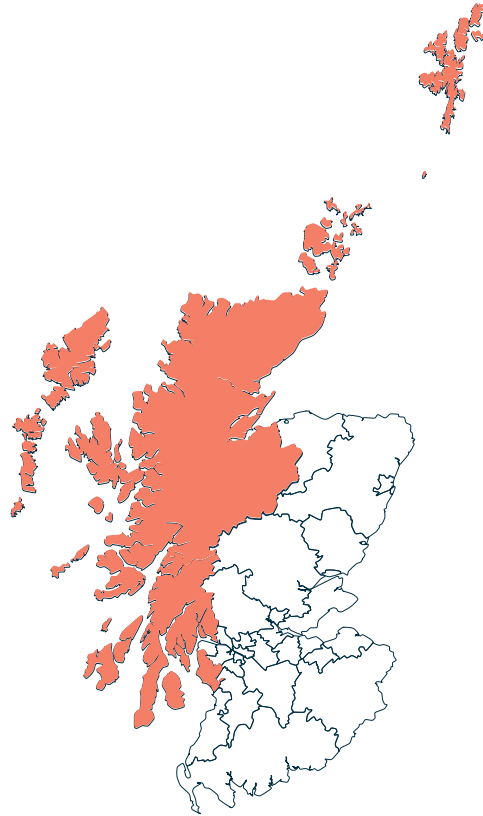


Making community infrastructure visible across Scotland's islands



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

DATE: ongoing

OUTCOME:  Strategy  Place  Data and Tech

The challenge

Scotland's [Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool](#) gives the public sector and construction industry a clearer view of future infrastructure investment, helping businesses plan for skills, jobs, supply chains and investment. But one part of Scotland's infrastructure story was often missing.

Community-owned and community-led projects can make a significant contribution to local economies, net zero ambitions and community resilience. Yet these projects are not always captured through established public sector pipeline processes, making it difficult to see the scale and diversity of activity taking place across Scotland's islands.

SFT identified an opportunity to address this gap.

Building a clearer picture

Working with the Scottish Islands Federation (SIF), SFT supported the development of an Islands Community-owned Infrastructure Pipeline (ICIP) that is incorporated within the existing Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool – testing a new way to identify and bring together information on community-led infrastructure projects.

SFT provided £10,000 in funding to support the initial work and brought its experience of developing and managing the national Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool.



Over around three months, SFT and SIF brought together information from across six island local authority areas. The initial pipeline focused on community-owned or community-driven projects with build costs of £250,000 or more, from early proposals through to projects approaching construction.

The work was primarily desk-based, with project information checked where possible with community organisations, development trusts and local authority contacts.

The result was a consistent pipeline that could be explored by location, sector, project value and project maturity.



Revealing the scale of community investment

The initial pipeline identified:

- **131 projects** - across **46 islands**
- **£708.85 million** - estimated total build value
- **106 projects** - with a value below £5 million
- **39 housing projects** - worth £72.8 million
- **31 cultural projects** - worth £59.5 million
- **Community facilities** - £46.9 million across the pipeline
- **Energy projects** - £31.4 million across the pipeline

Four proposed community tunnel projects account for around £473.1 million of the total. Even excluding these significant outliers, the pipeline represents approximately £235.75 million of planned community infrastructure.

The projects also demonstrate the breadth of community-led investment. Alongside housing, energy and community facilities, the pipeline includes projects led by development trusts, resident associations, hall and heritage groups, common grazing committees, youth and sports organisations and others – from meat-processing facilities and a community-owned hotel to observatories and sports facilities.

From counting projects to understanding need

The value of the pipeline goes beyond simply showing how many projects are planned.

By bringing fragmented information into a consistent format, ICIP creates an evidence base that can help identify:

- Emerging demand in particular sectors and locations
- Future skills and capacity requirements
- Potential supply-chain pinch points
- Opportunities for investment
- Projects that could benefit from development support
- Areas where stronger partnership working could help projects progress

This provides a more informed basis for conversations between communities, local and national government, industry, investors and other partners.

A starting point for better decision-making

The initial ICIP is deliberately a starting point rather than a complete picture. Community-led projects can be difficult to identify consistently, particularly at the early stages of development.

Further work is needed to improve information on project maturity and timescales, strengthen regular verification, consider how smaller projects could be captured and establish a sustainable approach to maintaining the pipeline.

But the initial exercise has demonstrated the value of bringing this information together.

By making community-owned infrastructure more visible, ICIP gives policymakers and partners a clearer understanding of the scale, diversity and potential of investment being driven by island communities.

It also shows how the experience and tools developed through a national infrastructure pipeline can be adapted to shine a light on activity that might otherwise remain fragmented or unseen.

The result: a stronger evidence base for supporting community ambition, targeting investment and helping island infrastructure projects move from ideas towards delivery.

The initial discussions with Scottish Futures Trust were a valuable opportunity to bring together knowledge from different sources and develop a clearer picture of community-led infrastructure projects across the islands. This complements Highland Council's BeConnected portal, where we are already seeing the benefits of improving visibility of projects and strengthening the evidence base for future investment.

The Islands Community-owned Infrastructure Pipeline builds on this approach at a national level, creating a shared understanding of future investment across Scotland's island communities and supporting better planning, decision-making and collaboration.

LEADER OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR RAYMOND BREMNER