**Draft Island Communities Impact Assessment**

# **Background**

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 defines an island community as a community that consists of two or more individuals, all of whom permanently inhabit an island (whether or not the same island), and is based on common interest, identity or geography (including in relation to any uninhabited islands whose natural environment and terrestrial, marine and associated ecosystems contribute to the natural or cultural heritage or economy of an inhabited island).

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 places a duty on the Scottish Ministers and other relevant authorities, including a number of public authorities, to have regard to island communities in exercising their functions. For the Scottish Ministers, this includes the development of legislation. This duty is often referred to as ‘island-proofing’.

An ICIA must align with the requirements of the Islands Act, namely to:

1. describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service (as the case may be) on island communities, and
2. assess the extent to which the authority considers that the policy, strategy or service (as the case may be) can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it

# **Objectives**

The Environment Strategy fulfils Ministers obligation under section 47 of the UK Withdrawal from the EU (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 to prepare and publish an environmental policy strategy, with section 47 also requiring Scottish Ministers to have due regard to the strategies when making policies, including proposals for legislation.

The [draft Environment Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670) sets out a holistic framework for delivering Scotland’s role in tackling the global crises of nature loss, climate change and pollution. The consultation draft of the Strategy can be found [here](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670). The draft Strategy brings together the Scottish Government’s existing policy response to tackling nature loss, climate change and pollution, highlighting the importance of carefully managing synergies and trade-offs across these goals. It builds on these existing policies by outlining new priorities and proposals. These focus, in particular, on opportunities for supporting the economic and societal changes needed to help tackle these global crises in ways that create wider benefits for Scotland – supporting green jobs and industries, improving people’s health, tackling poverty and promoting social justice.

It sets out steps for supporting and enabling these changes in ways that will transform our country for the better, improving the lives of people across Scotland. The Strategy is designed to capture the wealth of opportunities that transitioning to a green economy, and shifting towards sustainable lifestyles, will create for Scotland’s prosperity and wellbeing – boosting a wide range of green jobs and industries, improving people’s health, tackling poverty and promoting social justice. The draft Strategy we will also restore the natural capital that is the foundation of many sectors, especially in our rural and island economies, safeguarding their long-term productivity. The strategy will guide future policy development and set a clear direction for making more of our opportunities. It will help us to take better decisions for Scotland’s future, and to use new powers and freedoms to advance the wellbeing of people in Scotland.

*Vision and outcomes*

The draft Environment Strategy vision and outcomes are a statement of our objectives for protecting and improving the environment. The vision for the draft strategy begins by describing our 2045 vision for fulfilling our role in tackling the global crises of nature loss, climate change and pollution, helping to safeguard our shared planet for all life on Earth. We will harness the enormous opportunities this creates for Scotland to flourish as a fairer, greener and more prosperous nation.

The vision recognises that tackling these crises will depend on changes in Scotland’s economy and society. This, in turn, can help to transform Scotland for the better – for example by supporting green jobs and industries, supporting and enabling people and communities in Scotland to live sustainably – in ways that also tackle inequalities and poverty and create wider benefits for people’s health and wellbeing.

The draft Strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of everyone in Scotland. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that everyone can enjoy the life-supporting benefits the environment provides. This includes improving people’s health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and inequalities, and supporting jobs and businesses in the transition to net zero by 2045. To achieve the draft strategy’s vision, we have identified a set of outcomes that will contribute to this aim, these outcomes include:

* Scotland’s biodiversity is restored and regenerated
* We have ended Scotland’s contribution to climate change
* We minimise pollution and waste in our environment
* Scotland’s net zero, nature positive and circular economy thrives within the planet’s sustainable limits.

Two outcomes describe the positive transformations in our society and economy that will support these goals, while creating wider benefits for Scotland’s prosperity and wellbeing:

* Scotland’s society is transformed for the better by living sustainably, in harmony with nature.
* Scotland’s global environmental impact is sustainable.

The draft Strategy also sets out two cross-cutting outcomes, that inform policies across all of government, including:

* We build Scotland’s resilience to climate change and other global environmental risks.
* These transformations are achieved through a just transition and support climate and environmental justice.

The draft Strategy also presents high-level pathways for driving progress towards the outcomes. These pathways summarise key existing policies while also identifying proposals and priorities to guide future policy development across the breadth of government. The pathways are followed by a summary of arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress towards the outcomes, in order to guide improvements to our approach.

The Environment Strategy will sit alongside other existing high-level Scottish Government policy frameworks, including the Biodiversity Strategy, the Climate Change Plan, Scotland’s Economic Strategy and the National Planning Framework. The Strategy is an overarching framework for environmental policy, and promotes a whole of government approach to tackling the crises in climate and nature while promoting the sustainable prosperity of Scotland.

# **Data and stakeholders**

## **Evidence**

Our initial assessment is that the impact of the draft Environment Strategy will have not a have a more significant impact on island communities. However, there is evidence to suggest that island communities, as well as other areas in Scotland are likely to benefit from the proposals and priorities in the draft Strategy.

*Population*

The [2022 census data](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-fairer-scotland-budget-statement-2024-2025/pages/17/) shows that Scotland's population will age in every area to 2043, with the highest percentage reduction in children and the working age population in the islands and remote rural areas[[1]](#footnote-2), and Island communities tending to have an older population when compared to the rest of Scotland[[2]](#footnote-3). This makes those island communities more vulnerable to climate change. This is an issue because age is a factor which compounds vulnerability to climate change, and health issues that arise from poorer air quality due to a lack of access to green spaces and poor air quality[[3]](#footnote-4).

*Risks of climate change*

[The Scottish Islands Data Overview](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-islands-data-overview-2023/pages/1/) published in December 2023 found that the Scotland’s islands have become warmer and with sea levels projected to raise it could pose a significant risk for the islands in terms of flooding and contamination of freshwater. The publication also found that without significant reductions in the world's carbon emissions, the Scottish islands could see significant sea level rises.

*Access to greenspaces and waste*

The Scottish Islands Survey 2023[[4]](#footnote-5) found that those living in island communities are more likely to have green or blue outdoor space within a 5-minute walk than residents of Scotland as a whole. On the rates of recycling in island communities, Scottish island local authorities are generally lower[[5]](#footnote-6) when compared to the rest of Scotland. Additionally, every island local authority generally has a higher carbon impact from waste than the Scottish average.

The survey also found[[6]](#footnote-7) that island communities are generally very positive about their local environment, and find it easy to recycle waste but litter is a problem in some island regions and it is not always easy to dispose of bulky items. Most islanders (65%) agreed that their local environment is clean and litter free, however this varies amongst different islands with Shetland Outer Islands being most likely to report that their local area is clean and litter free (73%) and respondents in Arran, Bute and the Cumbraes are the least likely (53%).

*Energy*

Generally, every island Local Authority has a larger proportion of energy inefficient properties than the Scottish average[[7]](#footnote-8). This is likely to result in homes being more expensive to heat and increases the risk of fuel poverty, as well as increasing the use of fossil fuel to heat homes.

*Investment*

Projections show that over the next 10-15 years, the Highlands and Islands region stands to benefit from a generational investment of over £100bn[[8]](#footnote-9), driven by the generation, transmission and distribution of renewable energy.

## **Stakeholders**

In the preparation of the draft Environment Strategy, we have engaged with representatives from Island Councils and worked with colleagues across Scottish Government to identify whether there were any potential impacts the draft Strategy, and its associated priorities and actions could have on island communities.

We also welcome views from all representatives of island communities and other stakeholder groups during the consultation to help determine the impact of island communities from the Environment Strategy.

## **Consultation**

This draft Island Community Impact Assessment report has been produced to help inform the formal consultation for the draft Environment Strategy. We are aware that there may be other impacts, either positive or negative, which have not been identified. Following any feedback received during the consultation, this draft ICIA will be updated following the approach set out in the ICIA guidance.

The consultation on the [draft Environment Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670) will therefore help increase awareness of any opportunities/challenges that the Environment Strategy will bring to island communities in Scotland.

The consultation can be accessed via <https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/draft-environment-strategy/> with the consultation opening on 3 July and closing on 29 September.

# **Assessment**

## **Intended impacts/outcomes**

The draft Strategy brings together the Scottish Government’s existing policy response to tackling nature loss, climate change and pollution, highlighting the importance of carefully managing synergies and trade-offs across these goals. It builds on these existing policies by outlining new priorities and proposals. These focus, in particular, on opportunities for supporting the economic and societal changes needed to help tackle these global crises in ways that create wider benefits for Scotland – supporting green jobs and industries, improving people’s health, tackling poverty and promoting social justice.

For island economies, through the draft Strategy we will also restore the natural capital that is the foundation of many sectors, which will help safeguard their long-term productivity. We believe that the draft Strategy will have a direct effect on everyone in Scotland, including on island communities, by:

* improving people’s health and wellbeing,
* tackling poverty and inequalities, and
* supporting jobs and businesses in the transition to net zero by 2045.

## **Mitigations & Enhancement**

It is essential that there is an effective strategic management from planning to implementation of the actions identified in the draft Environment Strategy. The effective management of the actions will be the most influential enhancer of all positive impacts from the draft Strategy. When these actions are taken forward, it is important that island communities have the tools, resources and knowledge to take advantage of these policies to their full extent is also critical.

## **Determination**

*In your opinion, is the Adaptation Plan likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities)?*

We **do not** currently believe a full Islands Community Impact Assessment is required, as we do not believe that the positive, intended impacts of the Environment Strategy will have a significantly different effect on islands communities than what can be expected on the mainland. However, we are aware that there may be impacts, either positive or negative, which have not been identified. We will therefore review this assessment following any feedback received during the consultation. This will be updated following the approach set out in the ICIA guidance.

It is important to note that any priorities and actions identified in the outcome pathways that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on island communities and further Impact Assessments, including an ICIA, will be carried out where appropriate.

1. [Sub-National Population Projections | National Records of Scotland (nrscotland.gov.uk)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/sub-national-population-projections) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Annex B: Detailed Analysis by Portfolio - Scottish Budget 2024 to 2025: equality and fairer Scotland statement - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-fairer-scotland-budget-statement-2024-2025/pages/17/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Impacts of air pollution across the life course – evidence highlight note (london.gov.uk)](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Imperial%20College%20London%20Projects%20-%20impacts%20of%20air%20pollution%20across%20the%20life%20course%20%E2%80%93%20evidence%20highlight%20note.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Supporting documents - Scottish Islands Survey 2023: main findings report - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-islands-survey-2023-main-findings-report/documents/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Highlights - Scottish islands: data overview 2023 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-islands-data-overview-2023/pages/12/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [Scottish Islands Survey (2023) Main Findings Report](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2024/09/scottish-islands-survey-2023-main-findings-report/documents/scottish-islands-survey-2023-main-findings-report/scottish-islands-survey-2023-main-findings-report/govscot%3Adocument/scottish-islands-survey-2023-main-findings-report.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [10 Environment and Biosecurity - Scottish islands: data overview 2023 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-islands-data-overview-2023/pages/9/) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [workforce-north-a-shared-mission-to-grow-and-expand-our-workforce-april-2025.pdf](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/x1inshgw/workforce-north-a-shared-mission-to-grow-and-expand-our-workforce-april-2025.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)