

Outcomes 2024/25

Pioneering net zero – The Carbon Neutral Islands project

Overview

Working towards climate resilience and low-carbon innovation, Scottish Government launched its Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) project that is supporting six island communities on their journey to net zero by 2040.

Representing each local authority area with responsibility for inhabited islands (Shetland Islands Council, Orkney Islands Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Argyll and Bute Council, Highland Council, and North Ayrshire Council), **Barra & Vatersay, Cumbrae, Hoy & Walls, Islay, Raasay, and Yell** serve as testbeds for sustainable transformation.

Ambition meets action

The CNI project is more than an environmental initiative, it's a whole-system shift rooted in community empowerment and strategic investment. Designed to deliver on the **National Islands Plan** and Scotland's **National Performance Framework**, the project also contributes to Scotland's statutory goal of reaching **net zero emissions by 2045**.

From island based jobs that support circular economy to climate adaptation, the CNI initiative offers a replicable blueprint for island communities worldwide.

PRIMARY OUTCOME



10

Infrastructure-related carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, supporting Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy



CORPORATE PRIORITIES



NET
ZERO



SUSTAINABLE
PLACES



INCLUSIVE
GROWTH

Strategic Support by SFT

At the heart of the CNI Project's success is the Place, Housing and Economic Investment team at the **Scottish Futures Trust (SFT)**, which provides governance, oversight, and strategic direction across the programme's capital investments. Acting as both a financial steward and strategic partner, the team ensures:

- Alignment with national net zero goals
- Effective use of public funds
- Development of a robust, long-term project pipeline
- Creation of tools to measure long-term climate and economic impact

SFT's involvement also extends to promoting **financial sustainability**, building on past successes and publishing insights to support the delivery of community-led infrastructure planning across island regions.



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2024/25 milestones: Climate action on the ground

In 2024/25, **£1.3m in capital funding** was deployed across the six islands, fuelling diverse, community-driven low-carbon projects. Here are just a few of the transformative developments:

Cumbræ

- 130 homes began receiving **roof-mounted solar PV systems**, marking a major step toward household energy independence

Islay

- A **3-acre tree nursery, community orchard, and wood fuel infrastructure** project were developed to support local biodiversity and sustainable fuel use.

Community buildings received **energy efficiency retrofits**, reducing carbon footprints and utility costs

Raasay

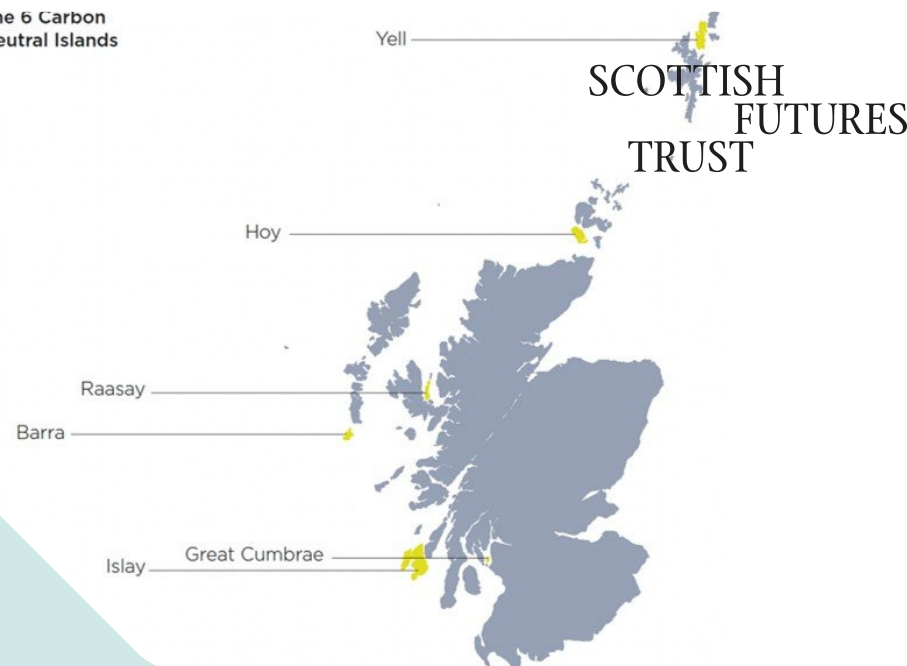
- Funding supported **native habitat restoration**, while the initial phase of a project developing three **affordable rental homes** with **zero direct emission heating** were supported through a deep retrofit of vacant properties in Inverarish

Barra & Vatersay

- Key community buildings underwent **energy upgrades**, reinforcing a place-based approach to resilience and low-carbon infrastructure

These investments reflect a **multi-sector, place-based approach**, bringing together housing, energy, land use, and community resilience under one transformative vision.

The 6 Carbon
Neutral Islands



Looking ahead

With tangible progress and growing momentum, the Carbon Neutral Islands project is not just reducing emissions, it's **reimagining what resilient, low-carbon island living can look like.**

By placing communities at the heart of climate solutions and embedding sustainability in local development, the CNI project offers a compelling model for climate leadership, at home and around the world.