

Agenda Item	15
Report No	SR/17/25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Skye & Raasay Committee 30 June 2025
Date: Islands (Scotland) Act 2018
Report Title: Allan Gunn Assistant Chief Executive
Report By: Corporate

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it relates to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2024/25

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the update and acknowledge the work that has taken place.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** No resource implications identified.
- 3.2 **Legal:** The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 is the overarching legislation that governs the actions in this report.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Islands, Poverty and Rural):** This report outlines positive benefits to Island communities.
- 3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** The section Carbon Neutral Islands outlines the approach being adopted in relation to Climate Change.
- 3.5 **Risk:** Nothing identified
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** No issues identified.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 gave a duty to Scottish Ministers to publish a National Islands Plan ([NIP](#)). This was published in December 2019 and consisted of 13 Strategic Objectives.
- 4.2 The Act requires that a review of the NIP should be conducted every five years, and this is ongoing with a new NIP expected in summer 2025.

- 4.3 Members of the Scottish Government's Islands Team spoke at the relevant Skye & Raasay Area Committee/business meetings about the proposals for the new National Islands Plan on 4 November 2024 and 17 February 2025
- 4.4 There are a number of groups involved in the delivery of the Islands Programme, and they are outlined in section 5 below.

5. Groups

- 5.1 **The Scottish Futures Trust**, established in 2018 by the Scottish Government, as a centre of infrastructure expertise, is involved in assisting the Islands Programme
- 5.2 **Inspiring Scotland** was formed in 2008 with the intention of tackling some of the long-term, entrenched social problems faced by Scotland's people and communities. They work with people, communities, charities, and public bodies to develop solutions to some of the deepest social problems. They have previously worked with Island Communities.
- 5.3 **The National Islands Plan Delivery Group (NIPDG)**. The key remit of the NIPDG is to ensure close monitoring of the delivery of the NIP and accompanying Implementation Route Map to help identify critical priorities and provide advice and input on key areas as Scottish Government works towards meeting the commitments in the NIP.
- 5.4 **The Islands Strategic Group (ISG)**. The role of Programme Board for the Islands Programme will rest with the ISG. It brings strategic expertise to ensure that the Islands Programme delivers against the high-level objectives set out in the NIP. The Chief Executive and Leader usually attend. Meets twice a year.
- 5.5 **The Islands Strategic Group Senior Officer Group (SOG)**. This met for the first time in August 2022 and the intention is to support any actions arising from the ISG and assist in preparing the agenda and papers for the ISG.
- 5.6 **Young Islanders Network (YIN)**. The NIP commits to creating a Young Islanders Network constituted by young people from all Scottish islands that will have a consultative role in the implementation of the National Islands Plan to ensure that the delivery of the Plan fully considers the interests and priorities of young people. Youth Scotland are supporting project delivery, and more information can be found [here](#). Highland currently does not have representatives on the YIN but did so previously.
- 5.7 **The Rural and Islands Communities Team** are part of the Scottish Government and have oversight and ultimate ownership. They report to Mairi Gougeon the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands.

6 Funding Streams 2024/25

- 6.1 The 2024/25 Islands Programme funding streams, allocated to Highland, are listed below.
- 6.2 On 24 May 2024 a package for Scotland's island communities was announced by the First Minister John Swinney which was broken down as follows:
- Islands Programme Capital Fund. £3 million to support locally designed critical island infrastructure projects. This was a competitive process, and assistance was provided by the Scottish Futures Trust who worked with local authorities

- Islands Programme Resource Fund. £1.5 million divided with £1 million going to the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund and £500,000 split between various other initiatives such as the Young Islanders Network.
 - The £1 million for the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund was split between the six island local authorities based on population. Local authorities did not need to apply.
 - Carbon Neutral Islands received £1.3 million (see section 7).
- 6.3 On 7 October 2024 the following projects in Highland were confirmed as successful
- Community and Public Access Improvements (road widening): £350,000 (Grant offer sent 1 November 2024)
 - Claggan Road
 - Neist Point
 - Glen Brittle
 - Staffin Harbour: £409,258 (Grant offer letter sent 4 November 2024)
- 6.4 The South Skye Community Campus application was unsuccessful at this time.

7 Carbon Neutral Islands

- 7.1 Raasay is the nominated carbon neutral island (CNI) within Highland and £1.3 million in capital funding, was made available across all 6 carbon neutral islands. £1 million of the total fund was opened up to competitive funding with local authorities acting as lead applicants.
- 7.2 The remaining £300,000 was divided equally to the 6 existing CNI's which meant Raasay received £50,000 capital to continue the implementation of their Community Climate Change Action Plans.
- 7.3 An additional £900,000 in resource funding was allocated to continue the implementation of the Carbon Neutral Project, including the retention of the Community Development Officers to support the work on the ground.
- 7.4 On 15 October 2024 Highland Council received notification that they were successful under the Carbon Neutral Islands Capital Fund.
- No. 3, 21 and 35 Inverarish Terrace, Raasay - £251,633
 - Habitat Restoration, Raasay - £75,000
- 7.5 This information was [confirmed](#) by the Scottish Government on 22 November 2024 alongside a [CNI progress report](#).

8 Island Communities Impact Assessments

- 8.1 The Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) is designed to improve outcomes for Island communities in meaningful ways and is a requirement of the Islands (Scotland) Act. An ICIA is required for any new or reviewed policy, strategy, or service, which is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities. An initial screening exercise will determine whether or not a full ICIA is required.
- 8.2 ICIA's are now embedded within Highland Council Integrated Impact Assessment (alongside Children's Rights & Wellbeing, Climate Change, Data Protection, Equalities,

Poverty, and Human Rights and Mainland Rural) and since the go live date on 1 July 2024 over 220 screenings have now taken place

9 Future Funding

- 9.1 On 6 May 2025 Marie Gougeon MSP Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform, and Islands wrote to Highland Council about the funding package for all of Scotland's islands for the financial year 2025-26. This covers:
- Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund - total £1 million to be distributed on a population basis through the General Revenue Grant. Highland with an islands' population of 11,022 will receive £107,000 (confirmed in a letter to the Director of Finance on 15 May 2025)
 - The Islands Programme – total £5.3 million capital reopened for applications with guidance distributed on 13 May 2025. This is available for infrastructure projects co-designed with island communities.
 - Carbon Neutral Islands – total £1.4 million capital fund.
- 9.2 The deadline for applications to both the Islands Programme and Carbon Neutral Islands Fund is 22 July 2025.

Designation: Policy Officer

Date: 19.05.2025

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