that there should be no barriers at all to participating in sport and physical activity – everyone should be able to access opportunities to be active, whoever they are, wherever they live and whatever their background.

Our Active Scotland Outcomes Framework sets out the shared vision and goals which have shaped the approach the Scottish Government and a wide range of partner organisations have taken to supporting and enabling people in Scotland to be more physically active. The Outcomes Framework is supported by our Active Scotland Delivery Plan which aims to cut physical inactivity in adults and teenagers by 15% by 2030 using wide-ranging approaches including active travel funding, support for both formal sports and informal physical activity, and partnership working across the transport, education, health and planning sectors.

SG Policy

Strategic Objective 7

To improve and promote health and wellbeing

In order to improve and promote health and wellbeing the Scottish Government will:

- 

Continue 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;
- 

Identify and promote good practice, especially as regards the improvement of services in islands and other remote areas;
- 

Continue 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 with stakeholders to develop propositions for a national centre for excellence in remote, rural and island health and social care;
- 

Work with stakeholders to ensure that we develop a plan to adequately support the aging population of island communities so that they remain active, connected, engaged and have access to suitable, quality opportunities;
- 

Support relevant local authorities to plan and develop sports facilities on the islands that respond to the needs of communities;
- 

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; and
- 

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.



Environmental Wellbeing and Biosecurity

The coastal, marine, and inland ecosystems of islands provide valuable natural assets and cultural services to island residents and the general population of Scotland. They are also important draws for tourism with over 50% of visitors to Scotland citing scenery and landscape as a major factor influencing their decision to visit.

Many of Scotland's islands have a strong traditional dependence on marine and coastal biodiversity for their food, industry, and transport. With increasing environmental pressures, island systems face serious challenges both in the immediate and near future. However, islanders positively recognise and value the importance of protecting these natural assets. Many islanders emphasised the islands' unique and beautiful environments, landscapes and scenery during our consultation.

Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) works on projects which promote sustainable inshore fisheries and aquaculture practices and regulation. COAST's mission is to protect and restore a diverse, abundant and beautiful marine environment for everyone in Arran, the Clyde and Scotland.

<https://www.arrancoast.com>



The environment on islands is also often linked to social and cultural benefits with respondents to the consultation frequently emphasising the peace and quiet, and the relaxed way of life on their island. In this context, the islands are regarded as good places to live and to raise children.



When I'm away I miss nature. The lands are alive. If you recognise their sentient glow, you appreciate your place of origin all the more.

(Consultation participant, Hoy)



Environment is intrinsic to the economic wellbeing of island communities. Climate change and environmental context could be pivotal in transitioning the economy and creating value-added, sustainable jobs. The implementation of the Plan will build on, and align with, where possible, with existing green policies and strategies, such as the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity, which incorporates a strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland, Scotland's National Peatland Plan, Scotland's circular economy strategy and our ambitious waste and recycling targets.

Scotland is the first nation in the UK to announce proposals for a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for single-use drinks containers. The scheme includes a broad range of materials and a target return rate of 90%. Waste disposal, control and lack of recycling facilities in some areas featured highly in discussions on the environment.



Waste disposal is under budgeted/resourced and runs counter to a Govt which wants to suggest it is up ahead of the curve on environmental issues.

(Consultation participant, Tiree)



We will also protect and promote all designated sites. Environmental wellbeing can be disrupted if attention is not given to biosecurity. Scotland's islands are fragile ecosystems of disproportionately high importance for wildlife in the UK and European context that are extremely susceptible to invasive non-native species. From a marine perspective, the Plan will build on, and align with, where possible, the National Marine Plan that calls for clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people.

It is also crucial that the interdependencies between social and economic development and environmental wellbeing are realised to ensure sustainable environmental protection. A healthy environment is also essential to Scotland's ability to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.³⁴ While transport, digital connectivity and housing may appear to have a stronger transformational role, if an island cannot deal with its waste in a sustainable manner, or its waters become polluted, fewer people will want to live, move to, or visit the island. Additionally, all of these issues require local community input in order to ensure inclusiveness and that they effectively integrated with the previously mentioned sectors to ensure sustainability.

³⁴ In its December 2018 report, the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership explicitly recognised the importance of environmental rights, alongside civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Its recommendations will now be taken forward by a National Taskforce. The full report can be found at: <https://humanrightsleadership.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/First-Ministers-Advisory-Group-on-Human-Rights-Leadership-Final-report-for-publication.pdf>.

Strategic Objective 8

To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity

In order to improve and promote environmental wellbeing, and deal with biosecurity the Scottish Government will:



Protect island biodiversity;



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;



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;



Work with island communities to explore how they can contribute to the circular economy through small-scale pilots for example supporting local food production; and



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



Climate Change and Energy

Small low-lying island systems are under threat from climate change and predicted sea-level rise. Climate change is expected to increase instances of flooding and coastal erosion, whilst simultaneously negatively affecting water supply, food production, health, tourism, and accelerating habitat depletion. Additionally, the majority of island economies are highly dependent on outside sources for food, fuel, and even employment, which together increase the economic fragility of many islands. Respondents to the consultation frequently mentioned the need for action on climate change.

However, there are opportunities for island communities to lead the way in showing how to realise our climate change ambitions. For example, European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) is a world-leading centre based on Orkney for testing wave and tidal energy devices. This shows how islands are at the forefront of emerging technologies. The introduction of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, whether it be increased revenue for island communities through renewable energy projects, or the protection, recovery, restoration or enhancement of natural carbon stores (on land or in the sea), or the introduction of (preferably nature-based) solutions to combat coastal erosion, can have a direct, positive effect on the local economy and environment. Subsequently, if the low carbon energy potential of islands was fully realised and avenues were developed to allow for reinvestment in the community, directed by the community to ensure inclusiveness, the effect on the island economy, facilities and general wellbeing could be transformational.

There are, and will continue to be in future, strong cases to upgrade existing island connections to the mainland or to build new ones so that the electricity generated on the islands can help meet wider Scottish and UK demand, and to allow for profits associated with the generation thus able to connect to be reinvested appropriately on the islands. The Plan presents an opportunity to support continued debate with relevant UK- and Scotland-based partners and stakeholders on how islands throughout Scotland can become hubs of energy innovation and climate change leaders, as is already happening on some islands and on several island communities across Europe.

Surf 'n' Turf, Orkney - Community Energy Scotland converts surplus electricity from Orkney's tidal and onshore wind sources into hydrogen. The hydrogen is stored and transported by road and sea to be used in Orkney when it is needed. Surf 'n' Turf is funded by the Scottish Government's Local Energy Challenge Fund (LECF), which is part of the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) delivered by Local Energy Scotland.

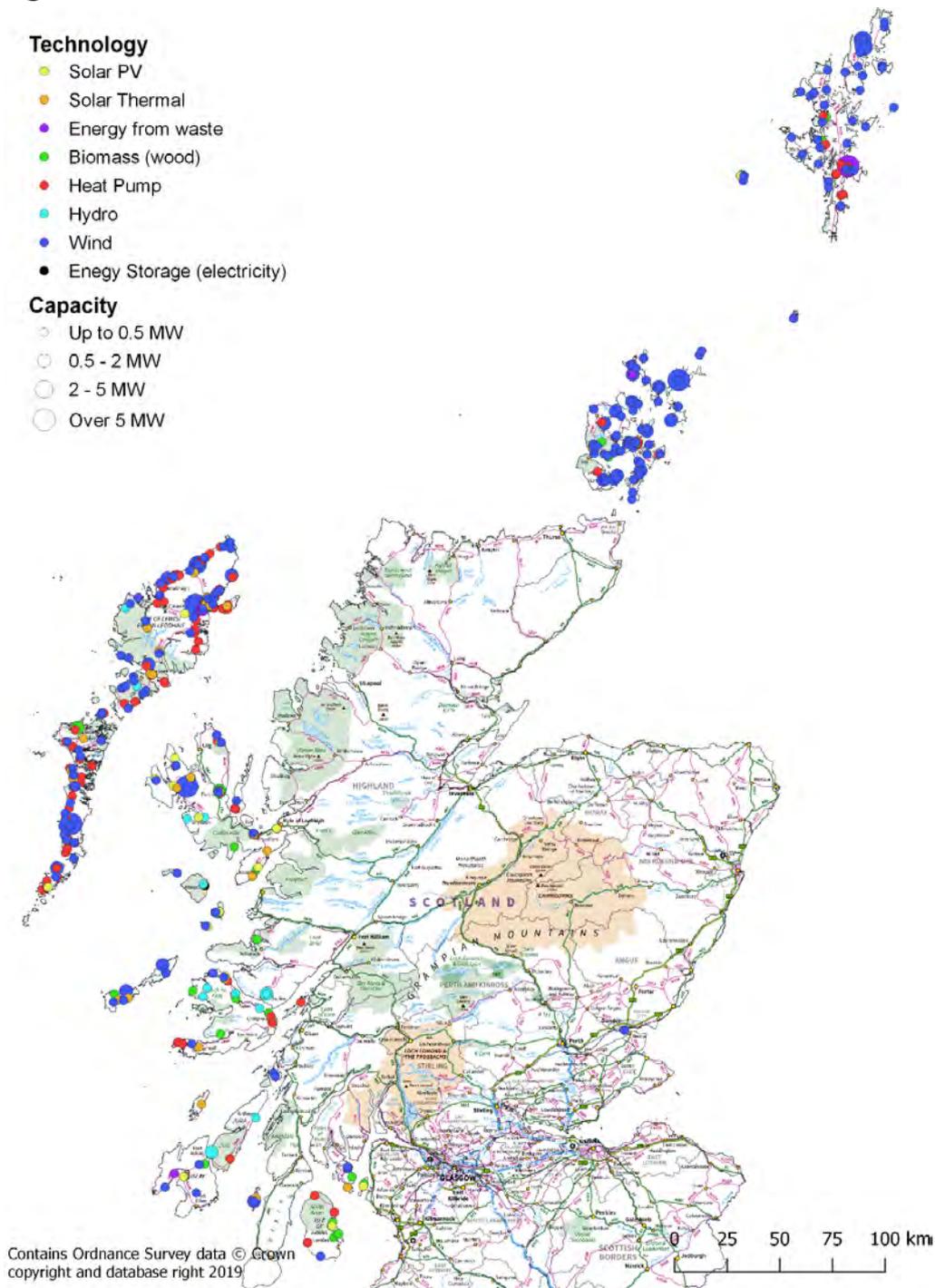
The project is a good example of how early support for hydrogen initiatives has acted as a catalyst for Orkney to attract and build on their impressive energy project portfolio of activity and innovation.

<http://www.surfnturf.org.uk>



While renewable energy is promoted and supported, Scotland as a whole and many islands therein, are still key players in the oil and gas energy sector. There are still plenty of opportunities in this sector that islands and island communities should harness. But, in light of Scotland’s wider commitments to tackle climate change, low carbon energy systems such as solar, wind, ground source and air source energy systems should be encouraged. Oil and gas operations need to be made as energy efficient as possible, and aspects of the industry such as decommissioning need to be fostered to secure a just and smooth transition to renewable sources of energy. There was recognition in our consultation of the local benefit being delivered by community renewable schemes, for example on Tiree, Eigg, Gigha and Lewis as well as the community funds arising from private renewable schemes.

Map showing renewables assets on Scotland’s islands³⁵



35 Map extracted from Energy Saving Trust database

Against this background, and in order to be truly sustainable, the implementation of the Plan will build on, and align with, where possible, with Scotland's wider climate change commitments, policies and strategies, as well as with existing energy related schemes. For example, islands will play their part in the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, will fully take into account the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme, and will learn lessons from the operation of the Climate Challenge Fund. From an energy perspective, the implementation of the Plan will consider carefully funding schemes such as the Energy Investment Fund, the Saltire Tidal Energy Challenge Fund and engaging, where possible, with the Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme (LCITP).

Strategic Objective 9

To ensure that Scottish islands are at the forefront of contributions to our ambition to end climate change

In order to ensure that Scottish islands are at the forefront of contributing to our ambition to end climate change, the Scottish Government will:



Work with island communities to support their climate change aspirations;



Work towards creating net zero emission islands and providing global climate change leadership;



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;



Continue 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 with Resilience Partnerships and energy providers to encourage them to focus on the resilience of islands' energy supply networks;



Work with transport-related stakeholders to have the most energy-efficient and climate-friendly transport services possible across the islands;



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



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.

Empowered Island Communities and Strong Local Partnerships

The consultation process for the Plan identified a need to fully back community empowerment and recalibrate governance arrangements for island communities. The importance of community was a key theme from the consultation and respondents provided a range of examples that highlighted the uniqueness of the islands and the strengths they provide for cultivating innovative initiatives and projects on a small scale. A thriving third sector was also highlighted as a key strength amongst island communities – in many cases filling in gaps in service provision.



The voluntary sector on the island is another outstanding, ongoing amazing effort by individuals within the community. It works well because of the efforts of people who work and live on the Island who are always willing to do that wee bit extra for their communities and neighbours.

(Consultation participant Arran) 

However, many of the islanders we talked to said that they felt remote from where decisions were taken and expressed a desire for more considered decision-making which included them.



Community council is constructive and effective. But does not have the power to properly influence decision making at council or national level.”

(Consultation participant, Iona and Mull) 

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, with its overall concept of island proofing and the change in electoral representation, is a starting point on a journey to strengthen local democracy in Scotland. Communities will be empowered if they feel ownership of the Plan and are kept informed of progress. There are already a range of policies and strategies in place to support empowered communities.



Crown Estate Scotland launched the Local Pilots Management Scheme in 2018 to create opportunities for communities to get more involved in managing parts of the Scottish Crown Estate. It is part of a wider step-change in how the Estate is managed, ensuring communities and local authorities have more say and influence.

Local organisations seeking to manage land and seabed are now into the final stages of a scheme designed to give communities more say on what happens in their area. The proposals involve all three Island authorities – Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, with Galson Estate Trust) and will see applicants take responsibility for more decisions relating to seabed, coastline and other land.

The Local Pilots Management Scheme will assist with testing and putting in place the practical arrangements for enhanced local management of Scottish Crown Estate assets through the powers in the Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019.



The implementation of the Plan provides an opportunity to build on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 which empowers communities to shape their individual and collective futures, regardless of where they live. The Act gives people more control over decisions that affect them, making it easier for local people to develop their own economies, wellbeing and environments. The Act also makes it easier for communities to take on public sector land and buildings and it provides a mechanism for community bodies to seek dialogue with public service providers to help improve outcomes. Asset transfer legislation is designed to encourage and support ownership and control of assets by communities, and should be considered by community organisations and authorities in situations that recognise the public benefits that community use will bring.

The 2015 Act also introduced duties on key local public services to work together and with communities to improve outcomes on themes that are priorities for people in their area. Community planning provides the space through which this happens. Community Planning Partnerships have both the responsibility to work together to address key needs and aspirations of island communities, especially those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, and the power to do so in ways that best meet local circumstances.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is recognised internationally as a way for local people to have a direct say in how public money is spent. In Scotland, PB is delivered in partnership with local authorities, communities and third sector organisations, and implemented across policy areas from policing to health and social care, transport and education. The Scottish Government is working with COSLA to help councils across Scotland reach the target of having at least 1% of their budget subject to PB by 2020. A PB Charter for Scotland was launched in July 2019 and it sets out seven key features of what a fair and high quality PB process should be to give people a meaningful say about the decisions that affect them directly. PB has been used successfully on some of the islands as a way to involve local people in decision-making – for example in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland.

The National Standards for Community Engagement are good-practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement, and improve what happens as a result. The Standards were revised in 2016 and continue to be used to support community engagement, and user involvement across Scotland in rural and urban areas on issues such as community planning and health and social care.

Another important area of work is the Local Governance Review which the Scottish Government and COSLA are jointly taking forward to consider how power, responsibilities and resources are shared fairly between national and local government, and with communities. One part of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 will create opportunities for Scotland's six island authorities to request additional powers from Ministers where this can help them to improve outcomes for island communities.

The Scottish Government has also committed to legislate to enable local authorities to introduce a Transient Visitor Levy – or “Tourist Tax”, if it is right for local circumstances. This is another example of the Scottish Government's commitment to ensure councils have the necessary powers to improve outcomes for people in the places for which they are responsible. The Local Governance Review is also considering how to further empower communities. Last year, people across Scotland took part in Democracy Matters – a conversation about the future of local democracy. Overwhelmingly, people wanted more control over decisions, which affect their community. The Local Governance Review is considering proposals for alternative governance arrangements at community, local authority or regional level which can encourage greater participation in local democracy and improve outcomes for people. Further widespread engagement with public service partners and communities will begin later in 2019. We look forward to islanders helping to shape decision-making arrangements which can work well in island settings and offer the greatest potential to improve the issues they care about most, such as economic development, housing or repopulation. All subsequent changes to governance arrangements will be fully reflected in the implementation of the Plan as more power is devolved to more local levels.

The implementation of the Plan will also build on, where possible, legislation enacted in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, which was a key milestone in the Scottish Government's wide-ranging programme of land reform to help ensure people benefit more fairly from Scotland's land. A key part of the 2016 Act was the publication of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, which has six principles that Scottish Ministers are required to promote. The implementation of the Plan should align with the six principles of the Statement. In particular, when implementing the Plan, regard should be had to the Scottish Government's Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land, which requires full and proper community engagement where significant decisions are being taken about land. Alongside and as part of this, community aspirations to own land should be considered where appropriate.

The powers and duties in the Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019 provide further opportunities for island communities to derive enhanced benefits from the assets in their area. The Scottish Crown Estate includes a diverse range of assets that are an integral part of our urban, rural, coastal and marine asset base including almost half the foreshore around Scotland and seabed leasing rights out to 200 nautical miles. A driver for Scottish Ministers' programme of reform of the management of the Scottish Crown Estate has been to seek to ensure that local communities, including island communities, can benefit from the assets while protecting the future revenue from the assets along with the total capital value which is currently almost £400 million for Scotland as a whole. All of the revenue and capital is now retained in Scotland rather than retained by the UK Government or Crown Estate Commissioners.

Potential benefits to communities from the Scottish Ministers' new framework for managing the Scottish Crown Estate include enhancing the wider economic, social and environmental benefits from the assets, opportunities for local management of parts of the estate or Scottish Ministers' commitment to bring financial benefits to coastal communities through distribution of the net revenue from Scottish Crown Estate marine assets out to 12 nautical miles for coastal community benefit. The diversity of the property, rights and interests comprising the Scottish Crown Estate, around our Islands, mean decisions on the use of the assets taken in Scotland and based on Scottish priorities in a transparent and inclusive way can deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits and opportunities for our Island communities across Scotland now and into the future.

The importance of hearing Island voices has also informed our approach to reform of the planning system with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 subject to a voluntary island communities impact assessment as it was developed. This assessment has helped ensure that the flexibility to adapt to island circumstances is factored in and includes pointers for review of national planning policies in Scotland, namely National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy

Each island has a development plan which identifies opportunities for change and areas where protection from change is needed to help take forward the aspirations of communities in a responsible manner, considering how change contributes to the social, environmental and economic enhancement. We are undertaking a review of the National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy³⁶ with a view to publishing a single integrated national planning policy document known as National Planning Framework 4. We will be engaging widely on the policy review and by law National Planning Framework 4 must contribute to the following six outcomes:

- Meeting the needs of people living in Scotland including, in particular, the housing needs for older people and disabled people.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Scotland.
- Increasing the population of rural areas of Scotland.
- Improving equality and eliminating discrimination.
- Meeting targets relating to the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gasses.
- Securing positive effects for biodiversity.



36 Scottish Government, Scottish Planning Policy, 2014: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-planning-policy/>

Strategic Objective 10

To empower diverse communities and different places

In order to empower diverse communities and different places the Scottish Government will:



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;



Support participatory processes aimed at providing island communities with a strong voice in the implementation of the Plan;



Explore ways to strengthen the voice of island communities whilst capturing the differences between islands in local and national decision-making;



Fully commit to working with island communities and local authority partners in the development and introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy Bill;



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;



Ensure that the Scottish Crown Estate is managed sustainably, responsibly and fairly, and in a transparent and inclusive manner, to deliver financial benefits and wider and long-term social, economic and environment benefits for Scotland and its communities;



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; and



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.

Arts, Culture and Language

Scotland has an enduring worldwide reputation as a centre for ideas, learning, education, creativity and innovation. Culture reflects the past; challenges the present and shapes the future. Alongside its sea boundaries, it is culture that forms an island's identity. Islanders often act as guardians of their local natural environment as well as their local culture and help to protect and safeguard our global heritage. There was a recognition in the consultation that investment in Gaelic language and culture has brought positive results. Islanders emphasised the need to take a comprehensive approach to include the many aspects of the culture of different island communities, including local languages.

Island communities are passionate about capturing, celebrating and sharing the uniqueness of their island experience. Islanders also feel strongly about preserving built heritage and natural environment, not just for their economic value through tourism, but for the quality of life they support and as a legacy for future generations. Scotland's islands are characterised by the richness of their cultural heritage and culture and creativity generated and experienced by local communities today. For many islanders who took part in the consultation, their sense of "self" and "community" is rooted in the culture and heritage of the island they inhabit. It is therefore essential that all islanders have an equal opportunity to access culture and the arts so that they can take part in or contribute to cultural life in Scotland in the way that they choose.

Additionally, from an economic perspective, creative and cultural industries make a substantial contribution to driving economic activity within the islands and offer a significant opportunity for future economic growth and diversification. Inspired by the natural environment, community, language and cultural heritage, the islands produce a diverse range of practitioners in traditional and contemporary music, literature, arts, fashion and crafts. The Fèis movement in Skye was mentioned in the consultation as having had a contribution in retaining jobs and young people with social skills through music. Broadcasting, textiles and heritage offer significant levels of employment and business opportunities. The islands also host renowned events, festivals and galleries which build their cultural and creative base.

Sabhal Mor Ostaig makes a broad contribution, education, economic, cultural and linguistic, in an island area with a low population. It continues to excel as the National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture, providing world-renowned short courses, further education, higher education and with impressive research capacity and support.

SMO has a key role in the economic regeneration of Skye, providing a varied range of housing and commercial opportunities to enhance its campus facilities and create a more vibrant, sustainable model for a 21st-century community which has Gaelic language and culture very much at its heart.

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/>



Food Tourism involves experiences learning about, appreciating and consuming food and drink that reflects the history, heritage and culture of a place. It also supports resilient local food systems which helps contribute to positive economic, environmental social and cultural impacts throughout the supply chain. Island communities fed into the development of Food Tourism Scotland – Scotland’s first ever Food Tourism Action Plan – and are well placed to benefit from the work of the National Food Tourism Board in implementing the actions identified within the Plan.

The implementation of the Plan will build on, and align with, where possible, with existing culture and language policies and strategies, such as A Culture Strategy for Scotland which will be published later in 2019, Our Place in Time: the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland and the Gaelic-related provisions in the Gaelic (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

We recognise that Gaelic is important to a number of Scottish islands and this Plan will ensure that Gaelic is maintained and strengthened as a living community language. There is a two-way relationship between language and community – Gaelic is important to the island communities where it is spoken, but equally the island communities where it is spoken are important to the health and future of the Gaelic language. While the two are linked, language is more than a cultural issue and permeates all aspects of community life where it is part of the community. Many respondents to the consultation emphasised the importance of Gaelic as an inherent part of many island cultures and others suggested a need to also promote other local languages spoken in islands.



Gaelic is the foundation from which the culture, music, story and dance of these island communities arises. It is also the glue that holds people together, the web of community relationships that allows them to survive and thrive in the face of hardship and marginalisation.

(Consultation participant, mainland with links to Outer Hebrides) 



Strategic Objective 11

To support arts, culture and language

In order to support arts, culture and language the Scottish Government will:

-  Continue to invest in our cultural and historic resources, to ensure that islanders are encouraged to engage with, and participate in, arts and culture;
-  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;
-  Support all of Scotland's indigenous languages and dialects in ways that are relevant to the communities where these are spoken;
-  Ensure that the commitments in this Plan affecting Gaelic-speaking communities are informed by and aligned with the commitments in the National Gaelic Language Plan;
-  For areas with Gaelic Language Plans, we will ensure the effect on Gaelic is considered from the outset in island-specific policies and initiatives;
-  Encourage public authorities and community groups in these areas to help increase the use and visibility of Gaelic; and
-  Encourage relevant authorities,³⁷ operating in islands where Gaelic is spoken to consider how they can improve Gaelic provision for island communities in line with their functions and services.



³⁷ Please see Annex A of the National Islands Plan

Education

Good quality education is a key driver for socio-economic development, not only on islands. Families will often make decisions about where to live based on the presence of good schools. Islanders told us that having a thriving and successful school contributes to an island and its community in multiple ways, from adding teachers and school workers to the island population to using schools as a hub of community extra curricula activities.

While the above applies to primary schools, clearly not every island can have a secondary school. However, where present, secondary schools on islands should be equipped and geared to prepare island-based pupils in the same way as on the mainland. Island students need to be put on an equal footing with their mainland and urban counterparts. Another critical aspect is residential accommodation (sometimes called hostels) and transport to schools for students based on other smaller islands who have to stay away from home during term time.

Through the Developing the Young Workforce programme, we continue to strengthen links between school, college and industry to develop senior phase curriculum choices that link study to local employment. This includes developing the senior phase curriculum to have the right balance of vocational skills, including Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities aligned to progression routes that are better informed by local skills needs. This work has led to collaboration across schools and colleges to enhance the number of options available to young people, particularly in areas where geographic barriers exist.

SG Policy

Gaelic medium education is proving to be popular and successful with parents and it makes a key contribution to the Scottish Government's aim of increasing the numbers of people learning, using and speaking Gaelic. It is vital, in islands where Gaelic is spoken, that Gaelic medium education is promoted and supported in line with the Guidance on Gaelic Education and that opportunities are made available for young people to have opportunities to use Gaelic out of school in other activities. Key educational agencies need to be aware of the particular needs of Gaelic education and take steps to support teachers of Gaelic in island communities.

Education on islands does not finish with primary and secondary schools. People on islands should have access to higher education options. Higher education should also further promote skills training, especially those related to socio-economic opportunities on the island. Finally, education should also pay attention to life-long learning, both in terms of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and classes and courses for older people. Some schools and institutions are already working towards how to facilitate distance learning for students who live remotely. Against this background, the Plan and its implementation will build on and align, where possible, with relevant Scottish Government education and skills policy.

We are also continuing to invest in good quality, modern and state of the art learning environments through the Scottish Government's existing school building programme, Scotland's Schools for the Future. So far, we have invested almost £195 million towards the construction or refurbishment of 18 new school projects in the six local authorities within Islands.

In spite of the good work of the Scotland's Schools for the Future Programme, there is still more to do. On 9 September, the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and CoSLA Spokesperson for Resources, Cllr Gail MacGregor announced the first phase of projects to benefit from the new £1 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme, this includes the innovative Castlebay Campus project on Barra.

SG Policy

We are investing £750 million during this Parliament to tackle the attainment gap and ensure every child has an equal chance to succeed. As announced in our 2019-20 Programme for Government as an early commitment on this Government's top priority, we will continue funding for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, including Pupil Equity Funding, beyond the end of this Parliamentary term and extend funding at current levels for a further year into 2021-22. We will continue to support LAs and schools within the Islands around the four key National Improvement Framework priorities – raising attainment for all, closing the attainment gap, improving young people's health and wellbeing, and improving employability skills and positive, sustained destinations for all young people.

SG Strategy



Strategic Objective 12

To promote and improve education

In order to promote and improve education on the islands Scottish Government, in collaboration with government agencies and other relevant stakeholders, will:

-  Work with UHI, the University of Aberdeen, and other education providers to ensure a broad range of options are available to young people;
-  Support UHI as it deepens collaboration with island partners to promote learner pathways, innovation and industry/employer engagement;
-  Ensure that young people are given the same opportunities to access education as young people on mainland Scotland;
-  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;
-  Continue to support and promote Gaelic medium education at all levels in islands where Gaelic is spoken;
-  We will 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; and
-  We will 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.



Implementation and Measurement of the National Islands Plan

For the Plan to lead to meaningful, positive and sustainable change there needs to be a gradual progress of ownership, monitoring and accountability. First, island communities need to feel that the Plan reflects their voices and their vision. Island communities need to be made aware of the content of the Plan and be supported to take ownership of it.

Secondly, in order to ensure that the Plan is inclusive, island communities need to be kept informed of progress towards its delivery. The statutory provisions in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 provide for annual reports on progress by Scottish Ministers, and a review every five years – potentially leading to its revision.

Thirdly, accountability is key to a fair Plan. Island communities need to be able to challenge Scottish Government if they feel that implementation of the Plan is lagging or no action is being taken altogether.

However, ownership, monitoring and accountability are just one important part of the implementation of the Plan. Another crucial part will be to develop an Implementation Strategy that addresses each of the 13 Strategic Objectives and the 104 commitments listed in the Plan. One key aspect of this Implementation Strategy will be the development of indicators.

In fact, as provided for in the Act itself, consideration has to be given to what would be appropriate to use for the purpose of measuring (whether quantitatively or qualitatively) the extent to which outcomes for island communities identified in the Plan are improved. We have considered this and decided that it would be appropriate to use indicators developed on the basis of the National Performance Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals as a means to demonstrate progress in implementing and delivering the Strategic Objectives and in meeting the commitments provided in the Plan.

Work to fully develop appropriate indicators is ongoing and the Implementation Strategy will include clear and measurable indicators for each Strategic Objective in order to set a path for implementation of the Plan. Some of the commitments will be achieved in the short to medium term, whilst others will require a longer period for delivery – some even beyond the lifespan of the Plan. Indicators will accompany the actions identified to deliver the objectives outlined in the Plan – with clear timescales, budgets and partners identified.

The development of indicators to measure the extent to which outcomes for island communities identified in the Plan are improved are building on the outcomes and indicators provided for in the National Performance Framework, and also on good practices stemming from the development of indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals at a global level. In particular, indicators are being developed for each outcome and objective in collaboration with key stakeholders and delivery partners. Once co-developed, indicators will be presented for comments and feedback to specific island stakeholders after which the indicator will be tailored and finalised. This co-production exercise is being undertaken having in mind the uniqueness of each island in Scotland, and the need to deliver on the commitments as soon as possible in some cases.

Robust indicators require good data. In fact, the latter is vital to underpin meaningful monitoring of progress on outcomes for our island communities. Currently, there is a lack of robust disaggregated socio-economic data at the island level, particularly publishable data.



Avoid tick-box measurement which only services the tickers.

(Consultation participant, Arran) 

Better local data is key to understanding the specific challenges facing island communities, both in terms of demographics and economic development. This is important in assessing the effectiveness of policy measures taken so far to address these challenges; informing where more targeted interventions may be required; and responding to the evolving needs of island communities.

The Scottish Government alone is not in a position to deliver all of the commitments that will improve outcomes for our island communities. We will continue to reach out and work with island leaders and a wide range of relevant stakeholders in the development of the Implementation Strategy of the Plan – with particular attention given to local authorities and their respective local public services.

The development of the Implementation Strategy will commence immediately upon the formal adoption of the Plan by Parliament. In the first phase, we will undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise for each of the Plan's outcome areas, specific Strategic Objectives and commitments. In the second phase, we will organise workshops, where possible, to discuss and agree the actions linked to each objective followed by tailored work aimed at the development of indicators capable of effectively measuring progress in meeting that specific objective. The third phase will include visits to island communities who will act as focus groups for the actions and the indicators suggested. Nonetheless, representatives from island communities will also be included in the earlier phases of the development of the Implementation Strategy and on the new National Islands Plan Governance Group. The fourth and final phase will be the publication of the Implementation Strategy, by Spring 2020 that will complement the National Islands Plan approved by Parliament.



Listen to the people in EACH community. No two island communities are the same, even within the same island group. We often have the best solution to our own unique problems, but we MUST have legislation and funding to allow us to help ourselves.

(Consultation participant Sanday, Orkney) 

Strategic Objective 13

To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan

In order to support effective implementation of the Plan, and better understand the challenges faced by island communities the Scottish Government will:

- 
 Establish a robust process to ensure the timely publication of a detailed Implementation Strategy setting out clear actions with defined responsibilities for action and timescales to support the delivery of the National Islands Plan;
- 
 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;
- 
 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;
- 
 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;
- 
 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;
- 
 Establish a National Islands Plan Governance Group to ensure close monitoring of the Implementation Strategy. This group will oversee the delivery of the National Islands Plan and feedback on progress to the Islands Strategic Group and other interested parties; and
- 
 Work with island communities to ensure that the Plan is widely promoted and understood by all sectors of society.

Global Leadership

The launch of the National Islands Plan should be celebrated as a historic moment in island governance, not only in Scotland, but globally. In fact, the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 is only one of a handful of place-based pieces of legislation to focus specifically on islands in the world. The measures it contains, like the island communities impact assessment and the possibility for Local Authorities to request more competences, are progressive provisions that should be welcomed.

The Plan and the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 are particularly important in a European context. Islands have been at the heart of European Union cohesion policy and article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty refers specifically to islands as areas where development needs to be promoted in order to secure equality with other regions.³⁸ Scotland and its island communities played an important part in raising the profile of islands within the European Union and it is important that this relationship continues. The Islands (Scotland) Act and the Plan demonstrate good practice that Scotland and its island communities need to share widely with other island communities across Europe in order to strengthen existing ties and forge new ones.

This Plan opens new opportunities for policy and knowledge exchange with international partners that share our ambition to empower island communities. The Scottish Government's commitment to promoting mutual learning to increase rural resilience underpins Scotland's growing participation in Arctic platforms. "Arctic Connections", Scotland's first Arctic policy framework³⁹ reflects on the challenges we share with our northern neighbours, sets out existing ties and explores avenues for even closer co-operation. This Plan and the lessons we have learnt through the consultation process will help to further strengthen Scotland's contribution to Arctic dialogue.

However, the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Plan do not showcase just regional and European leadership, but rather they also provide Scotland with leadership at the global level, in all four principles that underpin the Plan:

- A **fair** Plan that will address equality across Scotland. Its human rights approach will support greater accountability and help ensure that the rights of all members of Scottish society are respected, protected and fulfilled;
- An **integrated** Plan that 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 that will harness and unleash the potential of a green and blue economy in times of climate emergency; and
- An **inclusive** Plan that will promote genuine community empowerment at the local level enabling decisions to be taken as close as possible to where the effects of such decisions will be felt.

³⁸ Lisbon Treaty, art. 174: "In order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion. In particular, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions. Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions." Emphasis added.

³⁹ Arctic Framework.

By explicitly aligning the Plan with actions designed to further promote human rights in Scotland, and with the new human rights National Outcome in Scotland's National Performance Framework, the Plan demonstrates decisive human rights leadership. Further work to be taken forward by the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership will proceed in parallel with the Plan, with a view to formally incorporating internationally recognised human rights into domestic law. By developing a Plan that takes a strong human rights approach the intention is to support that longer-term strategic commitment whilst ensuring that more immediate practical actions help support greater accountability and deliver against Scotland's international human rights obligations.

Scotland has been one of the first countries to commit formally to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Plan are a means for us to demonstrate alignment and commitment of Scottish Government to the Sustainable Development Goals. The latter is at the heart of the indicators we are developing in order to measure our progress in the implementation of the Plan. The Sustainable Development Goals are closely aligned with the National Performance Framework which will also be used for such purpose.

Scotland has declared a climate emergency and has stepped up its climate action and commitments.⁴⁰ These are amongst some of the most ambitious in the world calling for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. The Plan is a green one, and it will play its part in delivering on Scotland's global leadership on climate change. The implementation of the Plan also provides an opportunity to promote islands in Scotland as hubs of innovation when it comes to driving a green and blue economy.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Plan provide Scotland with increased recognition globally when it comes to community empowerment. The Plan is an inclusive document that promotes community empowerment at the local level enabling decisions to be taken as close as possible to where the effects of such decisions will be felt. Together with the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act and the Local Governance Review, and in conjunction with the human rights approach already mentioned, the Plan provides islands and island communities with an opportunity to draw lessons and distil good practices for island communities elsewhere.

With the development, launch and the future implementation of the Plan, Scotland shows to the world and to island communities, wherever they are, that islands are important and that their voice is strong.

40 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-climate-emergency-scotlands-response-climate-change-secretary-roseanna-cunninghams-statement/>

Annex A

Duties in Relation to Island Communities: Relevant Authorities (introduced by section 7(2) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018)

Scottish Administration

1. Scottish Ministers
2. Keeper of the Records of Scotland
3. Keeper of the Registers of Scotland
4. Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Scotland

Scottish public authorities with mixed functions or no reserved functions

5. Accounts Commission for Scotland
6. Audit Scotland
7. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
8. Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (company number SC001854)
9. Children's Hearings Scotland
10. Creative Scotland
11. Crofting Commission
12. Crown Estate Scotland (Interim Management)
13. David MacBrayne Limited (company number SC015304)
14. Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (company number SC097647)
15. Highlands and Islands Enterprise
16. Historic Environment Scotland

17. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
18. Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
19. Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
20. Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
21. Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
22. Scottish Enterprise
23. Scottish Environment Protection Agency
24. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
25. Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council
26. Scottish Housing Regulator
27. Scottish Land Commission
28. Scottish Legal Aid Board
29. Scottish Natural Heritage
30. Scottish Police Authority
31. Scottish Qualifications Authority
32. Scottish Social Services Council
33. Scottish Sports Council
34. Scottish Water
35. Skills Development Scotland Co. Ltd (company number SC202659)
36. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland
37. VisitScotland

Health Boards (including Special Health Boards)

38. Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service
39. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
40. NHS 24
41. NHS Ayrshire and Arran
42. NHS Borders

43. NHS Dumfries and Galloway
44. NHS Education for Scotland
45. NHS Fife
46. NHS Forth Valley
47. NHS Grampian
48. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
49. NHS Health Scotland
50. NHS Highland
51. NHS Lanarkshire
52. NHS Lothian
53. NHS National Waiting Times Centre
54. NHS Orkney
55. NHS Shetland
56. NHS Tayside
57. NHS Western Isles
58. Scottish Ambulance Service
59. State Hospitals Board for Scotland

Integration Joint Boards

60. An integration joint board established by virtue of section 9 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014

Local Government

61. Argyll and Bute Council
62. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
63. Highland Council
64. North Ayrshire Council
65. Orkney Council
66. Shetland Council

Regional Colleges

67. Ayrshire Regional College

68. University of the Highlands and Islands

Regional Transport Partnerships

69. Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership

70. Shetland Regional Transport Partnership

71. Strathclyde Regional Transport Partnership



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For further information please contact the team on info@islandsteam.scot

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