

Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 - Annual Reporting Return Template

Name of Relevant Authority:	Shetland Islands Council
Reporting Period:	April 2024 - March 2025

Please describe how your organisation has had regard to island communities in carrying out its functions.

Raising Awareness of Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs)

The Community Planning and Development Service continued to raise awareness and support to enable the Council to meet its statutory duties of the Islands (Scotland) Act by:

- Sharing a news item on the Council's intranet, highlighting that the 2023-24 annual report had been published. The article included a summary of the work being done to address the unique needs of island communities, as well as linking to completed ICIAs. The article also linked to guidance on completing ICIAs which is available on the intranet's Impact Assessment page.
- A survey to all managers to inform support and monitor success had the following findings:
 - 93% had heard of ICIAs and 36% had completed one, an increase from last year's 80% and 20% respectively. 57% of respondents would know where to find everything they need in order to complete one, similar to last year's 60%.
 - 35% of respondents were not confident in completing an ICIA, compared to 60% last year.
 - Some qualitative feedback was provided which will be useful to inform further promotion of ICIAs.

Some examples of having regard to island communities are outlined below.

Islands with Small Populations Second Locality Plan

Shetland Partnership's Second Locality Plan was published and signed off in 2023. Over the last financial year, the Community Handyperson role has been redesigned, with a greater number of services from across the Council able to use the role to support service delivery within Fetlar. This integration of Council maintenance roles will provide improvements for the community, whilst also potentially saving staff time to travel to the isle. This role will be evaluated, with the potential to roll out, in part, to other remote islands across Shetland.

Another successful event was held, bringing the remote island communities together, to discuss Eco-Tourism and to ensure that the Council and Shetland's Climate Change Strategy were island proofed. All senior managers attended a network lunch, which also included the Government's Islands Team lead.

Community Work – Support to Bring about Change

Community Workers in the Council's Community Development team continue to support island communities to identify local needs and take action to bring about change. This includes but is not limited to support to deliver the Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan. The programme of Community Winter Pop-Ins, delivered between November and March, again included our small islands. Community Work delivered a series of safe, warm spaces where people could get a free hot drink and food, keep warm, meet other people, and access cost of living support and signposting. These took place all over Shetland, including many islands such as Whalsay, Skerries, Yell, Unst, Fetlar, Papa Stour, Foula and Bressay. All islands are visited regularly by Community Workers through the year, and often bring the whole community together to meet with partner agencies and discuss local issues.

Inter-island Transport Connectivity Programme - Engagement

This programme is looking at future transport connectivity options between Shetland's islands. A survey took place in December, followed by public drop-in sessions during March in Bressay, Unst, Yell, Fetlar, and Whalsay (for Whalsay and Skerries). Online workshops were also held with Foula and Papa Stour communities. Additional engagement took place with young people with support from the Council's Youth Services Team - this included a session with Shetland Youth Voice and meeting Shetland's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. A separate engagement exercise took place through a series of in-depth interviews with some of the islands' key businesses and industry bodies.

All of this helps to inform the Case for Change, which is part of the Network Strategy Strategic Business Case due to be presented to Shetland Islands Council before summer 2025.

Drop in Events to Promote Business Support

The Economic Development Service raised awareness of the support available to local businesses through a series of drop in events in November. The service has a range of tools and mechanisms to help guide and finance business, voluntary and community developments including free advisory and information services. Six of the 14 events in November took place in islands throughout Shetland, ensuring that island communities were integral to the events.

Sport & Leisure Services Kit for All in Partnership with Community Work

Following an Outdoor Clothing Swap Shop organised by the Council and RSPB, leftover outdoor clothes were taken to Pop Ins carried out by Community Workers, ensuring that those in more rural and island communities could also access free outdoor wear. The Swap Shop aimed to break down barriers to experiencing nature and encourage physical activity during winter by redistributing outdoor clothing. There is already a strong relationship between the Active Schools Team and the Community Development team with Kit for All being available at most of the Winter Pop Ins. Kit for All aims to remove barriers and increase accessibility to physical activity by facilitating donation and collection of sports and outdoor wear to those who feel they need it. The initiative is open to anyone in Shetland and is entirely voluntary but promoted through partners and front-line services in order to

meet people's needs best. Through joint working, clothing has been made available to those across Shetland including islands.

Support for Island Infrastructure

Funding was secured by the Economic Development Service for two projects under the 2024/25 Scottish Government Islands Programme. These were the Fair Isle Bird Observatory (£204,895) and Papa Stour Kirk Phase 3 (£277,665).

The Fair Isle Bird Observatory project focused on a completion of the rebuild of the bird observatory and visitor accommodation to enable the facility to re-open in May 2025 - the observatory is key to Fair Isle's ongoing economic survival and sustainability, particularly for the provision of visitor accommodation. The Papa Stour Kirk project is the final part of a 3-phase project to create a community hub and visitor interpretive centre as well as retaining its use as a kirk - it is the only available community building on the island.

Please provide a list of policies, strategies or services for which your organisation has completed a Section 10 assessment Island Communities Impact Assessment.

In the last financial year these have been completed for:

- Skeld School Mothballing (reported last year)
- Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project
- Shetland School Transport Policy
- Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-2027
- Local Heat and Energy Strategy
- Shetland Tree and Woodland Strategy
- Community Council Scheme Review

What other steps has your organisation taken for those policies for which an ICIA was not required (under the section 10(b)(ii) assessment).

The Council continues to raise the need to think about islands differently. The work of the Locality Plan and Locality Profiles ensures that information is regularly shared. This helps officers and Councillors, when developing and approving policy.

From the list above, none required a full ICIA. The Skeld Mothballing was reported on last year.

The Fair Isle Ferry Replacement project ICIA identified mainly significant positive effects on island communities. The business case programmes, developed with the Fair Isle community, ensured the preferred ferry service option meets their needs. Ongoing community involvement is essential to refine delivery parameters and achieve the best outcomes for Fair Isle as the project progresses.

The Schools Transport Policy ICIA highlighted that there may be some issues for secondary pupils attending college from the islands using the NEC Young Scot card as the public bus routes may not align with the college timetable. The team were to assess this, and if public transports did not align with the college timetable, then dedicated transport would be provided. Another mitigation already in place is ensuring that no pupil has to walk further than 1.5 miles in winter.

The Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan 2024-27 ICIA refers to the Shetland Partnership Locality Plan for Islands with Small Communities and how it enables communities and partners to find innovative solutions to key local challenges. The CLD Partnership, when considering how to address island realities, will focus on the development of relationships between those living within and the people responsible for delivering services in island communities. Community engagement is an ongoing and integral part of CLD.

The Local Heat and Energy Strategy consulted with internal and external stakeholders and will include further consultation as and when required as the Delivery Plan actions are developed. Major issues identified affect Shetland as a whole, rather than islands specifically.

The Shetland Tree and Woodland Strategy ICIA highlights that no island specific information or issues have been raised during informal engagement so far, and state that the strategy will go to public consultation prior to adoption by SIC, so that all Shetland residents will have the opportunity to engage. Tree Preservation Orders are currently in place at sites within Lerwick and Scalloway and will be considered for relict trees as part of the delivery plan.

The Community Council Scheme of Establishment Review identified that there are a number of individual island Community Councils as well as islands that are attached to mainland Community Councils. During Phase One of the consultation, the Council developed a number of proposed boundary options which were published and consulted on. An online survey was open and a number of drop-in sessions were held across Shetland in November 2023. The views of each island community were taken into account in the proposed boundary options for the scheme. The ICIA states that a number of points were made that island communities were best placed to determine whether or not they should have their own Community Council.