



Island Communities Impact Assessment of Strategic Plan 2020-23 – Screening

Name of policy

Scottish Land Commission Strategic Plan 2020-23

Background

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 places a duty on a number of public authorities, to have regard to island communities in exercising their functions. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the [National Islands Plan](#) lists the following areas that are relevant considerations for islands and island communities:

- Population Levels
- Sustainable Economic Development
- Transport
- Housing
- Fuel Poverty
- Digital Connectivity
- Health, Social Care and Well-being
- Environmental Wellbeing and Biosecurity
- Climate Change and Energy
- Empowered Island Communities and Strong Local Partnership
- Arts, Culture and Language
- Education.

The National Island Plan, published in December 2019, lists the Scottish Land Commission as a relevant public authority for the duties in relation to island communities (introduced by section 7(2) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018). Although there is no specific requirement in place yet to assess the impact of policies or practices on island communities, the principles are useful in paying due regard to the needs of the duty.

The Scottish Land Commission's Strategic Plan 2020-23 sets out the organisation's policy position and the direction of the land reform programme over the next three years. The plan considers a number of the above areas such as sustainable economic development, housing, climate change and empowered island communities. For that reason, an assessment is needed to determine whether it requires an Island Communities Impact Assessment.

Assessing impact

At the time of drafting the plan, there has been no guidance published by the Scottish Government outlining how assessments or screening should be carried out. To actively consider how our strategic plan will meet the requirements of the duty this screening is based on similar assessments made by the Scottish Government and other public bodies which are available on their website. We are also consulting with Scottish Government on the assessment.

Overview of the strategic plan

The vision of the strategic plan is ‘a fair, inclusive and productive system of ownership, management and use of land that delivers greater benefit for all the people of Scotland’. To help achieve this there are three outcomes the plan is working towards:

- Scotland’s land is owned and used in ways that are fair, responsible and productive
- More of Scotland’s people are able to influence and benefit from decisions about land
- The way we own and use Scotland’s land is creating public value and economic wellbeing.

The outcomes contribute to the Scottish Government’s [National Performance Framework](#) and the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The plan focuses on three areas to achieve the outcomes:

- Reforming land rights – reforming the governance of land rights and ownership to drive community and economic resilience, productivity and reduce inequalities
- Embedding responsible land ownership and use – embedding accountability and promoting responsible approaches to land ownership and use.
- Reforming land markets – the ways in which the value and benefits of land are created and shared to support a fair and productive economy.

The plan sets out how the Commission will deliver the outcomes through combining leadership and non-regulatory culture change with statutory functions to review and advise on legislative and policy change.

Our core values underpin the work of the Commission and the strategic plan:

- Integrity – We work for and are accountable to the people of Scotland
- Challenge – We challenge ourselves and others to lead change
- Innovation – We develop ambitious and progressive thinking
- Empowerment – We motivate ourselves and others to realise Scotland’s ambitions through land reform.

Development of the strategic plan

In preparation of the strategic plan the Commission undertook extensive external engagement. The engagement process looked at the key land issues for stakeholders which helped develop the priorities. The strategic plan was also discussed at the public meetings the Commission held across Scotland, including island communities such as Jura, Islay, Bute and Arran, with members of the public invited to comment. The discussions focussed on land ownership and the balance of power between landowners and the communities living on the land including access to housing, increased land values and engagement in decisions related to change in land use. These have been similar themes discussed at meetings across Scotland, particularly in rural areas, and effect many communities. The effect is not significantly different from island communities to other communities.

A specific piece of engagement took place with young people to feed their priorities for land reform into the plan. A number of workshops took place with young people in both urban and rural environments including Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. During this engagement period the main point raised was in relation to broadening the audience to ensure a diverse range of opinions is taken into account, including that of island communities.

Impact of the strategic plan on island communities

The role of land and land reform in addressing inequality runs throughout the plan with the focus on land being owned and used in a fair way to benefit all of the people of Scotland, including island communities.

The strategic plan is a high-level document setting out the Commission's outcomes and activities for 2020-2023; the plan is supported by a programme of work which outlines the priority areas of work over the three-year period. The plan does not provide the detail of how these outcomes and activities are delivered.

In line with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 the Scottish Land Commission must have regard to the [land rights and responsibilities statement](#). The first principle of the statement is:

'The overall framework of land rights, responsibilities and public policies should promote, fulfil and respect relevant human rights in relation to land, contribute to public interest and wellbeing, and balance public and private interests. The framework should support sustainable economic development, protect and enhance the environment, help achieve social justice and build a fairer society. Some of the most important commitments deal with human rights and with themes such as equality, dignity and social justice'

The plan gives specific regard to:

- Reforming land rights to develop policy proposals to stimulate a more diverse and productive pattern of land ownership
- Review new governance models that widen the range of people benefitting from land rights and stimulate greater productivity
- Broaden the participation in land use decision making and review ways to further embed land rights and responsibilities in public policy and in responsible business conduct across all relevant sectors
- To support a better functioning system of agricultural tenure through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner
- To review ways in which land markets can operate more effectively in the public interest with more people benefitting
- Emphasis on the Commission being an open and accessible public facing organisation, and to work in a collaborative way with strong networks across stakeholders
- The plan recognises the evolution of the Commission and our organisational structure to create a culture of shared leadership and responsibility.

A key focus of the plan is reforming land rights which in some island communities can have considerable impact on the way land is managed and made available. The plan also seeks to promote diversity in land ownership and diversity in participation in making decisions about land use across all of Scotland, both urban and rural.

Conclusion

Following the above assessment we believe that the effect of the plan on island communities is not significantly different to that on other communities and do not believe that an Island Communities Impact Assessment is required.

We will consider the need for an Island Community Impact Assessment for any new policies or strategies that are developed during the implementation of the Strategic Plan.