

Agenda Item	5
Report No	LA/9/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber

Date: 16 May 2023

Report Title: Implementation of Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – Annual Report

Report By: Deputy Chief Executive

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provide an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it relates to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2022/23.

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, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - 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** – No implications identified.

3.6 **Gaelic** – No implications identified.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 gave a duty to Scottish Ministers to publish a National Islands Plan ([NIP](#)) with the latest iteration appearing on 27 December 2019. A detailed Implementation Route Map ([IRM](#)), that addresses each of the 13 Strategic Objectives and accompanying commitments listed in the NIP, covers the 2020 – 2025 timeframe. This was refreshed on 26 September 2022.
- 4.2 The Islands Programme which supports the delivery of the National Islands Plan represents £30m of investment over the 5-year period
- 4.3 There are a number of groups involved in the delivery of the Islands Programme and they are outlined in section 5 below.

5 Islands Groups

- 5.1 The National Islands Plan Delivery Group - The key remit of this group is to ensure close monitoring of the delivery of the National Islands Plan and accompanying IRM to help identify critical priorities and provide advice and input on key areas as Scottish Government works towards meeting the commitments in the National Islands Plan.
- 5.2 The Islands Strategic Group - This group undertakes the role of Programme Board for the Islands Programme will rest with the Islands Strategic Group. It brings strategic expertise to ensure that the Islands Programme delivers against the high-level objectives set out in the Implementation Route Map. This group meets quarterly (March, June, September, and December) and is supported by the Islands Strategic Group Senior Officer Group.
- 5.3 Young Islanders Network. The National Islands Plan 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](#). The expected focus will be on Carbon Neutral Islands.
- 5.4 The Scottish Futures Trust established in 2018 by the Scottish Government, as a centre of infrastructure expertise, is involved in shaping future funding relating to the Islands Infrastructure Fund (see 6.2 and 11.1). Any monies received are required to be spent in current financial year and the policy around this will take shape in consultation with the ISG and the NIPDG.
- 5.5 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 a role in distributing funding streams such as the Islands Communities Fund and Healthy Islands Programme in the 2021/22 programme.
- 5.6 The Rural and Islands Communities Team – They 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 2022/23

- 6.1 The 2022/23 Islands Programme funding streams, allocated to Highland, are detailed below:-
- 6.2 The Islands Infrastructure Fund allocated £4m across the six Island Local Authorities. A ceiling of five applications per local authority was set and there was no financial limit per application. Following a competitive process Highland was successful with two bids:-
- The Old Man of Storr, Isle of Skye - £440,000
 - provision of a retail/visitor unit on-site
 - provision of EV charging points
 - digitisation
 - Old Surgery – Housing Enablement Project, Eigg - £72,000
 - provide a new, robust water supply through a borehole
 - establish an electrical supply
 - demolition, site clearance and access track creation
- 6.3 A £40,000 revenue funding allocation was also made available to support the National Islands Plan strategic objective 11 that covers arts, culture and language. Highland's proposal was around the Angus Og archive based in Skye which was successful and £40,000 was awarded to Highlife Highland on 22 June 2022.
- 6.4 The Scottish Government's Emergency Budget Review on 2 November 2022 announced an Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund to the value of £1.4m across the six Island Local Authorities. The purpose of this investment was to target support to islands communities and households facing additional challenges due to the current cost crisis enables local authorities to identify and support those most vulnerable and in need within their communities. The funding was allocated on a population formula with Highland Council being awarded £147,000 comprising of £115,000 revenue and £32,000 capital.
- 6.5 The money from the Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund was allocated as follows:
- Glendale Community Hall Association - £10,146.22
 - Hall Flood Defence Measure Upgrade & Hall Maintenance capital to enable a community warm hub to be open to help alleviate the cost of living.
 - Skye and Raasay cost-of-living payment - £113,000
 - Revenue funding for eligible residents equating to £155.00 per household (approx. 694 households)
 - Isle of Canna Community Shop storage shed - £10,000
 - Capital funding for connection of electricity supply and freezer storage which will enable bulk purchasing of goods at more competitive pricing which will be passed on to local residents at point of sale.
 - Isle of Muck replacement back-up generator - £11,853
 - Island is predominantly running on renewable energy, but this capital funding will allow for replacement of single back-up generator and will offer affordable electricity for island residents.

- Small Isles cost-of-living payment - £1,860.
 - Revenue funding for eligible residents equating to £155.00 per household (approx. 12 households).

7 Island Workstreams

- 7.1 Islands Bond - There was £5m allocated for the Islands Bond which was to be split into funding of up to £50k for up to 100 households to provide financial support for island residents to remain or to encourage people to move there. However, following public consultation, several face-to-face meetings and workshops, a decision was made by the Scottish Government on 19 August 2022 not to proceed. In essence there was an even split of those in favour and those against, but the Island respondents did not support the Islands Bond. Further information on this can be found [here](#).
- 7.2 The Scottish Government advised that the learnings and suggestions gathered through this consultation will inform the action plan around depopulation.
- 7.3 Carbon Neutral Islands - The 2021/22 Programme for Government stated that the Scottish Government would identify at least three Islands to progress towards becoming fully carbon neutral by 2040 but this was increased to six islands at COP26. The Islands [chosen](#) were Hoy, Islay, Great Cumbrae, Raasay, Barra and Yell.
- 7.4 A Project Progress Report was [published](#) in January 2023 outlining the implementation strategy to include carbon audits, climate change action plans and climate change investment strategies. The project will also align with the Scotland wide net zero work and contribute to the Scottish Government's 2045 net zero commitment. The Carbon Neutral Islands project aims to share good practices and learnings from the project with all other Scottish islands. £3m is committed to help to deliver the project.
- 7.5 Scottish Islands Passport Project - The [Scottish Islands Passport](#) scheme is a marketing initiative to encourage people to visit more of Scotland's inhabited islands. Led by HITRANS, the passport is both digital and hard copy. Project manager(s) appointed November 2019 and based on Jura. Cooperation with Islands Team but responsibility lies with Scottish Government Tourist Team. Product now live online as an app and some locations have a physical passport. Formally launched in April 2022.
- 7.6 Action Plan to Address Depopulation - The Scottish Government are committed to developing a strategic plan concerning depopulation across Scotland that will consider rural, island and urban Scotland. As part of this, they are looking to develop a work stream aimed at providing the policy framework to enable population retention and repopulation across rural and island communities, delivering on commitments within the National Islands Plan.
- 7.7 The exact structure and focus of the plan is still to be agreed and would expect this to be developed over the next 12 months with a view to producing a draft in winter 2023. The learnings and suggestions gathered through the Islands Bond consultation and workshops will be utilised in shaping a range of Practical Policy Tests to inform the 'Addressing Depopulation Action Plan'.
- 7.8 Whilst not specifically Island related £20,000 was allocated to Highland Council in February 2023 for a Childcare Practical Policy Test Project Proposal to explore the gaps in existing limited childcare options within the Kinlochbervie ASG encompassing Kinlochbervie, Durness and Scourie.

8 Future Funding

8.1 Island Infrastructure Fund

The Scottish Government Island Infrastructure Fund (IIF) is currently seeking applications from Local Authorities with Island communities. Highland Council were notified of this in early February with the deadline for submissions the 21/04/23. The funding available nationally this year is reduced to £4m and therefore the expectation is that the funding round will be oversubscribed and competitive.

8.2 There are two eligible areas in Highland that can submit applications – Lochaber and Isle of Skye and Raasay. Taking account of the reduced funding available and following local engagement on potential projects ready to proceed, it was decided to submit two applications by the deadline of 21 April, one for Lochaber and one for Isle of Skye and Raasay.

8.3 The projects identified for submission are ready to start within the required timescales of IIF and align with local identified priorities. The two applications submitted were the Canna Hub project and Skye & Raasay Roads Infrastructure Programme. Given the requirement to submit the applications by the deadline of 21 April, the Economy and Infrastructure Committee were asked to agree to homologate the decision to submit these applications.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 21 April 2023

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