

## > Empowering Scotland's Island Communities Your Introductory Guide

A' Toirt Ùghdarras do Choimhearsnachdan  
Eileanach na h-Alba  
Bhur stiùir fiosrachaidh





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> *We believe that the people who live and work in Scotland are best placed to make decisions about our future – the essence of self-determination; therefore we support subsidiarity and local decision making.*

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**“Lerwick Declaration”,**  
**First Minister, Alex Salmond MSP, 25 July 2013**

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> *Tha sinn a’ creidsinn gur iad na daoine a tha a’ fuireach agus ag obair ann an Alba a tha san t-suidheachadh as fheàrr gus co-dhùnaidhean a dhèanamh mun àm ri teachd againn – brìgh fèin-dhearbhaidh; mar sin tha sinn a’ cur taic ri bhith a’ toirt cumhachd nas fhaisge air na daoine agus a bhith a’ dèanamh cho-dhùnaidhean gu h-ionadail.*

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**“Dearbhadh Lerwick”,**  
**Am Prìomh Mhinistear, Ailig Salmond BPA, 25 Iuchar 2013**

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[Message from  
the First Minister  
of Scotland](#)

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Scotland's islands are a special and hugely valuable part of our nation. Their histories, cultures, natural resources and initiative have been central to Scotland's journey, and island communities will continue to play a vital part in our country's future.

In July 2013 I chaired a meeting of the Scottish Cabinet in Shetland where, inspired by the *Our Islands Our Future* campaign, we made clear our commitment to local decision making and empowering island communities. Then in April 2014 at a Cabinet meeting in Stornoway, we confirmed our support for constitutional protection for our islands. And in June 2014 in Orkney I launched *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, comprising an ambitious set of practical proposals from the Scottish Government.

The forthcoming referendum on independence is a once in a generation opportunity for democratic renewal. Independence provides the best opportunity to extend the principles of local decision making and community empowerment. I am therefore circulating this short guide to *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, to complement the *Scotland's Future* booklet outlining the wider advantages of independence.

We are ambitious for the future of the islands and their communities. The Scottish Government's proposals will increase local control of island natural resources and sustain job prospects across new and traditional island industries – empowering you to make the best of your islands as wonderful places to live and do business.

I trust that this guide helps to illustrate the practical steps that, with the full powers of independence, this Scottish Government can and will take – to deliver further and lasting empowerment for Scotland's island communities.

**Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP**

## Teachdaireachd bho Phrìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba

Tha eileanan na h-Alba sònraichte agus air leth luachmhor dhan dùthaich. Tha an eachdraidh aca, cultar, stòras nàdarra agus innleachd uile air a bhith aig teis-mheadhan slighe na h-Alba, agus thèid cùisean air adhart le coimhearsnachdan eileanach fhathast deatamach dhuinn mar dhùthaich anns an àm ri teachd.

Anns an Iuchair 2013 bha mi anns a' chathair aig coinneamh de Chaibineit na h-Alba ann an Sealtainn far an do dhearbh sinn, air ar misneachadh leis an iomairt airson *Our Islands Our Future*, mar a tha sinn taiceil do bhreithneachadh ionadail agus ùghdarrasachadh do choimhearsnachdan eileanach. An uairsin ann an Giblean 2014 aig coinneamh dhen Chaibineit ann an Steòrnabhagh, dhearbh sinn ar taic do dhìon bhun-reachdail son ar cuid eileanan. Agus anns an Ògmhios 2014 ann an Arcaibh, dh'fhoillsich mi *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, a' gabhail a-staigh grunn mholaidhean adhartach agus pragtaigeach às leth Riaghaltas na h-Alba.

Tha cothrom nach tig thugainn ach gach ginealach a' fuasgladh romhainn anns an referendum air neo-eisimeileachd airson ùrachadh deamocrataigeach. Tha neo-eisimeileachd a' tairgse a' chothrom as fheàrr a ghabhas airson prionnsabalan breithneachaidh ionadail agus a' toirt ùghdarras do choimhearsnachdan. Tha mi leis a sin a' cuartachadh an stiùir fiosrachaidh goirid seo a' mìneachadh *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, a tha a' dol còmhla ris an leabhran *Scotland's Future* a tha a' soillearachadh nam buannachdan coitcheann a tha an lùib neo-eisimeileachd.

Tha sinn misneachail airson na h-ùine a tha romhainn son na h-eileanan agus an coimhearsnachdan. Tha molaidhean Riaghaltas na h-Alba a' dol a neartachadh smachd ionadail air stòras nàdarra nan eilean agus a' caomhnadh cothroman cosnaidh ann an gnìomachasan ùr agus traidiseanta – a' toirt ùghdarras dhuibh am feum as fheàrr a ghabhas faighinn às na h-eileanan agaibh mar àiteachan a tha mìorbhaileach mar dhachaigh agus mar àiteachan obrach.

Tha mi an dòchas gu bheil an stiùir fiosrachaidh seo gu bhith cuideachail ann a bhith a' soillearachadh, le làn chumachdan neo-eisimeileachd, gach ceum pragtaigeach a tha Riaghaltas na h-Alba deònach a ghabhail, agus a' dol a ghabhail – ach an tèid tuilleadh ùghdarrais a mhaireas a libhrigeadh do choimhearsnachdan eileanach na h-Alba.

## **Am Fìor Onarach Ailig Salmond BPA**



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## Scotland's island communities

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Scotland's islands are special. They are beautiful and diverse, enjoying rich histories, healthy economies and immense prospects for future growth.

Our 93 inhabited islands<sup>1</sup> also include fragile areas, some with declining population, few young people, transport challenges, scarce economic opportunities and low income levels.

Just as Scotland's islands have played a vital role in our history, it is our shared responsibility to ensure all our island communities are able to play a positive role in Scotland's future.

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## What is the Scottish Government proposing?

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Devolution has enabled us to build a strong partnership between the Scottish Government, local government, the third and independent sectors and island communities themselves.

Since 2007, Scottish Ministers have regularly attended Scotland's islands to conduct business and engage with local communities, and Scotland's cabinet has met at locations across the islands.

*Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, a prospectus from the Scottish Government, is for all of Scotland's island communities. It was developed in partnership with the Leaders of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils – who formed the *Our Islands Our Future* campaign – and benefited from input from Council Leaders in Highland, Argyll & Bute and North Ayrshire representing their island areas.

The prospectus complements measures recently proposed in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, which the Scottish Government believes will help to shift the balance of power towards local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> source: 2011 Census



*Empowering Scotland's Island Communities* describes proposals the current Scottish Government plans to take forward if elected as the first government of an independent Scotland. They are about equipping all of our island communities with the tools to build prosperous, connected communities – to secure a vibrant future with opportunities for young people on our islands, to have access to the natural wealth of the islands and to strengthen island economies, while helping to ensure that any future Scottish Government supports the ambitions of our islands.

### **PROMOTING ISLANDS VOICE**

- » a Bill for an Islands Act upon independence – landmark legislation placing a duty on government and public bodies to ‘island-proof’ their functions and decisions
- » a ‘Minister for Island Communities’ to ensure island representation on all issues at the heart of government
- » greater islands representation and access within the EU, guaranteed through a ‘memorandum of understanding’ with the Scottish Government as an EU Member State
- » direct representation on decision-making bodies for disbursing Scotland’s EU funding
- » recognition of islands needs in the current consultation draft of an interim written constitution for an independent Scotland

### **HARNESSING ISLANDS RESOURCES**

- » all net income from the seabed in territorial waters (out to 12 nautical miles) passing to island communities, rather than to Crown Estate Commissioners
- » this seabed revenue includes leasing and other legal agreements covering cables, pipelines, aquaculture, wave, wind and tidal devices, piers, local authority harbours and moorings
- » greater local management and control of marine resources and increased local involvement through Marine Planning Partnerships
- » a new ‘charter’ for community benefit relating to aquaculture,

developed with the Islands Councils, the industry and regulators, including to increase local jobs and training

- » additional funding for island beef producers, and separate grants for crofters, in implementing the EU Common Agriculture Policy
- » an electricity market and regulatory framework that enables new island grid connections to be built
- » islands representation on a new strategic energy committee
- » exploring ways to mitigate adverse community impacts from oil and gas activities, consistent with commitments made to industry in *Scotland's Future*

## **ENHANCING ISLANDS WELLBEING**

- » establishment by local authorities of Island Innovation Zones that can focus on jobs, skills development and supply chain opportunities for island businesses
- » extending the duration of Enterprise Areas located in the islands, to stimulate job creation, investment and growth
- » reviewing transport partnership arrangements to account for island-specific views, and negotiating island ferries and infrastructure provision based on the principle of fair funding
- » rolling out the Road Equivalent Tariff to all remaining ferry routes in the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services network
- » securing island postal services under a renationalised Royal Mail, while regulatory levers such as a Universal Service Obligation can extend access to broadband and mobile telecommunications services
- » develop further and higher education and skills training capacity on the islands, for local industries of national significance such as oil and gas, marine resources and renewable energy
- » active partnership across government bodies and island stakeholders to promote islands tourism and support the Norse and Gaelic heritage, culture and language



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## What happens next?

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The Scottish Government believes that Scotland's people are best placed to make decisions about our future, and to know what is needed to deliver sustainable and resilient communities.

The referendum on Scotland's constitutional future on 18 September offers a once in a generation opportunity for democratic renewal.

The package of proposals in *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities* is based on the transfer of powers to the Scottish Parliament that independence would deliver; actions are already underway where possible.

Only with independence can the Scottish Government implement the islands prospectus in full, and, if elected, the current government will do so by bringing forward a Bill for an Islands Act which will be subject to formal public consultation. Island communities will then be empowered to make more decisions about the issues that affect them.

This is by no means the Scottish Government's final word on future actions with our island partners. However it is a logical and bold package of proposals – one that sets an ambitious course for further empowering Scotland's islands.



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[Find out more](#)

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Access the full prospectus, *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, at:  
**[www.scotland.gov.uk/islands](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/islands)**

This guide is available in braille, audio and BSL formats from:

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St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

**T** 0300 244 4000

**E** [ceu@scotland.gov.uk](mailto:ceu@scotland.gov.uk)

Information on Scotland's independence referendum, including *Scotland's Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, at:  
**[www.scotreferendum.com](http://www.scotreferendum.com)**

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[Tuilleadh Fiosrachaidh](#)

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Gheibh sibh an làn ro-shealladh, *Empowering Scotland's Island Communities*, aig:  
**[www.scotland.gov.uk/islands](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/islands)**

Tha an leabhran seo ri fhaighinn ann am Braille, riochd fuaim agus BSL bho:

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Fiosrachadh mu referendum neo-eisimeileachd na h-Alba, agus am measg sin tha *Scotland's Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, aig: **[www.scotreferendum.com](http://www.scotreferendum.com)**



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