

Our Islands Our Future Audio to Text Script

Steven Heddle (Orkney) speaks

Islands by their very nature are special places. As an island community we share a strong sense of identity and pride in our culture and traditions. Combine this with a can-do attitude to new ideas and opportunities and the result is a special place indeed ... with special challenges as well.

Scotland's islands have natural resources in abundance. In Orkney we've witnessed the birth of a new maritime industry built on the energy of the seas around us. It's generating jobs as well as electricity. But if the community at the heart of this renewables revolution is to benefit as it should ... we need the power to have a say in what goes on in our local waters.

Our Islands ... and Our Future. Whatever the outcome of the Independence Referendum, we need more powers to shape our own destinies. With power comes responsibility ... and ours is to build a stronger future for our islands. With our neighbours in Shetland and the Western Isles we're challenging political leaders on both sides of the debate to support our call for further devolution ... to Kirkwall, Lerwick and Stornoway.

Gary Robinson (Shetland) speaks

We may be on the edge of Europe – but Scotland's islands play a powerful role in the national economy.

In Shetland, we're seeing something of a return to the oil boom, with a surge in oil and gas developments around the isles. We have low unemployment, high productivity, and while we benefit from subsidised services, we contribute more to the national economy than we ever receive back.

Our Islands – Our Future – isn't about independence for the islands. It IS about making sure our communities benefit from the resources around them, and that we have as much control over them as possible. Given more devolved powers, we could do better for ourselves, and for Scotland. Devolution was never meant to stop in Edinburgh. It was meant to come down to local government and into communities.

We don't think what we're asking for is unreasonable – in fact some of it is enshrined in European treaties, and many things have been promised over the years, but haven't materialised. We're taking the initiative, and asking for what we want, and what we need to strengthen our economies.

This campaign demonstrates unprecedented cooperation between the three island groups. We're working together to make sure that, however the independence referendum goes next year, we get the very best result for the people of Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles.

Angus Campbell (Western Isles) speaks

What we're looking for is a level playing field. We want the powers to be able to unlock our potential ... so we contribute fully to local and national economic growth.

The almost limitless wind, wave and tidal energy resources we all share have the potential to bring long term prosperity to our own communities – and to the wider economies of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Among other things, we are seeking greater powers over the use of those resources.

We are determined that we should not pay the penalties for remoteness (for example in relation to broadband, transport connections and charges for connecting our renewables energy to the national grid). Our communities, our people and our businesses should be accorded the same well-being and economic opportunity as those living elsewhere in the EU, the UK and Scotland.

The three islands areas face challenges due to remoteness and yet we contribute significantly to national economic growth. Oil, renewables, high quality food and drink products, crafts and tourism are sectors which are inextricably linked in people's minds to our islands. We know that more can be done to drive growth in our economies, we recognise our strategic importance, and we are asking for the powers to unlock our economic potential for the benefit of the islands, Scotland, the UK and Europe.