

Review of National Outcomes - Island Communities Impact Assessment

Summary

This ICIA has been carried out as part of the statutory review process for the National Outcomes. It considers the existing National Outcomes in terms of their potential impact on Island Communities, alongside feedback on these from stakeholders and members of the public, and then outlines how this has informed the review and subsequent development of new Outcomes.

Through the consultation and call for evidence which was undertaken for the review, one key issue with the existing National Outcomes was identified as specifically relevant to Island Communities. The 'environment' outcome states that 'we discourage car reliance and use particularly in towns and cities', and it has been noted by people from and organisations representing Island Communities that this fails to account for the different context and needs of those living on Islands. This has been considered as part of the review, alongside other opportunities to strengthen the relevance and impact of National Outcomes on Communities, Wellbeing Economy and Fair Work, Culture, Education, Health and Housing in island communities.

Background

The National Performance Framework (NPF) sets out a vision for national wellbeing in Scotland. It is Scotland's wellbeing framework. It explicitly includes 'increased wellbeing' as part of its purpose, and combines measurement of how well Scotland is doing in economic terms with a broader range of wellbeing measures. These indicators incorporate a range of different types of data – from social attitudes and perceptions to economic and environmental statistics – to paint a broad picture of Scotland's performance.

The NPF sets an overall purpose and vision for Scotland. It highlights the broad National Outcomes that support the purpose and provides measures on how well Scotland is progressing towards those outcomes. The National Outcomes are underpinned by statute by the introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. It places a duty on public authorities to have regard to the National Outcomes in carrying out their functions.

A review of the National Outcomes is required by the Act which states that Scottish Ministers may review the National Outcomes at any time, but must begin the review before the expiry of the period of 5 years beginning with the date on which the National Outcomes were published.

The current review of National Outcomes has included an online consultation, a call for evidence, a series of stakeholder engagement events, and desk based research covering a broad range of sources. There is therefore a wealth of data to draw on in developing revised outcomes and considering their impact on different groups such as Island communities.

The National Outcomes apply to all of Scotland, providing a national wellbeing framework. Islands were not specifically mentioned within the existing Outcomes.

The National Outcomes are designed to apply to all of Scotland, and so should not have different impacts on different communities. However, as consultation has shown, the wording of the National Outcomes can recognise the differing needs of particular groups, such as island communities.

There is only one mention of a specific island within the data - otherwise stakeholders and respondents have spoken generally about island communities.

Assessment

The National Outcomes provide a framework to support decision making, and therefore the impact of the National Outcomes on people or groups is a result of policies which are implemented that contribute to the National Outcomes. These policies will therefore require their own impact assessments. Through the review process the needs of island communities have been reflected more comprehensively in the revised National Outcomes.

The data that has been considered as part of this assessment includes the text of the National Outcomes and the existing National Indicators, and any consultation evidence that specifically referenced the islands.

- Desk based Research - Stratherick and Foyers Community Action Plan 2021
- Desk based Research – Stromness Community Action Plan 2019
- Desk based Research - Scottish Government Citizens' Panel on Covid 19 - 2021
- Desk based Research – National Discussion on Education
- Call for Evidence – Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership
- Call for Evidence - Highland/Argyll/Bute Health and Social Care Partnership
- Stakeholder Engagement Sessions
- Individual responses to consultation
- National Indicators

The potential impacts of the existing National Outcomes were considered, and are highlighted below:

Children and Young People

One source within the desk-based research spoke of the importance of children and young people having the same educational opportunities in island/rural/remote communities. This is discussed further within the Education Outcome but is also relevant to the Children and Young People Outcome.

Communities

This Outcome includes the aspiration that 'everyone has a warm, appropriate, efficient and affordable home'. We know there is a lack of accessible and affordable housing in some island communities, and that most extreme fuel poverty rates are higher in most island local authority areas than Scotland as a whole.¹ Affordable housing in island communities was also raised as an issue within the Review. This Outcome could therefore be revised to ensure that different contexts and needs of island communities are accounted for.

Culture

The Culture National Outcome does not currently reference Gaelic language and culture, which could be seen as an important omission given the importance that island communities place on this.² Additionally, while rural and traditional cultures are specified, island culture is not. This Outcome could be revised to include specific reference to island culture and Gaelic language.

Economy

None of the language in this Outcome is seen as having a potential negative impact on island communities. However, the National Islands Plan noted a 'a lack of investment in relation to the retention and/or increase of on-island job opportunities and available business space', which could be acknowledged within this outcome. Additionally, the Indicator 'Access to super-fast broadband' shows differing impacts on island communities, with Na h-Eileanan Siar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands having the lowest percentages in 2017 with 54%, 58% and 64% of residential and non-residential addresses having access, respectively.

Education

¹ [The National Islands Plan: Plana Nàiseanta nan Eilean \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

² [The National Islands Plan: Plana Nàiseanta nan Eilean \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

The wording of this Outcome does not negatively impact island communities. However, the Outcome does not reference issues around access to high quality education which exist in some island communities.³ As noted, this was highlighted within the desk-based research, as the Final Report on the National Discussion on Education noted a desire to ensure children in rural, remote and island communities have the same educational and extra-curricular activities; the need to incentivise and retain head teachers in island schools; and the importance of unique identities arising from strong community connections for rural, remote and island communities.⁴ Additionally, Gaelic language education is not mentioned within this outcome. Future revisions of this Outcome could consider these aspects.

Environment

'We promote active travel, cycling and walking, and discourage car reliance and use particularly in towns and cities' should be reworded in future iterations of this outcome. While the wording does specify towns and cities, consultation responses and input from stakeholders has shown that discouraging car use at all in island communities could pose significant disadvantages. It was highlighted that this wording fails to adequately consider the needs of island communities, who may rely on car use to access essential services and remain connected. More broadly, stakeholders and respondents noted the importance of transport for island communities, describing it as a 'lifeline service' and an enabler for all other outcomes. This was the primary negative impact identified through the review, and this Outcome should therefore be revised as a matter of priority.

Fair Work and Business

No negative impacts were identified within the wording of this outcome.

Health

This Outcome could be strengthened by noting that some smaller islands may have specific difficulties in accessing some healthcare services, with smaller islands often reliant on transporting patients or professionals between the island and other island or mainland communities.⁵ Data on this is not currently collected as part of the National Indicators.

Human Rights

³ [The National Islands Plan: Plana Nàiseanta nan Eilean \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

⁴ [All Learners in Scotland Matter: The National Discussion on Education Final Report \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

⁵ [S.I.F-Briefing-Paper-Health-Social-Care-in-Small-Island-Communities-template-draft-1.pdf \(scottish-islands-federation.co.uk\)](http://scottish-islands-federation.co.uk)

No negative impacts were identified within the wording of this outcome.

International

No negative impacts were identified within the wording of this outcome.

Poverty

No direct negative impacts of the wording of this outcome have been identified, however previous comments on fuel poverty and access to affordable and warm housing can be seen as relevant here.

Summary of Impacts

The Environment Outcome and its commitment on discouraging car use is the key finding of this assessment, with one respondent highlighting that this could be seen as leading to barriers to accessing essential services.

Some potential differing outcomes have been identified in the above assessment. These impacts are not considered to be significantly different for island communities as they can be effectively addressed through the Review of National Outcomes. Feedback has been taken into account so that the revised National Outcomes better reflect the specific needs highlighted by Island Communities.

Revisions to the National Outcomes

Evidence demonstrated that island communities had specific needs and expectations to be addressed in the National Outcomes. In particular, issues around transport were raised by several respondents and stakeholders.

This was taken into account in the development of the revised National Outcomes. The line in the previous Environment Outcome regarding discouraging car use is not included in the revised Outcome, and the new Climate Action Outcome addresses transport with: "Our transport networks enable affordable, integrated, accessible and low carbon travel for all ". The revised Communities Outcome outlines access to all required services and well maintained and accessible infrastructure, including 'we recognise that communities have diverse needs and support our rural, urban and island places to flourish.' Additionally, a new Outcome focused solely on housing mentions the importance of affordable housing across all communities, and Wellbeing Economy and Fair Work Outcome states 'We are well connected across urban, rural and island communities.'

Based on findings from the statutory review, as well as this impact assessment, the National Outcomes have been revised and are now worded in a way which recognises the distinct needs of island communities within certain policy areas. This should guide future policy development in a way which is advantageous. Future policies, services, and strategies will however also have their own Island Communities Impact Assessments, which will be able to provide a detailed assessment of potential effects on island communities and mitigate these if necessary.

The changes to the revised National Outcomes that most benefit island communities can be summarised as follows:

- **Communities** – “We recognise that communities have diverse needs and support our rural, urban and island places to flourish.” This Outcome also refers to universal digital access, which responds to the lower broadband access across some island communities.
- **Wellbeing Economy and Fair Work** – “we are well connected across urban, rural and island communities”
- **Culture** – This Outcome now no longer specifically mentions rural and traditional cultures so as to include all cultures. Sustainable tourism is referenced - an issue that significantly affects some islands. Gaelic language is now explicitly referenced.
- **Education** – the specific issues identified for island communities relating to education should be managed through policy delivery, and are not in scope for the broad ranging nature of the National Outcomes. The revised Education and Learning Outcome includes, “We provide excellent education for all our children and young people through an education system that meets everyone’s needs” to recognise that needs may vary.
- **Health** – “We recognise the differing health needs across our population, and ensure that everyone, including women, children, older people, disabled people and those living in rural or island communities, have access to the most appropriate services and care to meet those needs. “
- **Housing** – this new Outcome recognises the importance of affordable housing, that meets everyone’s needs and enables access to local services. These are issues that are significant for island communities.

ICIA approved by: Jackie Wilkins

Position: Deputy Director, Performance and Outcomes

Signature: Jackie Wilkins
Date completed: 02/03/2024