

Island Communities Impact Assessment: Permitted Development Rights Review – Phase 3

Overview

This Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) relates to Phase 3 of the Scottish Government’s Review of Permitted Development Rights (PDR). Overall, we consider that the changes being taken forward through Phase 3 of the PDR review will deliver positive benefits for island communities. The measures are not, however, considered likely to have effects on island communities which are significantly different from their effects on other communities (including other island communities).

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 (the 2018 Act)

Section 8 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 states that Scottish Ministers must prepare an ICIA in relation to a policy, strategy, or service, which, in its opinion, is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions. These provisions came into force on 23 December 2020. In December 2020 the Scottish Government published guidance and a toolkit for the preparation of ICIA¹.

Policy objectives

PDR refer to types of development which are granted planning permission through national legislation, meaning they can be carried out without a planning application having to be submitted to (and approved by) the local authority. Specifically, PDR are contained within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 (“the GPDO”).

The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of PDR in Scotland. This review involves taking forward new and extended PDR for a wide range of development types. Phase 3 of the review is primarily focussed on measures that are intended to help address the climate and cost of living crises. In particular, the Phase 3 measures are intended to support the:

- deployment of domestic and non-domestic renewables equipment, such as solar panels, wind turbines and heat pumps.
- alteration and replacement of windows to improve energy efficiency.
- roll-out of electricity network infrastructure.

By removing the need to seek planning permission before carrying out specified development or works, PDR can help to provide greater certainty for developers and save time and money associated with preparing a planning application. In doing so, this can help to promote wider Scottish Government objectives – including those related to the climate and cost of living crises. Any changes to PDR would apply Scotland-wide.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/island-communities-impact-assessments-guidance-toolkit/>

Data Gathering and Consultation

The Phase 3 measures have been informed by a public consultation carried out in summer 2023, as well as sustainability appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) requirements, which was subject to public consultation in November 2019.

The Phase 3 consultation ran for three months (May to August 2023) during which the public was able to comment on the proposals – as well as the initial analysis in the consultation stage ICIA. No comments on the ICIA (or the specific effects of the proposals on island communities) were received. The sustainability appraisal and draft SEA Post Adoption Statement have been updated alongside each phase of the review. An independent analysis of the consultation responses has been carried out, and it contains a detailed summary of respondents' views on each of the Phase 3 consultation proposals.

[The National Islands Plan](#) sets out 13 strategic objectives for improving the quality of life for island communities. These include:

- Reducing fuel poverty (objective 5)
- Contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and promoting clean, affordable and secure energy (objective 9).

The [National Islands Plan Survey](#) (July 2021) highlights the issue of fuel poverty – it found that the majority of island residents reported that their heating bills had increased. This may have been exacerbated by the on-going cost of living crisis. The survey also found a high proportion of islanders engage in pro-environmental behaviours, including generating their own renewable energy, which is particularly common in the Orkney Outer Isles.

Conclusion

Overall, the Phase 3 measures are expected to have a positive impact on island communities insofar as they result in increased deployment of renewable energy equipment, thermal efficiency improvements and electricity network infrastructure. This should help contribute to reductions in carbon emissions and over the medium and longer term, may reduce households' and businesses' energy costs. In doing so, the measures can play a part in contributing to the National Islands Plan's strategic objectives, which include reducing fuel poverty, promoting climate change mitigation/adaptation and clean, affordable and secure energy.

Authorisation

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