

**Islands Strategic Group
Room Q1.04 Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh
Thursday 04 October 2018 (13:00-15:00)**

NATIONAL ISLAND PLAN DISCUSSION PAPER

Sections 3 to 6 of the Act places a duty on the Scottish Ministers to prepare, lay before the Scottish Parliament and publish a 'National Islands Plan'. The Plan must set out the main objectives and strategy of the Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities.

The Plan will provide a framework for reporting on the work the Scottish Government and its agencies is taking forward across a wide range of key policy areas to help sustain and support all of Scotland's island communities.

This is now a key piece of work that requires input from the relevant local authorities to establish the key consultation questions and the consultees over and above those included in the schedule of the Act.

As defined in the Act, the purpose of the Plan will be to set out the main objectives and strategy of Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities that result from, or are contributed to by, the carrying out of functions of a public nature.

The National Island Plan will provide an agreed strategic direction, not only for the Scottish Government, but for all Scottish public authorities that have an interest in improving outcomes for island communities. The plan will seek to focus resources and, where necessary, provide targets for key areas of activity.

Timescales and Consultation

The Act provides that the first Plan must be laid before the Scottish Parliament within 12 months from the date on which that section of the Act comes into force – 04 October 2019. Scottish Ministers would then be able to review the Plan at any time but they must begin a review of the Plan before the end of five years from the date the last Plan was published.

Scottish Ministers must consult people and communities in the islands and those who will likely be affected by the proposals in the plan. Scottish Ministers must lay a proposed Plan before the Parliament and then publish it after parliamentary consideration.

Scottish Ministers must also prepare and publish a National Islands Plan Progress Report on an annual basis following the publication of a new or revised plan. The Progress Report must provide an update on the progress towards achieving improved outcomes for island communities and any other information Scottish Ministers consider appropriate.

The progress report must also provide information on activity to meet the duty to have regard to island communities (island-proofing) that has occurred over the previous year.

The progress report must be laid before the Parliament by Scottish Ministers and then published.

Potential Structure/Content

In considering the model for the plan, thought needs to be given specifically to structure and content. On structure, this may take the form of a policy subject based approach similar in nature to the British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan. Alternatively, the structure could be linked in some way to an existing model such as the National Performance Framework (**see Annex i**).

Alternatively, a themed approach could be used, similar to that for the **'Empowering Scotland's Island Communities Prospectus'**. This used three key headings of:

- *'Promoting Islands Voice'*;
- *'Harnessing Islands Potential'*; and
- *'Enhancing Islands Wellbeing'*

It was these headings that were also used to form the structure of the **'Empowering Scotland's Island Communities Update'** publication which was issued in March 2016.

The anticipation is that the plan would cover all key policy areas falling under the responsibility of Scottish Ministers. It would also incorporate relevant commitments from the Empowering Scotland's Island Communities Prospectus; Manifestos; Programme for Government; and other new and existing policy initiatives.

During the 2015 consultation, structure and content were key areas commented on. While a number of the areas raised have been addressed in the Act, **Annex ii** contains an extract from the consultation analysis by way of background.
<https://consult.gov.scot/islands-team/islands-bill-consultation/>

A number of plans and strategies already exist that could be looked at in the development model for the National Islands Plan:

- **The National Gaelic Language Plan** – sets out the strategy for promoting, and facilitating the promotion of, the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, and Gaelic education and Gaelic culture;
- **British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan** - framed around ten long term goals relating to public services as a whole - early years; school education; post-school education; employment; Health, mental health and social care; transport; culture, leisure, sport and the arts; justice; and democracy. This plan covers 2017-2023 and sets out more than fifty actions to be taken during that six year period.
- **National Planning Framework (NPF)** - sets the context for development planning in Scotland and provides a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole. Key outcomes include economic growth and regeneration; sustainable and well-designed places; a reduction in carbon emissions; supporting better transport and digital connectivity; and protecting and enhancing our natural cultural assets for sustainable use.
- **National Transport Strategy (NTS)** - sets the long term vision for our transport policies.

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

- Introduced in 2007 and refreshed in 2011 and 2016, the National Performance Framework (NPF) sets out **a vision for national wellbeing in Scotland** and measures achievement in relation to this.
- The new NPF was launched on 11 June 2018 by the FM, in partnership with COSLA, following an extensive open review process. The NPF is underpinned by statute (the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015).
- A wide range of indicators are used to assess progress towards the Purpose and National Outcomes. These provide a broad measure of national wellbeing, incorporating a range of economic, social and environmental indicators.
- Performance is reported on **a new NPF website** (<http://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>) which is updated as soon as new data become available. It includes performance on equality groups and area based inequalities. The new website is easier to navigate, more interactive, and more effective and meaningful in terms of how data is presented.
- An annual Performance Update is published alongside the budget so that the Scottish Parliament can scrutinise Scotland’s progress towards the outcomes

The key components of the NPF:

- **Our Purpose** sets out the direction and ambition for Scotland
- **Our Values** describe the underpinning principles that we share as a nation
- **11 National Outcomes** describe what we want to achieve and the kind of Scotland we want to see
- **81 National Indicators** enable us to track progress towards the Purpose and the National Outcomes.

Purpose of recent review:

- Following the introduction of the **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**, Scottish Ministers now have a duty to consult on, develop and publish a new set of National Outcomes for Scotland and **to review them at least every five years**. The recent review of the NPF was undertaken in response to this legislation.
- The Scottish Government conducted a series of **public, expert and internal consultation exercises** in 2017-18 with the help from partner organisations and key stakeholders, including the Carnegie UK Trust, Oxfam Scotland and the



Children's Parliament. The significant changes to the National Outcomes have also led to a **review of the overall framework**, including the National Indicator set and overarching Purpose.

- The review aimed **to identify a set of National Outcomes which better reflects the values and aspirations of the public, expert stakeholders and Ministers**, and also improves **alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other frameworks**, It also aimed to simplify the language and look of the framework, creating an overall framework which is meaningful, accessible and appealing. It should also allow better tracking of progress in reducing inequalities, promoting equality, and encouraging preventative approaches.

Extract from Island Bill pre-consultation results (March 2016)

<https://consult.gov.scot/islands-team/islands-bill-consultation/>

Island-proofing

There was a high level of support for the Scottish Government to consider placing the concept of island-proofing in legislation through the proposed Islands Bill. Almost all (91%) of those who expressed views believed that this should be done.

Among the perceived benefits of, or reasons for a need for island-proofing, three common themes emerged, which were:

The existence of specific issues impacting on islands (e.g. isolation; remoteness; environment and climate issues; and population issues).

The need for a tailored approach to legislation, policy and services (rather than “one size fits all”).

Other benefits of island-proofing (e.g. more: joint working; equality; understanding of island issues; sustainability, accountability; empowerment; consistency with European provision; efficient use of resources; and economic benefits).

A small number of respondents mentioned drawbacks of island-proofing, which focused on a perceived lack of need for this, disagreement with the overall principle and concerns about potential negative consequences.

There was also a high level of support for Scottish Ministers to have the power to issue statutory guidance to other relevant public bodies related to island-proofing.

Almost all (98%) of those who expressed their views on this believed this should be the case.

When respondents were asked to identify which public bodies and decisions the statutory guidance should relate to, a very common theme was that all public bodies and / or all of their decisions should be covered by this. A number of public bodies and decisions in particular policy areas were also highlighted. These policy areas were:

- Communications.
- Community safety.
- Economic development and planning.
- Education, arts and culture.
- Employment and benefits.
- Energy and power.
- Environment and tourism.
- Finance.
- Health and social care.
- Housing and building.
- Transport.
- Waste management.

Within these, many topics for inclusion were mentioned, as were specific public bodies that should be covered.

A number of additional suggestions were made for the policy of island-proofing to cover, including that it should take account of the need to consider all aspects of island life, and the impact of specific issues.

Many comments were made about the overall approach that should be taken to island-proofing, such as that it should be embedded in the decision-making process, and promote: equality; diversity; flexibility and proportionality; responsiveness and meaningful action; community empowerment; joint working; transparency and accountability.

Some suggestions were also made about types of issues to be covered in the statutory guidance or other issues for consideration in taking this forward (e.g. clarification of terminology; extension of the focus of the Bill to include other remote and rural areas; and the need for monitoring, scrutiny, challenge and review of policy and decisions).

A National Islands Plan

There was a high level of support for the Scottish Government to introduce a National Islands Plan. A large majority (85%) of those who expressed views of this believed that such a Plan should be introduced.

Among the perceived benefits of, and reasons for a National Islands Plan, common themes were:

- Generally positive views of such a development (including examples of other successful plans).
- The potential to address issues facing island communities (as well as to keep a focus on these, and tackle changing needs).
- The provision of a structure and clarity (e.g. a framework for identifying goals, objectives, actions and responsibilities; and enabling monitoring, review and accountability).

A small number of respondents identified drawbacks, or reasons why there should not, in their view, be a National Islands Plan. The most common theme was that islands should be empowered to make their own decisions. A few disagreed with the overall principle, or expressed concerns about potential negative consequences of a Plan.

Three main areas were identified for a Plan to cover and report on:

- Overall challenges affecting island areas (particularly population, overall sustainability and service delivery issues).
- Specific policy areas (the same as those identified for coverage by the statutory guidance).
- The general coverage and approach of the Plan (e.g. to cover and report on: all relevant areas, bodies and proposals; measures and activities; empowerment and inclusion; and equality).

Many respondents commented on what they saw as additional requirements for a National Islands Plan (e.g. that it should recognise the overall context and existing work; that local communities and relevant organisations should be involved in preparing and

monitoring it; and that there should be mechanisms for accountability, reporting and review).

The most commonly suggested lifespan for a National Islands Plan was five years, although other suggestions were made (particularly three years, and over five years). Among the perceived benefits of a five-year period were that it would align with the timescales for parliamentary and political cycles, other local plans and strategies. It would also allow time for strategies to be put in place, and for monitoring and reporting.

The Consultation Questions

Question 1: Is the concept of “island-proofing” something the Scottish Government should consider placing in legislation through the proposed Islands Bill Yes/No? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 2: If you answered „Yes“ to question 1, do you agree that Scottish Ministers should have the power to issue statutory guidance to other relevant public bodies related to island-proofing which they would be required to adhere to in exercising their functions and duties Yes/No

Question 3: If you answered „Yes“ to question 2, please state which public bodies, and what specific decisions you think this statutory guidance should relate to?

Question 4: Are there any other areas that you feel the policy of island-proofing should cover?

Question 5: Do you agree that the current powers Island Councils, and Councils with Island responsibilities presently have are sufficient to deliver positive outcomes for their local island communities Yes/No?

Question 6: If you answered „No“ to question 5, please outline what additional powers you feel they require to benefit or better protect the island communities they serve, and explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 7: Do you feel there is a requirement to make any additions to the existing Zetland and Orkney County Council Acts of 1974 Yes/No? If „Yes“ please state what additions should be made and give the reasons for your answer.

Question 8: Should any of the powers currently set out in the Zetland and Orkney County Council Acts of 1974 be extended to the Western Isles and other relevant Councils Yes/No? If „Yes“ please explain which powers and give the reasons for your answer.

Question 9: Do you think the Scottish Government should introduce a „National Islands Plan“ Yes/No? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 10: Are there any specific areas you feel the plan should cover and report on?

Question 11: If such a plan was introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate life span for the plan – e.g. 3 years/5 years/other?

Question 12: Do you agree that statutory protection should be given to the Na h-Eileanan an Iar Scottish parliamentary constituency Yes/No? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 13: Should the Scottish Government consider amending the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 to allow the LGBCS the power to make an exception to the usual 3 or 4 member ward rule for use with respect to populated islands Yes/No? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 14: Please provide details of any additional issues, not addressed in your other responses, that you think should be considered in relation to the introduction of a future Islands Bill and its potential provisions.