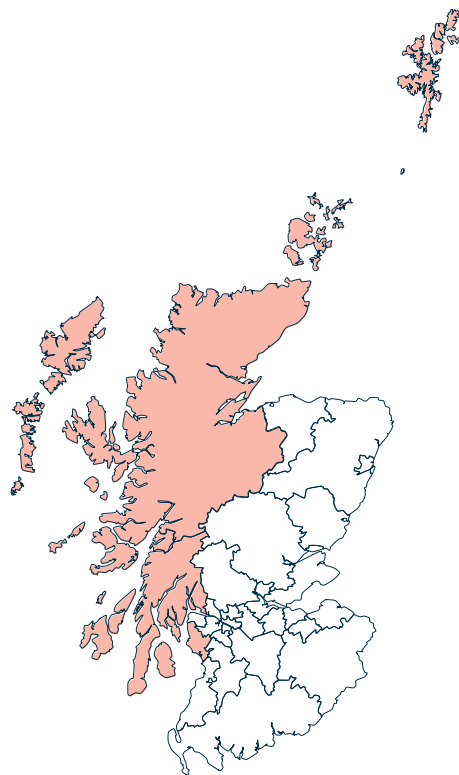


Carbon Neutral Islands - turning ambition into action



LOCATION: Western Isles, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Argyll and Bute, Highland Council and Shetland

DATE: ongoing

OUTCOMES:

- Delivery
- Investment
- Place
- Climate Change

The challenge

Scotland's islands have a vital role to play in the transition to net zero. But the journey presents challenges that can be particularly acute in island communities.

Higher energy and transport costs, fuel poverty, constrained infrastructure, limited local capacity and geographic isolation can all make it harder to deliver change at pace. At the same time, Scotland's islands have significant opportunities through renewable energy, natural capital and strong traditions of community-led action.

The Scottish Government's [Carbon Neutral Islands](#) (CNI) programme is supporting six islands – Barra, Great Cumbrae, Hoy, Islay, Raasay and Yell – in their ambitions to become carbon neutral by 2040.

The programme is designed not only to support progress on each island, but also to generate learning that can benefit Scotland's wider island network.

From community ambition to investment

Each island has developed an emissions baseline and a Community Climate Change Action Plan, creating a strong evidence base for identifying local priorities.

The challenge has been translating these ambitions into practical projects that can be developed, funded



and delivered. This means understanding the costs, risks and funding requirements of individual projects, overcoming delivery barriers and ensuring investment supports a fair transition that reflects the different circumstances of each island.

To help meet this challenge, the Scottish Government asked the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to support the delivery of the programme.

SFT acts as a strategic delivery partner and enabler to the Scottish Government Islands Team, working closely with local authorities, island anchor organisations and Community Development Officers.

Drawing together expertise from across its Delivery, Investment and Climate Change workstreams, SFT helps connect community priorities and carbon



evidence with the practical steps needed to turn ideas into investable and deliverable projects.

Bringing expertise together

SFT's role includes supporting project development, programme management, investment decisions and monitoring across the six islands.

This involves helping to assess project costs, risks and funding requirements, while also identifying opportunities for alternative funding and financing. SFT provides wider strategic and delivery support to help overcome barriers, strengthen delivery plans and ensure activity remains aligned with the overall objectives of the CNI programme.

Climate Change expertise helps ensure that investment delivers more than carbon reduction alone, supporting resilience and wider community benefits.

By bringing these different areas of expertise together, SFT provides strategic programme support and specialist input while retaining the flexibility needed to respond to the distinct priorities, opportunities and delivery circumstances of each island.

Progress and learning

The CNI programme has now progressed from carbon baselining and community planning into investment and delivery, with £4.65 million invested to date across the six islands.

SFT's involvement has helped strengthen the link between community ambition, carbon evidence



£4.65mil

HAS BEEN INVESTED TO DATE ACROSS THE SIX ISLANDS

and investment, supporting the development of island-specific project pipelines and the delivery of capital projects.

Just as importantly, the programme is generating practical learning about what it takes to deliver net zero infrastructure in rural and island settings.

Working across six very different islands makes it possible to identify common barriers, successful approaches and opportunities for replication, while recognising that solutions cannot simply be copied from one place to another – they must be adapted to local circumstances.

A model for place-based net zero

The Carbon Neutral Islands programme demonstrates how place-based net zero ambitions can be translated into practical investment and infrastructure projects.

By combining community priorities with robust carbon evidence and bringing together delivery, investment and climate change expertise, the programme is helping to turn ambition into action.

The learning emerging from Barra, Great Cumbrae, Hoy, Islay, Raasay and Yell will also have value beyond the six islands, helping to inform future

Scottish Government investment and wider approaches to delivering a fair, affordable and resilient transition to net zero across Scotland.

For SFT, CNI provides a practical example of how its expertise can work together to support communities, unlock investment and help deliver sustainable infrastructure for a thriving Scotland.

Islay's status as a chosen island in the Scottish Government's Carbon Neutral Islands project has been a game changer in supporting the long-term sustainability of the Islay community. The involvement and support of SFT has helped turn this ambition into action, providing valuable expertise and momentum to help projects progress and deliver meaningful benefits for the island. Projects to date range from the Community Food Forest and an income-generating solar farm, to the decarbonisation of 100% of the island's community-owned buildings. Together, these initiatives are strengthening Islay's long-term sustainability, delivering multiple benefits across the community while taking the island closer to its 2040 Net Zero target. SFT's contribution has been an important part of enabling this progress and supporting Islay in translating its net zero ambitions into tangible community outcomes.

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