

# National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map 2024

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



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# Ministerial Foreword



I am pleased to present the 2024 update to the National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map (IRM).

Building on the [Annual Report](#) published last March, this is the latest in a series of documents released every year since 2022 to chart a forward-looking path for the continued implementation of Scotland's [National Islands Plan](#).

This route map sets out the tangible actions and investments that the Scottish Government intends to put in place going forward to support our island communities and empower them to thrive.

The complex challenges and significant opportunities facing our islands call for decisive actions across a broad spectrum of policy areas. This document seeks to catalyse and coordinate the delivery of island-focused measures across portfolios, concentrating on National Islands Plan commitments around which further efforts are needed.

There is, however, an important difference compared to past iterations of this route map.

As required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the Scottish Government has carried out a comprehensive review of the National Islands Plan. As well as inviting responses through a dedicated online portal, we delivered in-person workshops and hosted online sessions to engage as many islanders as possible and give everyone with an interest in Scotland's islands the opportunity to share their views.

While the Plan was seen as comprehensive and ambitious, respondents were clear that there is more to be done to realise our shared vision of successful and empowered island communities.

Since its publication in December 2019, the implementation of the Plan has navigated through a succession of often intertwined crises, not least the full effects of an unwelcome Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and the widely felt repercussions of Russia's war on Ukraine. The resilience shown by our islands in the face of these challenges cannot be overstated.

Having considered the results of the consultation and reflected on what islanders told us, we have announced that a new National Islands Plan will be published in 2025.

Continuing a dialogue that has been underway since the development of the first Plan, we will work with island communities, local authorities and delivery partners to ensure the new document reflects their priorities and is conducive to even stronger partnerships benefitting islanders.

This route map will therefore continue to guide the ongoing implementation of the current Plan whilst ensuring continuity between the two documents and bridging their delivery.

People and communities will remain at the very heart of this work. The Scottish Government will continue to listen to and be guided by islanders while we sustain our efforts to meet their needs and support their ambitions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mairi Gougeon', written in a cursive style.

**Mairi Gougeon**

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

# Introduction

Within the National Islands Plan, published in 2019, the Scottish Government committed to producing an Implementation Route Map to guide the delivery of the vision and priorities set out in the Plan.

The [Implementation Route Map 2020-2025](#) was developed in collaboration with island local authorities, communities and other key delivery partners to identify desired outcomes, timescales and indicators for each of the 13 Strategic Objectives listed in the Plan.

Since 2022, the Scottish Government has also released annual route maps setting out actions and investments aimed at driving further progress towards the commitments made in the Plan.

This document – the third in its series – focuses on as yet unfulfilled commitments. Detailed actions have been assigned to each commitment, alongside an indicative timescale for delivery:

**Short:** one-two years

**Medium:** two-five years

**Long:** over five years

Commitments that were already fulfilled during 2020-2023 do not feature in this document. You can read more about the actions taken to fulfil them in past years' Annual Reports.

[Annual Report 2020](#)

[Annual Report 2021](#)

[Annual Report 2022](#)

[Annual Report 2023](#)

The delivery of the National Islands Plan is a continuous process and some actions have been '**implemented**' since the latest Annual Report issued in March 2024. These actions will be fully reported upon in the next Annual Report, due by the end of March 2025.

Given the nature of many of the commitments featuring in the National Islands Plan, assigning a timescale for fulfilment is not always appropriate. This is why the delivery of these commitments is marked as '**ongoing**' in this document.

# New National Islands Plan

As required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the Scottish Government has carried out a comprehensive review of the National Islands Plan.

Following a public consultation carried out last year to inform a review of the National Islands Plan, Scottish Ministers have announced that a new Plan will be published in 2025.

This document – the **final route map update under the current Plan** – will guide cross-government efforts to ensure the implementation of the 2019 document continues until the new Plan comes into effect.

# Our Strategic Objectives and Values

The National Islands Plan sets a direction for the Scottish Government and provides a framework for action in order to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities.

The Plan has 13 Strategic Objectives which we will use to direct our work over the coming months and years.



## Strategic Objective 1

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



## Strategic Objective 2

To improve and promote sustainable economic development



## Strategic Objective 3

To improve transport services



## Strategic Objective 4

To improve housing



## Strategic Objective 5

To reduce levels of fuel poverty



## Strategic Objective 6

To improve digital connectivity



### Strategic Objective 7

To improve and promote health, social care and wellbeing



### Strategic Objective 8

To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity



### Strategic Objective 9

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



### Strategic Objective 10

To empower diverse communities and different places



### Strategic Objective 11

To support arts, culture and language



### Strategic Objective 12

To promote and improve education for all throughout life



### Strategic Objective 13

To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan



# A Fair, Integrated, Green and Inclusive Plan

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

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

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

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

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

# National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map 2024

## Strategic Objective: 1 – Population

Address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile

**Partners:** Local Authorities, Island Communities, Scottish Islands Federation, Skills Development Scotland, Crofting Commission, Scottish Crofting Federation, Youth Scotland, Rural Youth Parliament, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI), University of the Highlands and Islands, James Hutton Institute, Robert Gordon University, Heriot Watt University, Young Islanders Network.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Identify islands where population decline is becoming a critical issue in order to ensure that these islands have their needs addressed.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to utilise and promote the <a href="#">Scottish Island Regions (2023) geography</a> developed by the James Hutton Institute (JHI) and used as the basis for the National Islands Plan Surveys 2020 and 2023. Grouping islands together into regions is one feasible way to provide aggregate statistics on the Scottish island population, overcoming the challenge that many of the islands are very sparsely populated. Using this new grouping will mean that National Records of Scotland will be able to produce Scottish Island population estimate data every year.</li> <li>• Based on the 2022 Census, the National Records of Scotland have published <a href="#">population counts for both individual islands and island groups</a>. More data and reports concerning islands and island groups will continue to be released over the course of 2024 and 2025.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Scottish Islands Survey</a> 2023 was published on 17 September. While it will not contain population data, it will provide relevant accompanying information, such as demographics of returners to islands.</li> <li>• Following a public consultation, the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP) will finalise its Regional Economic Strategy, which includes a strong focus on population retention and growth.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to support Community Settlement Officers roles within Argyll and Bute Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on a co-funding basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with young islanders to identify actions to encourage them to stay on or return to islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to support Youth Scotland to deliver the Young Islanders Network (YIN), ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and can genuinely shape both the delivery of the current National Islands Plan and the development of the new document.</li> <li>• Work on the Graduate Retention project is continuing. Graduate Retention aims to encourage students to remain in Scotland (and rural locations/move to islands) after completing their studies. Working with young islanders will help us develop our understanding of what would make them want to stay or return after study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that policies aim to retain and attract Gaelic speakers to live and work in Gaelic-speaking island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing completion of Island Communities Impact Assessments by relevant authorities will support this process following the 2022 update to the <a href="#">ICIA Guidance and Toolkit</a>.</li> <li>• Established quarterly meetings between the Gaelic and Scots Team and Bòrd na Gàidhlig will continue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with the Crofting Commission to encourage a healthy turnover of croft tenancies on our islands to create opportunities for new people into crofting.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission is expanding its Residency and Land Use (RALU) work with a view to addressing absenteeism and bringing tenanted and owner-occupied crofts back into active use. This will help create opportunities for new entrants.</li> <li>• The Commission will be writing to a selection of crofters (both tenants and owner-occupier crofters) who have either not returned their crofting census or indicated in their returns that they are in breach of one or more of their duties.</li> <li>• The Commission will continue to promote the <a href="#">Scottish Land Matching Service Crofting Resource</a>.</li> <li>• The Commission will continue to engage with crofters on succession planning.</li> <li>• The Commission will launch and publicise a system of investigating reports focusing on owners of vacant crofts who are not working the croft and/or are not ordinarily resident on or within 20 miles (32 kilometres) of the croft. This is to determine whether a notice should be issued requiring the owners to submit proposals for letting the croft.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• New initiative</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 2 – Sustainable Economic Development

Improve and promote sustainable economic development

**Partners:** Local Authorities, Island Communities, Scottish Islands Federation, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Creative Scotland, Creative Scotland’s RFOs (Regularly Funded Organisations), Youth Scotland, Marine Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Crofting Commission, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Fisherman’s Federation, Visit Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Tourism Industry, University of the Highlands and Islands, Third Sector Interfaces, Crown Estate Scotland.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Identify key actions to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth on islands such as community-run businesses, e-commerce and digitally enabled island-based businesses.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will consider this as part of work being taken forward under the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) to transform the way in which the public sector in Scotland provides support for workers and businesses. NSET recognises the need to build a model that reaches every community, rural or urban, and connects people and businesses with the support they need.</li> <li>• We will continue to work with teams and our agencies delivering the priorities of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation in ways that maximise benefits for island communities.</li> <li>• Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) will continue to support regional strengths and opportunities whilst addressing barriers to growth. HIE will continue to flex its delivery for island communities and businesses through its area team approach, adjusting intervention rates and criteria for programme support to increase entrepreneurship, innovation and productivity.</li> <li>• HIE will also continue to support growth, innovation and productivity in sectors which are fundamental to islands’ economy, both those which are well-established such as food and drink, tourism and creative industries and those which are developing including renewable energy, the blue economy and space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All island local authorities are active members of COHI and are represented on the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership.</li> <li>• The Skills Recognition Scotland pilot project ended in Autumn 2023. A Lessons Learnt Report is to be published in summer 2024. The Graduate Retention programme continues to encourage students to stay in Scotland on completion of their studies.</li> <li>• The first iteration of <a href="#">Scotland's Migration Service</a> launched on 27 March 2024 to help recently arrived migrants to settle, and Scottish employers and inward investors to navigate the UK immigration system to meet their labour needs. The second iteration of the service will launch in the autumn and will open both to people abroad who want to work in Scotland, and to people in Scotland who have limited leave to remain or enter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As set out in the NSET, the Scottish Government is developing Community Wealth Building (CWB) legislation for introduction in this parliamentary term. The Scottish Government is undertaking detailed analysis of respondents' feedback to the public consultation held in 2023, including in relation to the proposal for a duty to advance CWB .</li> <li>• HIE will continue to provide business and industrial premises in island locations where market failure exists and develop innovation assets to support transformational opportunities. HIE will also continue to support community wealth building through building community capacity, capability and developing community assets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work in partnership to support strategic projects which deliver sustainable economic growth in the islands, e.g. Orkney Research and Innovation Campus and Stornoway port developments.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the Islands Growth Deal, to which both the Scottish and UK Governments have committed up to £50m, we will be investing in local people, projects and priorities in partnership with local authorities, the UK Government and a wide range of public, private and third sector partners. This will spread the benefits of inclusive economic growth across Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides, increasing opportunities for all.</li> <li>• The Calanais Visitor Centre, a project within the Outer Hebrides Destination Development programme, is now in delivery. It will have a strategic role in facilitating and servicing the increased visitor numbers anticipated from the Stornoway Deep-Water Cruise Terminal.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government, along with HIE and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, is a key partner in the Stornoway Deep Water Port project, providing £33.7m in resource funding over 25 years through the Growth Accelerator Model (GAM). With the port now fully operational, the focus in the coming years will largely relate to supporting green energy opportunities and creating new jobs.</li> <li>• The Scottish and UK Governments have each committed £1.5m of funding to complement the work being undertaken to support the development of a local energy plan for Islay and lead to the implementation of an energy network across the island. We will continue to work with stakeholders to support the local energy plan, which is being developed for consideration as part of the Argyll and Bute Rural Growth Deal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several projects with a strong focus on the marine economy are being taken forward as part of both the Islands Growth Deal and the Argyll and Bute Growth Deal. Both the Scottish and UK Governments will continue to work closely with partners in both Deals to develop these projects to the benefit of coastal communities.</li> <li>• Following the publication of its 2023-28 Strategy, HIE will continue to identify and pursue opportunities for development in marine renewable energy, aquaculture, marine biotechnology and processing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Display leadership in the public sector by demonstrating that jobs and careers can be successful on islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Dispersal aims to demonstrate that work can be carried out from most locations. The Scottish Government will continue to engage and reflect on this emerging work.</li> <li>• Through the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), the Scottish Government has committed to implement a focused Talent Attraction programme to attract key skills and talent from the rest of the UK. The Talent Attraction programme includes a number of workstreams with the aim of attracting and retaining working age people with the skills to support Scotland’s economic recovery and help to address population challenges.</li> <li>• The Graduate Retention programme aims to encourage students to stay in Scotland after completing their studies. This is an action stemming from the <a href="#">International Education Strategy</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Promote a thriving business environment that allows individuals to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities on islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to ensure that new and revised policies, strategies and services are island-proofed by carrying out Island Communities Impact Assessments.</li> <li>• In addition to mainstreamed business support, the Islands Programme will continue to investment in the development and safeguarding of critical island infrastructure. In order to ensure these investments provide best value for our island communities, the framework for the Islands Programme is underpinned by the principles of place-based community wealth building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Create and promote apprenticeships and job opportunities for young islanders.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) Enhancement Group has been established and will revisit the purpose and objectives of GAs to help inform future policy and ensure the strategic direction for GAs is in line with wider skills reform. This will include a review of how they can support island employers and young people.</li> <li>• Modern Apprenticeship policy will also be reviewed to ensure that apprenticeships help to drive economic growth, address skills gaps in the labour market and support the delivery of Scottish Government commitments, including around net zero and sustainable island communities.</li> <li>• Work is underway to develop an evidence base to improve the apprenticeship models for Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships. We expect this work to take until the end of the year. We will then work with stakeholders and learners to make improvements to the models over the coming years.</li> <li>• Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provide an all-age career service in every local authority highlighting the options available to people across Scotland, including Modern Apprenticeships. SDS undertakes further activity, together with employers, to highlight the importance of Modern Apprenticeships, particularly through Scottish Apprenticeship Week. We continue to work closely with SDS to support Modern Apprenticeships throughout Scotland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Ensure that skills provision is agile and responsive to future demand and enables individuals to take up opportunities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Strategy for Economic Transformation’s Skilled Workforce Programme aims to ensure that people have the skills they need at every stage of life to have rewarding careers and meet the demands of an ever-changing economy and society and that employers invest in the skilled employees they need to grow their businesses.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring the education and skills system is agile and responsive to the economic needs of our regions and sectors. As part of this, the <a href="#">Independent Skills Delivery Landscape Review</a> was published in June 2023. The same month, the Scottish Government published our <a href="#">Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Skills and Research</a> setting out a range of initial priorities. Work on several of these priorities is underway and will be critical in ensuring that the education and skills system is more responsive to Scotland’s strategic skills needs.</li> <li>• Informed by the recommendations of the independent Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review, the Scottish Government is developing an Implementation Plan to attract and equip more people with the skills and knowledge needed to work in land-based and aquaculture sectors.</li> <li>• The Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland (SAPRS) sets out our strategic, partnership approach to support the skills needs of rural and island economies. The Plan has now matured and we are developing our future approach for the sustainable, long-term co-ordination and delivery of skills for rural and island communities, taking account of the reform across the education and skills system.</li> <li>• The Argyll and Bute Deal includes the Rural Skills Accelerator programme, which will serve island communities in the region.</li> <li>• The Islands Growth Deal’s Talented Islands programme will improve the education and skills across all sectors in the Islands Deal programme, particularly in the net zero and renewables sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ongoing development of a second National Marine Plan (NMP2) is informed by a participative approach and extensive stakeholder engagement enabling co-design of policies in the plan. NMP2 will continue to set the context for sectoral and regional marine planning, and provide greater clarity on the consideration of regional circumstances in decisions.</li> <li>• As part of the assessment of the draft plan, we will undertake a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA), and an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA), providing dedicated opportunities for island communities to engage with the process, including via established Marine Planning Partnerships and Local Coastal Partnerships.</li> <li>• The Islands Growth Deal's Food And Drink programme will see investment in Acarsaid pier, a strategically significant harbour which allows easy access to the fishing grounds of both the west and east of Eriskay. The investment will provide for pier strengthening and remedial works, ensuring its operational functionality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Ensure that sustainable land use including agriculture and forestry continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to work with the forestry sector to offer training opportunities to both new entrants and existing members, including in island communities.</li> <li>• The Crofting Commission’s Crofting Development Team has two members of staff based in the Western Isles. Additional Commission staff are based on other islands, including Orkney. The Development team works with crofting communities, grazings committees and landlords to encourage active croft use and management of common grazings. Its work also helps identify opportunities for new entrants.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government continues to provide support to help sustain croft businesses. Officials continue to consider potential changes to the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme and are exploring the introduction of Standard Costs.</li> <li>• Our <a href="#">Vision for Scottish Agriculture</a> outlines our aim to transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. This commitment will sit at the heart of a robust and coherent framework to underpin Scotland’s future agriculture support regime from 2025 onwards.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Agricultural Reform Route Map</a> was updated in June 2024 and provides further clarity on how we intend to deliver the ambitions set out in the Vision. It illustrates the process for moving to a new agricultural support framework with information on milestones, measures being considered, support available and how to prepare for these first changes from 2025.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill</a> unanimously passed Stage 3 in June 2024. The powers in the Bill will be used to realise the Vision, delivering on our commitment to support agriculture. The Bill will enable multi-year transformation in support for farming and rural communities, as we move from legacy EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) schemes to future co-developed support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <a href="#">Agricultural Reform Programme</a> (ARP) brings together different future support workstreams, including the <a href="#">Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board</a> (ARIOB), into a coherent programme structure. The detail required for future support is subject to active co-development and we remain committed to engaging widely with stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government will continue to provide core funding to VisitScotland, our national tourism organisation, to help grow the value of tourism across Scotland, including our islands. In growing the value of the visitor economy, VisitScotland is focused on increasing regional and seasonal spread, increasing satisfaction – among visitors, residents and businesses – and developing responsible tourism.</li> <li>The <a href="#">Tourism and Hospitality Industry Leadership Group</a>, co-chaired by the Minister for Business, will identify and influence the strategic game-changing actions needed to drive investment and ultimately lead to the sustainable growth of the tourism and hospitality industry across Scotland, including our islands.</li> <li>The Scottish Government will continue to support the Scottish Agritourism sector with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands co-chairing the Scottish Agritourism Strategy Implementation Board.</li> <li>Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) will work directly with businesses and social enterprises in our island destinations to develop and sustainably grow the value of tourism, with a particular focus on supporting the transition to net zero, creating community benefit, embedding fair work principles, fostering innovation and increasing productivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Medium Term</li> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Ensure that crofting continues to provide jobs and opportunities to island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to provide support to help sustain croft businesses, through the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme (CAGS) and the Croft House Grant (CHG). Officials are considering potential changes to both these schemes including increasing the value of individual grants. As part of the CAGS work, officials are also exploring the introduction of Standard Costs and widening the scope of activities supported.</li> <li>• We have undertaken a public consultation on Crofting Law Reform. It includes proposals to make crofting regulation less onerous for active crofters and the Crofting Commission. There are also proposals to make it easier for crofters to cooperate with landlords and benefit from implementing projects on common grazings, such as peatland restoration or woodland creation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with the food and drink industry to leverage its economic potential and explore options for sharing some of its benefits with island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are providing £10m over 2023-25 towards the work of the new Food &amp; Drink Industry Strategy. The strategy sets out aims and actions for the sector to help food and drink businesses throughout Scotland leverage their economic potential.</li> <li>• The Outer Hebrides Food &amp; Drink Programme will add value in fragile communities via £1.5m of Islands Growth Deal investment that seeks to preserve and enhance local markets for traditional fishing industries. It will enable the sustainable development of the islands' primary food production industries, develop local markets and respond to sectoral opportunities linked to product diversification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Seek to expand the range of economic, social and environmental benefits that island communities derive from forestry.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Forestry will continue to work with a range of partners to increase the benefits delivered from forests and woodlands on the islands. This includes carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation, enhancing and protecting Scotland's rich biodiversity, growing inclusive and sustainable island economies and helping communities adapt to the changing climate and improve their health and well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<b>Ensure that legislation and policy relating to early learning and childcare is appropriately island-proofed.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government will continue to engage with island stakeholders in the development of Early Learning and Childcare policy and legislation, including conducting an Island Communities Impact Assessment where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure that opportunities to develop the wellbeing of the Gaelic language and increase the number of speakers and users are considered as part of sustainable economic development.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to explore and develop a broad range of opportunities that promote and support the Gaelic language. These initiatives have a significant economic impact, through direct employment and attracting visitors while simultaneously supporting grassroots, community language use and the wellbeing of the Gaelic language.</li> <li>The Scottish Government will publish its formal response to the Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic. This provides an economic perspective on Gaelic development in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Skye &amp; Lochalsh, Tiree and Islay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Support women in agriculture on Scottish islands to succeed, including encouraging their participation in the Women in Agriculture Development Programme.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will encourage the delivery of Islands-specific Women in Agriculture Development Programme courses during the 2024-25 financial year.</li> <li>We will provide targeted support for Practical Training Funding to enable training courses to be hosted on islands.</li> <li>We will provide additional travel and subsistence support for island women to attend courses on the mainland.</li> <li>We will continue to promote online and in person training provision for women on Scottish islands.</li> <li>We will Encourage Women in Agriculture groups to increase networking on islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium Term</li> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with relevant local authorities to develop regional food and drink action plans to support growth of the sector on islands, including a focus on the vital Whisky sector.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to engage with Scotland Food &amp; Drink and other key industry stakeholders through government subgroups and various food and drink action plans to identify opportunities to further support the sector and help stimulate economic growth. Through the implementation of the food &amp; drink industry strategy '<a href="#">Sustaining Scotland. Supplying the World</a>' we will continue to provide funding and support to our regional food groups, including the three island groups, enabling them to promote local food and drink businesses to develop strength and long-term sustainability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>To work with relevant local authorities to encourage take up of Food For Life accreditation to help stimulate local sourcing in public sector settings.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to support the delivery of the Food for Life Programme (FFL) across Scotland, with a primary focus on school meals. There are currently 15 councils who hold FFL accreditation, with Orkney and Shetland awarded bronze level accreditation in 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively.</li> <li>• In 2024-25, the Soli Association will continue to work with schools on maintaining accreditation as well as trying to embed FFL principles in the wider Scottish Public sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 3 – Transport

Improve transport services

**Partners:** Local Authorities, Island Communities, Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd, Hitrans, Visit Scotland, Calmac Community Board, ZetTrans, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport Scotland will continue to undertake Island Communities Impact Assessments and consultation with island stakeholders in relation to future strategies and policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engage with local authorities, island communities and transport operators in developing regulations and guidance for the bus services provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which aim to enable local authorities to better respond to local needs.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government has now delivered all the bus provisions within the 2019 Act to enable local transport authorities to consider all the powers available to them. This includes partnership working, franchising and local authority-run services which sit alongside their ability to subsidise services. Further regulations and guidance will be laid throughout 2024 to give these powers full effect, and we will continue to engage with stakeholders as these are developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The updated draft Vessels and Ports Plan was published for public consultation on 1 February 2024. The views from communities and stakeholders will inform the finalisation of the Plan with an aim to publish the final document later in 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Develop a new Ferries Plan<sup>1</sup> 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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) draft Strategic Approach and the updated Vessels and Ports Plan, were published for public consultation on 1 February 2024. Key findings and initial responses to the public consultation and community engagement were <a href="#">published</a> on 3 September 2024</li> <li>The purpose of the ICP is to set out how ferry services, supported by other transport modes, will be delivered, and strengthened, working towards a long-term vision, supported by clear priorities and defined outcomes for people and places, based on supporting delivery of the National Transport Strategy and the National Islands Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short Term</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>As part of the next Ferries Plan, review the impacts of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) and consider future ferry fares policy options that will meet the needs of islanders and support island economies.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Islands Connectivity Plan's Draft Strategic Approach paper, published for public consultation on 1 February 2024 sets out a commitment to take forward detailed consideration of a number of future ferry fares proposals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium Term</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Ferries Plan is now known as the Islands Connectivity Plan.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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 the use of active, public or shared transport for all or part of journeys to and from islands in an affordable and accessible manner.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an Onward and Connecting Travel (OCT) work programme as an element of the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) is underway. Priority areas for action will be taken forward as an ongoing programme in collaboration with our ferry network operators, other modal transport providers, and relevant stakeholders including local authorities.</li> <li>• Work with Calmac and Scotrail to develop a Partnership Agreement to facilitate a more integrated approach is now well underway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new booking system is operational but modifications to further improve the experience for customers and staff will continue as required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented</li> </ul>
<p><b>Determine strategic transport investments from our island communities through STPR2 – which will also inform Transport Scotland’s Ferries Plan 2.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft Islands Connectivity Plan Strategic Approach papers, was published for public consultation on 1 February 2024 and included consideration of the relevant STPR2 commendations.</li> <li>• The views from communities and stakeholders will inform the finalisation of the Strategic Approach paper with the aim to publish the final document later in 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work in partnership with local authorities and communities to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, the design of place and access to bikes, facilities, promotion and education to make walking and cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys including as part of multi-modal journeys.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport Scotland will transform the funding stream for active travel, evolving the delivery model which will include closing the <a href="#">Sustrans Places for Everyone Programme</a> by December 2025.</li> <li>• Transport Scotland will provide more direct funding to local authorities, working with them to streamline processes and increase the pace and scale of infrastructure delivery.</li> <li>• Transport Scotland will transform the funding stream for active and sustainable travel behaviour change with funding being provided to Regional Transport Partnerships to tackle priorities in their regions.</li> <li>• Transport Scotland is also funding Sustrans, to provide embedded officers in Orkney and Highland to support those local authorities in developing their active travel strategies, network plans and projects in 2024-25.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Explore the potential to reduce the need to travel by using the planning system to promote places which bring people and services together.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) approved in February 2023 includes a new policy on local living, including the principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods that connect people to a range of amenities and services close to home. It is a flexible approach that can vary across the country and settlements to suit the context. <a href="#">Planning Guidance: Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods</a> was published in April 2024. The implementation and monitoring of NPF4 is being progressed through the <a href="#">Delivery Programme   Transforming Planning</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Subject to requirements as set out in the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service and the Northern Isles Ferry Service contracts, we will always strive to improve, where necessary and possible, issues relating to freight and will engage proactively with operators, communities, and stakeholders as appropriate.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) draft Strategic Approach was published for public consultation on 1 February 2024. This included a section on Freight. The Strategic Approach will be finalised later in 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium Term</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 4 – Housing

Improve housing

**Partners:** Local Authorities, Island Communities, Scottish Islands Federation, Rural Housing Scotland, Scottish Land Commission, Shelter Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Communities Housing Trust, Rural and Islands Housing Association Forum, Tighean Innse Gall, local Housing Associations.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Ensure that the regulation of short-term lets takes account of the unique circumstances of island communities and make special provision for them where required.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have monitored the implementation of short-term lets regulation and introduced the <a href="#">Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) (Amendment) Order 2024</a> to make technical updates to the licensing scheme, which Parliament passed on the 26 June 2024. We published impact assessments, including an assessment of impact on island communities.</li> <li>• Local authorities now have powers to introduce short-term let control areas in order to manage the number of short-term lets in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Make best use of all housing stock including derelict properties and options for compulsory purchase.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through <a href="#">Housing to 2040</a> we have committed to take a range of actions to help bring empty homes back into use including an audit to inform how we deliver the other actions. The independent audit considered the scale, characteristics and location of empty homes, and the effectiveness of interventions to bring them back into use. The findings endorsed our approach and showed that the most cost effective intervention is at local authority level, with dedicated empty homes officers working with private owners to bring homes into use.</li> <li>• We continue to support and fund the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership which has helped bring almost 11,000 empty homes back into use since 2010.</li> <li>• In April 2023, we launched a consultation on proposals to increase council tax on second and long-term empty homes. The regulations have now been amended to 1) provide a grace-period from exposure to the council tax premium when an empty home is purchased by a new owner and renovations or repairs are being undertaken; 2) enable local authorities to charge a 100% premium on second homes from 1 April 2024 which brings them into line with the existing powers on empty homes. We will continue to discuss other options with Local Government based on the analysis of consultation responses, including a possible increase in the premium beyond 100%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In October 2023, we published a <a href="#">Rural &amp; Islands Housing Action Plan</a> to meet the housing needs of, and retain and attract people to, those communities. The action plan marks an important step in tackling the challenges head on and includes a range of actions to support for the delivery of the right homes in the right places working with a range of partners.</li> <li>• We have committed to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70% will be for social rent, with at least 10% in rural and island communities.</li> <li>• In recognition of the challenges with recruiting and retaining staff in rural and island communities, we are making up to £25m available from our affordable housing supply programme budget over the period 2023-28. The funding will support local authorities and registered social landlords to purchase existing suitable properties which can be rented directly or leased to employers to provide affordable homes for key workers.</li> <li>• Recognising the importance of community-led housing in rural and island communities, we are providing a package of financial support, co-funded with Nationwide Foundation, of up to £960,000 over the period 2023-24 to 2025-26.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that the impact on Gaelic-speaking communities is considered as housing policies are developed.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is expected that Local Housing Strategies prepared by local authorities will evidence how the development of outcomes have been influenced by community engagement and consultation to deliver national priorities, plans, and targets, and how the Place Principle<sup>2</sup> is being used to deliver change within communities and achieve desired outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The Place Principle aims to promote a shared understanding of place, and the need to take a more joined-up, collaborative approach to services and assets within a place to achieve better outcomes for people and communities in which they live. The Place Principle is not prescriptive - rather, it encourages and enables local flexibility in responding to issues and circumstances in different places.

## Strategic Objective: 5 – Fuel Poverty

Reduce levels of fuel poverty

**Partners:** Local Authorities, Island Communities, Scottish Islands Federation, Shelter Scotland, Local Energy Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, Home Energy Scotland, Housing Associations.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Review how delivery schemes can work better locally and review funding for island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Warmer Homes Scotland scheme re-launched in October 2023 and eligibility criteria have been reviewed to ensure it is still reaching the target audience and supporting fuel poor households.</li> <li>• We will re-run the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund in 2024-25. The fund targets immediate support to those who are struggling due to the cost of living crisis, through direct allocation to the six island local authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>



## Strategic Objective: 6 – Digital Connectivity

Improve digital connectivity

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Scotland 5G Centre, Ofcom, UK DSIT, Internet Service Providers, Openreach, Mobile providers, HIE, SDS, Island Communities

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Deliver a step change in the quality of digital connectivity across the islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to invest in the £384m Reaching 100% (R100) North contract which covers the majority of Scotland's inhabited islands.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government will lead delivery of local and regional procurements in Scotland as part of the UK Government's Project Gigabit, and jointly managed activity in Scotland that arises from the UK-wide procurement framework. We continue to urge the UK Government to ensure that plans are in place to offer ultrafast connectivity to premises considered by UK Government 'Very Hard to Reach' for the purposes of Project Gigabit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mandate the delivery of gigabit-capable connectivity to selected island locations, through the R100 programme, with many other island communities to benefit once contracts are finalised.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of the R100 contract build delivered on islands will be fibre to the premises (FTTP), capable of delivering gigabit speeds – putting island communities in Scotland ahead of the curve, even compared to many urban areas.</li> <li>• Through the R100 North contract, we will continue to progress delivery with over 12,000 premises located in island communities expected to receive a gigabit-capable connection. During 2024-25 we expect to connect premises in Westray, Eday, Rousay and Shapinsay in the Orkney islands; Unst and Whalsay in the Shetland islands; and the isles of Mull and Iona through the R100 North contract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to engage with UK Ministers to ensure Scotland receives its fair share of Project Gigabit funding, urging the UK Government to commit a level of funding that allows early investment in Scotland's islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Call on Ofcom to address the issues faced by island communities when designing telecoms regulation and policy. We also committed to convene a meeting with Ofcom and island representatives to explore how regulatory levers (such as spectrum auctions) could improve both mobile and broadband coverage on the islands and ensure that the needs of islands are represented to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in UK national policy development.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to work with island partners including local authorities, communities and business to gather evidence of demonstrate needs of islands in regards to mobile and broadband coverage.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government continues to work closely with representatives of the Office of Communications (OFCOM) to ensure that Scotland’s interests are represented and any issues raised with focus in the year ahead on their forthcoming Telecoms Access Review. This also includes co-ordinating regular liaison between OFCOM and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) representatives with our recognised local authority single points of contact for digital connectivity, including representatives of island communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Through the Scotland 5G Centre, building on the 5G RuralFirst trials currently taking place on Orkney, and working with partners including Ofcom, we committed to develop rural 5G use cases to address the rural digital divide using 5G technology.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Scotland 5G Centre, and in partnership with the 5G New Thinking project, we continue to monitor the progress of the pan-island testbed 5G network trials (including fixed wireless access and spectrum sharing) and key 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) use case applications (including energy and food &amp; drink), and explore how the outputs and lessons learned can be mainstreamed and help inform policy in addressing the rural digital divide.</li> <li>• Private 5G networks have been built on Westray and Papa Westray, and on Flotta and Hoy, working with local on-island partners Cloudnet IT Services and Orkney Islands Council. A total of seven 5G rural private network base-stations have been installed and providing connectivity to 68 trialists across these island communities. A 5G network core was set up and a network monitoring system developed for the network operations. While physical deployment activity concluded in March 2022, the project team has maintained and operated the network, and also carried out additional engineering to allow scope for further innovative projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with local resilience partnerships and telecoms providers to encourage them to focus on resilience of data links to and from the islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to engage with relevant resilience partnerships to identify any challenges to resilience of data links to and from the islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extend the availability of coding clubs and community-based digital inclusion programmes across the islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will learn from existing programmes being delivered in the island communities and support their implementation across the islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 7 – Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Improve and promote health and wellbeing

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, TSIs, Community Planning Partnerships, Young Islanders Network, NHS Scotland, Local Health Boards, Royal College of Midwives, Sport Scotland, Active Schools, Scottish Sports Council, Samaritans Scotland, Scottish Women’s Aid, Age Concern Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Scottish Drugs Forum, Alcohol Focus Scotland, Alcohol Information Scotland, Island Communities

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration Joint Boards will continue to work closely with Health and Social Care Partnerships to ensure each island is recognised within their unique circumstances.</li> <li>• Alcohol and Drug Partnerships in island areas will continue to consider how to overcome the challenges of rurality. In some cases, a structured assessment will be employed, covering the extent to which teams have maximised access choice and care through technology, travel and models of care. Progress is noted in the annual Medical Assisted Treatment (MAT) Benchmarking Report, published by Public Health Scotland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identify and promote good practice, especially as regards the improvement of services in islands and other remote areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to implement the recommendations from the <a href="#">Shaping the Future Together: Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group report</a>.</li> <li>• The National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Social Care was established in October 2023. The Centre is engaging with stakeholders to better understand the needs and opportunities in our island areas. Work is underway to support health boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships in planning and delivering services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS Near Me will continue to be utilised across every Health Board in Scotland to provide greater flexibility, whilst supporting remote working, reducing the need to travel and promoting greater access to specialist services.</li> <li>• Procurement of a ‘once for Scotland’ digital solution for the education and management of type 2 diabetes is ongoing and is forming part of wider digital transformation work being led by ANIA which will explore a potential value case for Digital Solution to support T2 Diabetes and prevention agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support relevant local authorities to plan and develop sports facilities on the islands that respond to the needs of communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>sports</b>scotland will continue to engage strategically with local authorities (through their capital planning processes) and island communities with regards to opportunities to deliver improved local facility provision for sport and physical activity.</li> <li>• <b>sports</b>scotland and the Scottish Government Islands Team are continuing to have discussions with Orkney Islands Council regarding improved local facility provision in preparation for the 2025 Orkney Island Games and beyond.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>sports</b>scotland will continue to support Orkney Islands Council, Orkney Islands Organising Committee and local sports associations to add value to Orkney hosting the (rescheduled) 2025 International Island Games through the development of the local infrastructure of people, places and pathway opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>sports</b>scotland will continue work with the Community Sport Hub Officer and with the Orkney Islands Games Organising Committee to deliver a needs based programme of education and development for coaches and volunteers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with our partners to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take steps to assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of the Bairns' Hoose model provides Scotland with an opportunity to adopt a genuinely child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced abuse or harm. National Bairns' Hoose Standards were published in May 2023, with Standard 3.4 stating that: 'Children in rural and island communities can access Bairns' Hoose in a way that is right for them.' From October 2023, these Standards are being tested by Pathfinder partnerships (made up of local authorities, police, health and third sector partners) including in island settings. By Autumn 2026, we will have enough knowledge about how the Standards work in different contexts to develop a national Bairns' Hoose blueprint that can be adapted to local requirements whilst guaranteeing the same quality of care. The Pathfinder phase, which will be completed by March 2027, will be followed by an incremental roll out phase.</li> <li>• The Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviews (JII) is being introduced nationally and is a cornerstone of Bairns' Hoose. The Model is now live in every local authority except Orkney and Shetland who, with support from the National JII team, continue to reflect on the best strategy to ensure this new approach is available to children and young people in their communities. It is expected that the Model will be available in every area by the end of 2024.</li> <li>• The Caledonian System is an internationally recognised behavioural change programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse which involves working with woman and children to reduce the risk of harm that domestic abuse can have. Consideration is being given to the lessons learned during COVID and the needs of island communities. We remain committed to investing in interventions which provide evidence of being able to change the attitudes of offenders. We will continue to explore with Community Justice Scotland the safest, most effective way in which we can increase the availability of the Caledonian System across Scotland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Address any equality, health and wellbeing related data gaps that exist in respect of, for example, women and girls, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <a href="#">Equally Safe strategy</a> published in December 2023 recognises that women living in island communities may experience distinct challenges, such as lacking places to seek refuge or assistance in times of danger.</li> <li>• The Delivering Equally Safe fund supports third sector organisations and public bodies to contribute to the objectives, priorities and outcomes of the Equally Safe strategy. It funds a range of organisations working in island communities including Orkney Women’s Aid and Western Isles Rape Crisis Centre.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government have established a Sustainable Funding Project Board to take forward our commitment to develop a stable and flexible funding model for Violence Against Women and Girls services. The Project Board is co-chaired with COSLA and brings together a range of public sector and specialist third sector organisations, including representation from the islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Consider our consultation on out of school care through which we have gathered views from parents on the challenges of accessing childcare and range of activities for school age children in island communities. Responses to our consultation will, together with continued engagement, inform development of a future strategic framework which will be published before the end of this parliamentary term.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <a href="#">School Age Childcare Delivery Framework</a>, published in October 2023, sets out our commitment to develop and test solutions that support the sustainability of essential school age childcare services within rural and island communities. We have established an Early Adopter Community in Shetland where we will work with the local authority and partners to understand what it takes to support childcare systems that are locally appropriate, within island communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that health, social care and wellbeing services are available through the medium of Gaelic to support Gaelic-speaking island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both NHS Highland and NHS Western Isles have published revised Gaelic Language Plans for 2023-28.</li> <li>• Bòrd na Gàidhlig has commissioned a study looking at Gaelic and wellbeing. It will be delivered later in 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Align our ambition to eradicate child poverty with the Plan by continuing to work with island local authorities and health boards to build on their understanding of child poverty in their areas – helping to focus efforts on lifting families out of poverty and mitigating against its damaging impact.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second <a href="#">Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan</a>, published in March 2022, outlines the transformational actions we will take alongside our delivery partners – including island local authorities and health boards – to deliver on our national mission to tackle child poverty.</li> <li>• Island local authorities and health boards will continue to be required to produce Local Child Poverty Action Reports under the terms of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.</li> <li>• We launched the second round of the Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (CPAF) in May 2024. It is open to local authorities and health boards as lead applicants. The fund supports small scale projects to generate evidence on a known problem, adapt a promising approach from elsewhere, or re-design a service or services to deliver greater impact on child poverty.</li> <li>• The 2024-25 round of the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund, worth £1m, will have a strengthened focus on tackling child poverty on islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work alongside national partners, continuing to share good practice identified across Scotland which could be applicable to child poverty in our island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to work with national partners to ensure knowledge and good practice is shared and to support and improve local responses to tackling child poverty, including in our island communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with islanders to contribute, where we can, to the creation of a fairer, healthier, happier nation for all of Scotland by supporting the work of the group of Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to learn from and collaborate with other countries and organisations through WEGo, and more broadly, to transition to build a fair, green and growing, wellbeing economy that puts people first, serving current and future generations. That means empowering our island communities to take a greater stake in the economy, tackling inequalities, and aiming to ensure that they can seize the opportunities from the just transition to net zero to deliver greater prosperity and increased wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with our partners to consider a range of options to ensure that adequate mental health care is available, whilst taking into consideration the uniqueness of our island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <a href="#">Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023-2025</a> includes an undertaking to address the unique challenges faced by those living in rural and island communities. We will work with the National Rural Mental Health Forum to gather and share evidence around the barriers faced by rural and island communities, with a view to building their resilience further and supporting wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 8 – Environment Wellbeing and Biosecurity

Improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with environmental security

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Island Communities, HIE, SEPA, Nature Scot, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Land Commission, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Marine Scotland, Calmac Coastal Community Network, VisitScotland, NFUS.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to undertake island-specific projects to put in place measures to address biosecurity in an integrated manner, including on the most important islands for breeding seabirds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with island communities to explore how they can contribute to the circular economy through small-scale pilots for example supporting local food production.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) continues to work actively in this field including by chairing Highland Adapts, the Highlands region adaptation partnership.</li> <li>• ZWS is working in collaboration with HIE to deliver the Fuel Change Highlands and Islands Challenge, a development programme getting young people engaged with climate action.</li> <li>• ZWS is also supporting partners in a Highland cup re-use scheme and it is delivering workshops and follow-up support on circular economy with Highland Council and Shetland Islands Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Develop work with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy’s Non-Native Species Action Group to increase public information around minimising particularly high-risk invasive species movements on islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will consult with the Non-Native Species Action Group and NatureScot on which species should be included and how raising public awareness may be best achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with island partners to design solutions that address climate change through nature based solutions with multiple benefits including, for example the protection and restoration of peatlands and salt marshes.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to support collaboration with island partners to ensure nature based solutions are used to tackle climate change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 9 – Climate Change and Energy

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

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Island Communities, SEPA, Scottish Land Commission, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Marine Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Local Energy Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, European Marine Energy Centre, Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance, DTAS, VisitScotland, HIE, NFUS, Sustrans and ZetTrans, Climate Action Hubs, NatureScot, National Trust for Scotland, Crofting Commission.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with island communities to support their climate change aspirations.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community climate action hubs across the islands have been established to empower communities to identify the actions that are most appropriate to their needs and provide support in their local areas. They will help groups take advantage of funding opportunities, and promote collaboration between projects.</li> <li>• The Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) project, commenced in 2021, supports island communities to lead the way in realising Scotland’s climate change ambitions. Directly supporting six islands in their journey towards carbon neutrality by 2040, the work undertaken under this project not only benefits the environment, but supports local economies, facilities and general wellbeing through investment in communities.</li> <li>• Following the production of a Community Climate Change Action Plan by each island, the CNI Islands have been moving forward with implementing projects to achieve the aims of these plans (with Scottish Government capital funding support).</li> <li>• In 2024-25 a financing strategy is under development in order to streamline approaches to financing these CNI initiatives.</li> <li>• Replicability is also a priority, with the Scottish Government working with Community Energy Scotland to share key learnings from the CNI with other islands not directly involved in the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<b>Work with island communities to look at alternative solutions to managing waste, particularly in respect of Scotland's Circular Economy Strategy.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An updated draft Circular Economy and Waste Route Map was published in January 2024. This included an updated <a href="#">Islands Communities Screening Assessment</a>. Key proposed measures within the Route Map are being designed to account for different geographical requirements. The final Route Map will be published later in 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short Term</li> </ul>
<b>Work with local authorities to help them work towards their statutory targets.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authorities do not currently have individual statutory targets for climate change. The Scottish Government will however continue to provide funding and support to local authorities to assist with their emission reductions efforts.</li> <li>The Scottish Government fund the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service. The service will help support planning and delivery of programmes of area-wide emissions reduction across Scotland. Later this year we will hold the first meeting of a new Climate Delivery Framework which will foster a collaborative approach between national and local government to achieve our shared climate change goals. These initiatives, whilst focused at a national level, will also benefit island local authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Work towards creating net zero emission islands and providing global climate change leadership.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to explore opportunities to work with international partners to exchange expertise and best practice on island decarbonisation, including in relation to our Carbon Neutral Islands project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal Change Adaptation Guidance was published in 2023. Continued engagement through the Adaptation Scotland Programme with the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership and Climate Hebrides has supported development of locally led adaptation across the islands. We will also continue to engage with other island stakeholders through national capacity building projects and events.</li> <li>• An adaptation component runs through the Carbon Neutral Islands project Community Climate Change Action Plans published in June 2023. The islands involved in the project have undertaken a number of projects related to adaptation and resilience building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work closely with island partners, the network owner and all other key stakeholders to deliver existing proposals for electricity transmission links to mainland Scotland.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to engage closely with island local authorities and industry to assess the risks and opportunities as Scottish island wind projects approach this year's Contract for Difference (CfD) allocation round.</li> <li>• Scottish Ministers will continue to make clear to Ofgem that its decisions on island links must take the net zero imperative more fully into account, and incorporate a more flexible approach to what are vital strategic investments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with Resilience Partnerships and energy providers to encourage them to focus on the resilience of islands' energy supply networks.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government Energy Networks Strategic Leadership Group will continue to be an influential forum for discussing the development of Scotland's energy networks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with transport-related stakeholders to have the most energy-efficient and climate-friendly transport services possible across the islands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport Scotland has consulted on developing an Aviation Strategy. The responses are helping us determine how commitments that are relevant to the Highlands and Islands region can be progressed.</li> <li>• We will continue to examine the scope for utilising hybrid and low carbon energy sources in the public sector marine fleet as part of our vessel replacement programme.</li> <li>• As part of the Islands Connectivity Plan, we will explore and consult on pathways to zero/low emission ferry transport.</li> <li>• We will support all island authorities to develop public EV charging strategy and expansion plans.</li> <li>• We continue to support island authorities to work collaboratively to apply for the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, which aims to leverage £60m of public and private investment to increase the size of the public charging network, with a particular focus on areas where commercial investment on its own is not commercially viable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our forthcoming Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan will set out our vision for a future net zero energy system that delivers affordable, secure and clean energy and provides high quality jobs and economic opportunities across Scotland. It will also set out policies to support a managed transition from fossil fuels in line with the Scottish Government’s climate change goals, alongside interventions and policies in areas such as skills, investment and supply chains, to help ensure that this is a just transition, including for Scotland’s island communities.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government will continue to engage extensively with UK Government, Ofgem, National Grid ESO and industry stakeholders regarding wholesale electricity market reform and the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA).</li> <li>• Reforms to the wholesale market could have significant impacts for all market participants including consumers, especially those in Scotland’s rural and island communities where there are higher rates of fuel poverty.</li> <li>• We have commissioned research to explore the potential impacts locational marginal pricing (LMP) could have for our net zero and just transition ambitions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with communities, crofters, farmers and landowners to expand forests and woodlands on the islands, recognising wider land-use objectives.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Forestry will continue to support sustainable woodland creation on the islands through the Forestry Grant Scheme.</li> <li>• Scottish Forestry will also continue to work with a range of partners including the Woodland Trust and Point and Sandwick Trust to deliver the Croft Woodlands Project, which covers all islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Support the adaptation of Scotland's aquaculture and fishing industry.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to ensure island fishing representatives contribute to the development of annual fisheries negotiations strategy and priorities.</li> <li>• We will continue to identify and fill priority knowledge gaps, working in partnership with our stakeholders to develop a fisheries climate change action plan and building on work already undertaken in this area.</li> <li>• As set out in our <a href="#">Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture</a>, we will continue to support the aquaculture sector to put in place climate resilience plans to manage the risks of climate change by 2029.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with a range of stakeholders to develop an action plan to improve resilience to properties at flood risk.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to work with stakeholders to deliver the <a href="#">Living with Flooding: Action Plan</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with local authorities to strengthen recycling and food waste services in island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill was approved by the Scottish Parliament in June 2024. Section 12 requires Ministers to publish a code of practice on household waste recycling, which is to be co-designed with local government. This code can make different provision for different local authority areas to account for local need, context and availability of infrastructure. Section 13 provides powers for Scottish Ministers to set targets for local authorities relating to household waste recycling. Targets will be agreed with local authorities to ensure they are practical and achievable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that the voices of islanders are fully heard, achieving a just transition to net zero, and that islands benefit from the many opportunities associated with a green and sustainable economy.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Island Communities Impact Assessment informed by engagement with island stakeholders will accompany the publication of the forthcoming Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (ESJTP).</li> <li>• We will also publish a sectoral Land Use and Agriculture Just Transition plan, which will be co-produced with relevant stakeholders. Impacts on islands will be a key consideration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 10 – Empowered Communities and Strong Local Partnerships

Empower diverse communities and different places

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Island Communities, Scottish Islands Federation, Scottish Community Development Centre, Community Land Scotland, Development Trust Association Scotland, Scottish Land Commission, Marine Scotland, Youth Parliament, Youth Scotland, COSLA, Crown Estate Scotland.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We remain committed to conclude the joint Local Governance Review (LGR) with COSLA and implement the findings through legislation where required. The LGR is a key part of our overall approach to Public Service Reform and to future relationship with local government and communities.</li> <li>• The New Deal for Local Government and delivering a Visitor Levy and a Council Tax premium on second homes/long-term empty properties all represent material changes which empower local government. We will continue to work with local government partners to explore further fiscal empowerments that support local communities, as exemplified by our commitment to develop and consult on proposals for a Cruise Ship Levy.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government is continuing to work with island local authorities and health partners to develop Single Authority Models. Alternative local governance arrangements will strengthen and streamline local decision-making, and support a shift towards more preventative public services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Support participatory processes aimed at providing island communities with a strong voice in the implementation of the Plan.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Participatory Budgeting Strategy Group has devised the <a href="#">Future of Participatory Budgeting in Scotland: framework</a> to inform ongoing work on how participatory budgeting can be used as an innovative engagement tool to tackle issues concerning health and wellbeing, education, housing and climate justice.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government continues to support COSLA's Participatory Budgeting team, including in relation to the development and delivery of CONSUL, a free citizen participation software. CONSUL has been translated into Gaelic, enabling online community engagement processes in Gaelic.</li> <li>• We will continue to fund the Scottish Community Development Centre to provide support and advice to communities, including on islands, on participatory processes.</li> <li>• The development of a second National Islands Plan will be informed by consultation and engagement with island communities, local authorities and delivery partners to ensure the new Plan meets their needs and supports their ambitions. We will also work with the Young Islanders Network to ensure young people have an opportunity to influence and inform the content of the Plan.</li> <li>• The implementation of the current and forthcoming Plans will be supported by the Islands Strategic Group, which was established to ensure greater involvement of relevant local authorities councils in helping design solutions to the challenges islanders face.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Medium Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Explore ways to strengthen the voice of island communities whilst capturing the differences between islands in local and national decision-making.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is currently underway and a report will be made available later in 2024. The review aims to identify opportunities to give local communities, including on islands, a greater say over how local public services are delivered, assets are used and resources are allocated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Resilient Communities team will issue a survey to Community Councils that is designed to establish a baseline of Community Councils' community resilience activity. The team will work with island stakeholders to ensure that the perspective of island communities is considered in designing future policy initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short Term</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Crown Estate Scotland Sponsorship Team will work with Crown Estate Scotland and potential new managers, on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that wider policies relating to the Scottish Crown Estate and that transfer and/or delegation proposals have completed an Island Communities Impact Assessment and take into account the National Islands Plan as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that Gaelic speakers in island communities are encouraged and supported to represent themselves through the medium of Gaelic.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the publication of the <a href="#">Scottish Government's Gaelic Language Plan 2022-2027</a>, we remain committed to providing more services through Gaelic and extending opportunities to use Gaelic in everyday situations and formal settings.</li> <li>Education Scotland published a revised <a href="#">Gaelic Language Plan for 2022-2027</a>. This is part of HM Inspectors' five-year strategy for Gaelic Education. As part of this, HM Inspectors will continue to provide specialist evaluations for Gaelic Medium Education and islands contexts. We will also take forward new high-level aims to support Gaelic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 11 – Arts, Culture and Language

Support arts, culture and language

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Creative Scotland, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Comunn na Gàidhlig, An Comunn Gàidhealach, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Historic Environment Scotland, National Youth Orchestra, HIE, VisitScotland, Event Scotland, Creative Scotland, RFOs, National Lottery, Island Communities.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects such as Ceòlas, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, An Comunn Gàidhealach, the Heritage Forum and centres such as Lanntair, Kildonan Museum, Taigh Chearsabhaigh, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn will continue contribute towards the delivery of this objective.</li> <li>MG Alba has recently expanded its FilmG short films contest to Nova Scotia, creating links between young Gaelic speakers in Scotland and Canada. The Scottish Government continues to foster these connections between Scotland's island communities and international counterparts through programmes such as Seachdain na Gàidhlig, Nova Scotia's Mios nan Gàidheal, and the Mòd.</li> <li>EventScotland will act as the lead agency for <a href="#">Scotland's National Events Strategy 2024-2035</a> and will continue to raise Scotland's reputation as the perfect stage by supporting and securing a portfolio of events and developing the events industry. EventScotland will continue to maintain constant awareness/alignment with wider Scottish Government and VisitScotland initiatives that focus on the islands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support all of Scotland's indigenous languages and dialects in ways that are relevant to the communities where these are spoken.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Languages Bill, introduced to the Scottish Parliament in November 2023, will give Gaelic and Scots official status within Scotland. It emphasises proportionate, community-based delivery on behalf of the languages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Ensure that the commitments in this plan are informed by and aligned with the commitments in the National Gaelic Language Plan, working closely with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government's <a href="#">Gaelic Language Plan</a> outlines its alignment with the National Gaelic Language Plan. The Scottish Government Islands Team is represented on the Scottish Government's Gaelic Implementation Group. This meets twice yearly and is a forum for ensuring our policy area fulfils the commitments of both the National and Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plans.</li> <li>We will continue to work closely with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, including in relation to the development of a new National Islands Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that the effect on Gaelic language development is considered from the outset in island-specific policies and initiatives and that these link to statutory Gaelic language plans.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government's Gaelic Language Plan has corporate service aims to ensure the equal prominence of Gaelic and encouragement to use Gaelic in communications.</li> <li>Representatives on the Scottish Government's Gaelic Implementation Group ensure their policy areas are mindful of the language and that, where possible, policies serve to advance Gaelic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with public authorities and community groups in increasing the use and visibility of Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking island communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plan contains corporate service aims to ensure the equal prominence of Gaelic in Scottish Government logos and branding, the prominence of Gaelic signage in Scottish Government offices, and commitments to use Gaelic in our public communications and corporate publications. Other Scottish Government agencies, such as Social Security Scotland, provide bilingual material relating to their services and discussions are ongoing with island-based Scottish Government offices to increase their Gaelic provision.</li> <li>A number of Gaelic development officers from different organisations are based in island communities with the aim of increasing the use and learning of Gaelic. To help organise their efforts a Gaelic Development Officers Network has been formed with support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>



Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with relevant authorities to improve Gaelic provision for Gaelic-speaking island communities in delivering their functions and services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gaelic Implementation Group established under the Scottish Government’s Gaelic Language Plan is an ongoing opportunity for officials across the Scottish Government to support Gaelic through their work. The Islands Team are represented on the Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support approaches that promote the sustainable management of the historic environment.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic Environment Scotland (HES) will continue to provide advice and funding to island projects and research initiatives.</li> <li>• HES is represented on the Islands Growth Deal Advisory Forum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 12 – Education

Promote and improve education for all throughout life

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Island Communities, UHI, Heriot Watt University, Robert Gordon University, Scotland’s Rural College, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, e-Sgoil, SDS, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant, local colleges, Young Scot, Creative Scotland, Youth Theatre Arts Scotland, Youth Scotland.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Work with UHI, the University of Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University and other education providers to ensure a broad range of options are available to young people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government will continue to engage with these institutions to ensure young people in island communities have access to a wide range of opportunities throughout the lifelong learning and skills system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support UHI as it deepens collaboration with island partners to promote learner pathways, innovation and industry/ employer engagement.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to engage with UHI to identify opportunities for joint work and pursue shared priorities emerging from UHI’s <a href="#">Islands Strategy</a> and the new National Islands Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure that young people are given the same opportunities to access education as young people on mainland Scotland.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education Scotland will continue to include island practitioners in groups and professional learning reviewing curriculum pathways and curriculum planning to continue to increase access to the curriculum for all children and young people.</li> <li>The Rural Skills Accelerator programme will include a mobile STEM Academy which will serve island and rural communities in Argyll and Bute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>Continue to support and promote Gaelic medium education at all levels.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to support the Northern Alliance working group for Gaelic.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government introduced the Scottish Languages Bill to the Scottish Parliament in November 2023. Among its aims is that of establishing a new strategic approach to Gaelic education.</li> <li>• HM Inspectors will continue to ensure that islands, and Gaelic language and education are sampled in inspection and review activities, to promote accountability, build capacity, share effective practice and inform policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The £2bn Learning Estate Investment Programme prioritises schools in need of updating, as identified by local authorities, to ensure rapid progress where most required and will benefit tens of thousands of pupils across Scotland.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government announced the 10 successful Learning Estate Investment Programme Phase 3 projects in October 2023. 47 projects have been selected to be supported through Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme, which includes at least one priority project from every island authority. The Scottish Government will continue to work with COSLA, local authorities and Scottish Futures Trust to explore how we can deliver further improvements in the school estate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Scotland will continue to collaborate with island authorities to improve educational outcomes of children living in poverty. Five Attainment Advisors work with local authority central staff and individual schools to continue to improve the use of data, identify need and develop appropriate interventions to close the poverty related attainment gap. Joint cross-island professional learning is taking place to develop skills in data use and how to make best use of the Pupil Equity Funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consider the needs of adult learners in our island communities as we develop our adult learning strategy for Scotland.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A report on the independent review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) was published in July 2024. We will continue to engage with adult learners in our island communities to identify how we can remove barriers to learning as we consider the recommendations from the independent review of CLD alongside COSLA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective: 13 – Implementation and Measurement of the National Islands Plan

Support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan

**Partners:** Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Island Communities, National Islands Plan Delivery Group, Islands Strategic Group.

Commitment	Action	Timescale
<p><b>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</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have developed and will continue to update a <a href="#">Scottish Islands Data Dashboard</a> to gather island-level data that can be used to inform impact assessments and monitor progress around the National Islands Plan strategic objectives.</li> <li>• The Scottish Islands Survey was carried out in 2023 and a <a href="#">report</a> was published in September 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Short Term</li> </ul>



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