

Island Communities Impact Assessment – The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development and Use Classes) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020

We consider that the proposed changes will deliver positive benefits for Island Communities. Of the proposals we are bringing forward we consider that Digital Communication, Agriculture and Peatland restoration will be of particular benefit to the islands.

Digital Communication

Our proposals will allow providers to update their existing infrastructure with more up to date versions or install new more advanced technologies which will improve coverage and connectivity for some of our most remote communities.

Agriculture

Our proposals are intended to support the rural economy and complement wider Scottish Government initiatives to support Scotland's rural economy and promote rural repopulation. In particular, the proposed new permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential and commercial uses will help to boost the supply of housing and support economic diversification in rural areas.

Peatland Restoration

Peatlands cover more than 20% of Scotland's land area including many of the islands. Healthy peat plays a vital role in carbon storage and combating the effects of climate change, and in maintaining Scotland's water quality and rich biodiversity. Peatlands reduce flood risk and support farming and crofting. They are also part of the wild landscapes that attract tourists to Scotland.

Conclusion

We invited views during the public consultation on whether our conclusion that the proposed changes would have positive benefits for island communities. None of the responses indicated that the proposals would adversely affect Island Communities. However, concerns were expressed about the impact of the agricultural proposals on the long-term viability of crofting. In response to these concerns, the new PDR for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use will not apply on croft land.

Authorities have also highlighted that in some circumstances applications for full planning permission which attract a fee are being replaced with the prior approval/notification procedure which attracts a lower fee than that for full planning permission. They consider that it may be the case that the prior approval/notification of development can involve resource in excess of the fee which is paid. It should be noted however, that the Scottish Government has previously consulted on increasing planning fees earlier in 2020. The work is currently on hold at the moment, however, it will be restarted in 2021 where this issue can be looked at in the round.

Authorisation	
Policy lead Neil Langhorn Development Delivery Planning and Architecture Division	14th December 2020

Local Government and Communities	
Deputy Director or equivalent John McNairney Chief Planner and Deputy Director Planning and Architecture Division Local Government and Communities	15th December 2020