



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# **Environmental Report – Non-Technical Summary**

## **Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Environmental Assessment**

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This Environmental Report – Non-Technical Summary has been prepared by [Ramboll UK Limited](#) (Ramboll) on behalf of Transport Scotland.

This report represents the independent views and recommendations of the consultants conducting the analysis and may not necessarily reflect the opinions held by Transport Scotland.

# Introduction

Transport Scotland are consulting on the Environmental Report that has been prepared to describe and assess the likely environmental effects associated with the implementation of the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP).

This Non-Technical Summary provides an overview of the findings presented in the Environmental Report.

## What is the ICP?

The ICP replaces the [Ferries Plan 2013-2022](#), and sets out how ferry services, supported by other transport modes, will be delivered, and strengthened, working towards a long-term vision, and supported by clear priorities and defined outcomes for people and places. The ICP comprises the Strategic Approach paper (SAP) and the Vessels and Ports Plan (VPP) (which have been subject to assessment), as well as (Refreshed) Community Needs Assessments (CNAs) (see Figure 1 - The ICP structure):

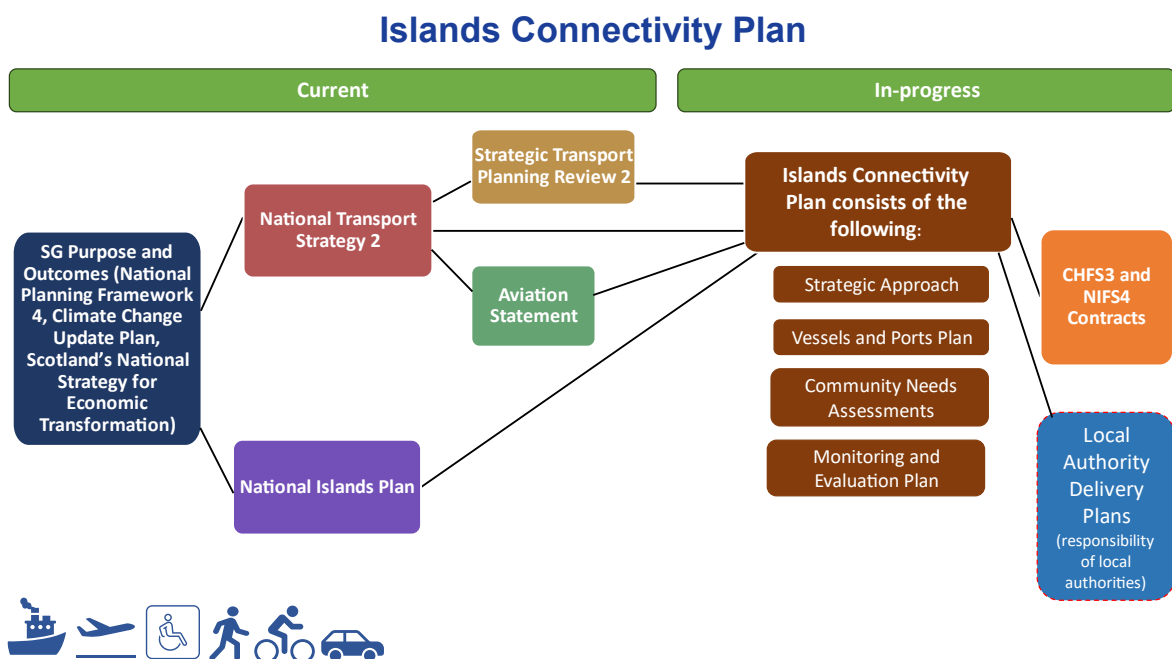


Figure 1 - The ICP structure

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will also be implemented to inform the regular review of the SAP and VPP.

# What is Strategic Environmental Assessment and how has it been undertaken?

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) aims to offer protection to the environment by ensuring public bodies and those organisations preparing plans of a ‘public character’ consider and address likely significant environmental effects. The Environmental Report sets out the assessment findings and has been prepared in line with the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#).

Figure 2 - SEA process followed in relation to the ICP development illustrates the process followed through its main components, i.e. the SAP and the VPP.

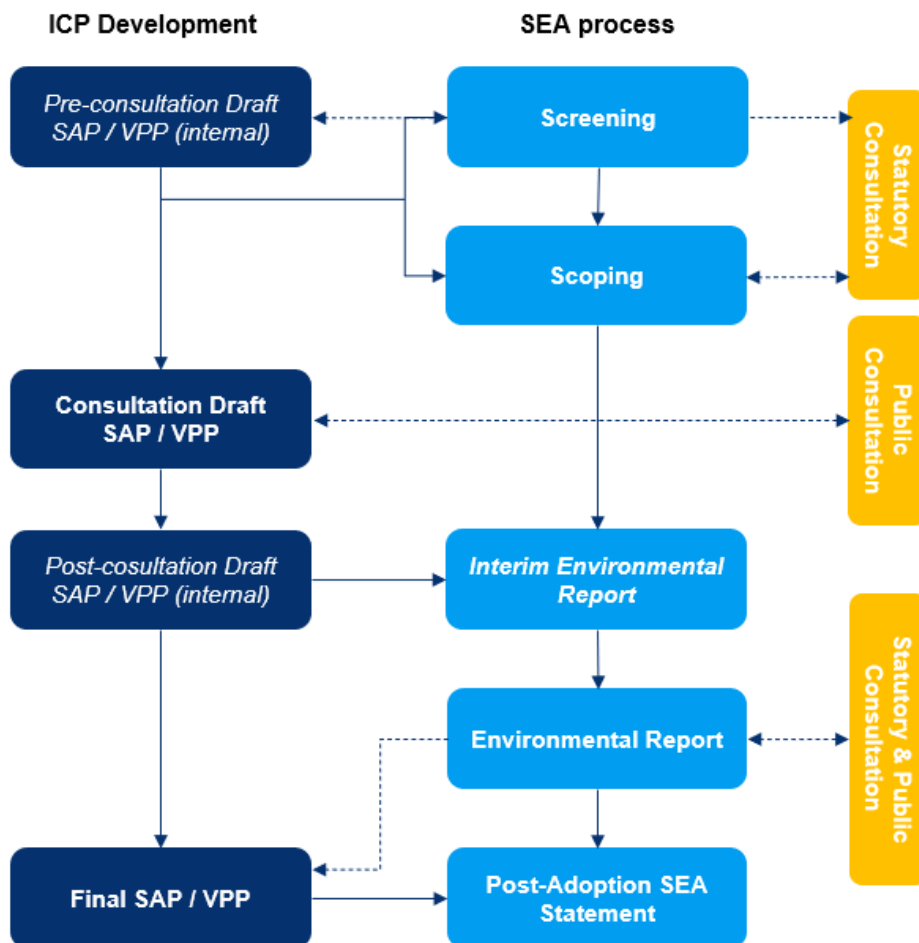


Figure 2 - SEA process followed in relation to the ICP development

The assessment has been undertaken using a bespoke assessment framework, developed in consultation with statutory consultees, that interrogates the SAP and

VPP components to target potential effects on agreed SEA topics, assessed in a qualitative manner, and identifies mitigation and enhancement measures aimed at avoiding / minimising negative environmental effects and/or enhancing positive effects.

## What are the likely environmental effects of the ICP?

### SAP Vision and Outcomes

Table 1 – Summary of the assessment of the ICP Vision and SAP Outcomes in relation to SEA objectives 1 – 9 outlines the scores applicable to the potential effects of the ICP Vision and SAP Outcomes (potential cumulative effects).

SAP Components	1. Air Quality	2. Noise	3. Soil/ Sediment	4. Water environment	5. Biodiversity	6. Cultural Heritage	7. Landscape	8. Material Assets	9. Population & Human Health
ICP Vision: “Scotland’s ferry services, supported by other transport services, will be safe, reliable, affordable and inclusive for residents, businesses and visitors enabling connectivity, sustainability and growth of island and peninsula communities and populations”.	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	P	P
SAP Outcomes: Potential cumulative effects (SAP Outcomes are associated with four main priorities: 1 – Reliable and Resilient; 2 – Accessible; 3 – Integrated; Low Carbon and Environmental Impact)	P	O/ U	O/ U	O/ U	O/ U	O/ U	O/ U	P	PP

Table 1 – Summary of the assessment of the ICP Vision and SAP Outcomes in relation to SEA objectives 1 – 9 (PP-positive significant, P-positive, O-neutral, N-negative, NN-negative significant, U-unknown)

Regarding the ICP Vision, whilst the primary drivers of the ICP directly / indirectly contribute to long-term benefits associated with SEA objectives 8 (material assets) and 9 (population and human health), it is not clear whether the ICP Vision would lead, in practice, to positive or negative effects on the natural and historic environment (SEA objectives 1 – 7), and accordingly these are rated as unknown.

Regarding the SAP Outcomes, although individually, Outcomes are identified to potentially have positive, neutral and unknown effects on SEA objectives 1 – 7, mainly because the number of services and associated vessel / vehicle / people movements may increase or decrease as a result of the ICP, in combination, there is a clear intent perceived to reduce the overall dependency on private vehicles to access ferry services by facilitating a better integration with public transport and encouraging active travel; and, for any new vessels / services to be more efficient and less polluting. Accordingly, SAP Outcomes are considered to have a not significant positive cumulative effect on SEA objective 1; no / unknown cumulative effects on SEA objectives 2 – 7; positive not significant cumulative effects on SEA objective 8 (material assets); and significant positive effects on SEA objective 9 (population and human health), as multiple and complementary benefits to ferry-dependent communities have been identified.

## VPP Objectives and Project Categories

Table 2 – Summary of the assessment of VPP Objectives and Project Categories outlines the scores applicable to the potential cumulative effects of the VPP Objectives and Project Categories.

VPP Objectives	1. Air Quality	2. Noise	3. Soil/ Sediment	4. Water environment	5. Biodiversity	6. Cultural Heritage	7. Landscape	8. Material Assets	9. Population & Human Health
VPP Objectives: Potential cumulative effects	P	P	U	U	U	U	U	PP	PP
VPP Project Categories: Potential cumulative effects (Project Categories include A – Fleet renewal and B – Port upgrades)	P	P	U	U	U	U	U	PP	PP

Table 2 – Summary of the assessment of VPP Objectives and Project Categories in relation to SEA objectives 1 – 9 (PP-positive significant, P-positive, O-neutral, N-negative, NN-negative significant, U-unknown)

Regarding the VPP Objectives, although individually, some Objectives are considered likely to have both negative and positive effects on SEA objectives 1 - 7 for various reasons. In combination, these are rated positive (not significant) for SEA objectives 1 (air quality) and 2 (noise), as the long-term benefits from the gradual decarbonisation of the vessel fleet and port infrastructure outweigh the potential short-term negative effects that may arise during port construction and the small-scale negative effects that may arise during ferry operations as a result of potential vessel fleet growth. On the other hand, cumulative effects on SEA objectives 3 – 7 are overall rated as unknown, as the long-term benefits to these SEA objectives are less clear. Significant positive cumulative effects are identified on SEA objectives 8 and 9 (material assets and population and human health), as individual positive effects are considered complementary and beneficial to strengthen port infrastructure and connectivity.

Regarding VPP Project Categories, the long-term benefits achieved through the increased adoption of modern and less polluting vessels and overall decarbonisation of the vessel fleet and port operations, are considered to overall have positive effects on SEA objectives 1 and 2; cumulative effects on SEA objectives 3 – 7 are also rated as unknown; and significant positive cumulative effects are identified on SEA objectives 8 and 9 (material assets and population and human health), as individual positive effects are considered complementary and beneficial to strengthen port infrastructure and connectivity.

## How can these environmental effects be effectively managed, mitigated or enhanced?

The Environmental Report details proposed mitigation and enhancement measures for individual environmental effects identified that, if implemented, would result in an improvement of effects and overall scoring of the SAP and VPP components. These measures can be summarised as follows:

- Consider changes to specific wording or adding of specific references in the description of SAP / VPP components, particularly to describe SAP Outcomes and VPP Objectives in a Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) way) or to set out how progress towards the Outcomes / Objectives will be monitored in a SMART way; include specific reference to the protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment; increase clarity on the use of terms such as ‘sustainability’ and implementation mechanisms for SAP Outcomes; and further emphasise the

environmental and social benefits associated with some of the SAP and VPP components.

- Consider the addition of policies to the ICP, particularly to include clear reference to overarching principles, such as the sustainable transport hierarchy, circular economy or waste hierarchy; and to develop a separate set of policies / principles to follow during new vessel design / construction, or during the planning of port upgrades.

## What monitoring is proposed?

Given that no significant negative effects have been identified, monitoring is not considered required. It is noted that the ICP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan still needs to be developed, on this basis consideration should be given to the inclusion of specific environmental criteria / indicators relevant to the SEA topics within the monitoring and evaluation plan to monitor progress on positive effects and enhancement measures outlined.

## What are the reasonable alternatives to the ICP?

Two reasonable alternatives to the ICP have been identified:

- 'Maintaining the Ferries Plan', which only scores positively on SEA topic 9 (population and human health), reflecting that it was originally conceived to prioritise socioeconomic growth over other environmental aims and aspirations. The expanded scope of the ICP in relation to the Ferries Plan can be considered to overall decrease the potential negative effects that implementing this alternative would have, and to overall increase the opportunities for enhancement, ensuring that existing issues that have been identified by island communities can be addressed, and that actions are aligned with higher-level policies.
- 'No replacement Plan', which would also fail to address existing issues that have been identified by island communities, and hinder the management and delivery of ferry services by the Scottish government.

Overall, having the ICP in place has a more positive effect on SEA objectives than these two alternatives, and it ensures that existing issues identified by ferry users and island communities can be addressed, increasing opportunities for environmental enhancement and facilitating management and delivery of ferry services by the Scottish government.



## How can I provide feedback?

Public views are now invited on the Environmental Report. The consultation runs until the 13 March 2025 and there are a number of ways that responses can be submitted. These are:

- By email to: [icp@transport.gov.scot](mailto:icp@transport.gov.scot)
- By post to: Transport Scotland  
George House  
2nd Floor  
36 North Hanover Street  
Glasgow  
G1 2AD

Respondents may find the following questions helpful to provide a focus on their responses to the Environmental Report. Please note that responses do not need to be confined to these questions, and more general comments on the Environmental Report are also invited.

- What are your views on the accuracy of the information used to describe the SEA environmental baseline?
- What are your views on the predicted environmental effects and mitigation measures?

## How will consultation responses be considered?

Following consultation and adoption of the ICP, a Post-Adoption SEA Statement will be prepared documenting how SEA findings and consultation responses have been incorporated into the ICP, and the reasons of choosing the plan against other reasonable alternatives and the measures taken to monitor significant environmental effects (if any).



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