

Orkney Islands Council Visitor Management Plan 2027-2037

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	The Visitor Management Plan sets out Orkney Islands Council's strategic approach to operational visitor management. It establishes a framework for responding to tourism pressures affecting Council services, infrastructure, public spaces, and communities. This is supported by a programme of actions covering areas including visitor information, transport, volume management, local infrastructure, and internal coordination.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	Response
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	The Plan provides an evidence-based framework for translating identified tourism pressures into practical Council action. Its objectives reflect the need to manage current operational impacts while strengthening the longer-term resilience of services and assets that support residents and visitors. The key objectives are to: • Maintain access to services and protect Council assets, particularly where visitor use creates additional pressure; • Improve the experience of Orkney for residents and visitors without compromising local needs; • Relieve pressure on infrastructure and services through targeted physical, operational, educational and behavioural interventions;

	• Strengthen coordination across Council services involved in visitor management; • Prioritise interventions on the basis of evidence and identified need; • Identify the staffing, operational and financial resources required to deliver visitor management responses; • Explore proportionate opportunities for income generation and savings that support the sustainability of Council services affected by tourism.
Do you need to consult?	Consultation has already been undertaken as part of the development of the Plan. This included the Our Orkney, Our Story research, which gathered views from residents, visitors, community organisations, businesses, and public bodies through online engagement, stakeholder discussions and community workshops. Further engagement was undertaken on tourism-related income generation and with relevant Council services through the Internal Operational Review. The Plan is subject to public consultation from 10 September to 9 October 2026, providing further opportunity for communities and stakeholders to comment on the proposed approach and actions. Further consultation may be required during the development of individual actions where the circumstances of a particular island or community need to be considered in more detail.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	The assessment covers island communities across the Orkney archipelago. As all communities within the local authority area are situated on islands, consideration has also been given to differences between communities within Orkney rather than only applying comparison purely with mainland Scotland. Particular consideration has been given to communities where geography, transport dependency, infrastructure or service capacity

	may influence how tourism pressures are experienced. This includes ferry-linked communities, while recognising that circumstances vary between individual islands.
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	The Plan aims to provide a structured framework for how the Council will respond to the operational effects of tourism on the services, infrastructure and places for which it is responsible. Its purpose is not to manage tourism as an industry, but to ensure that tourism is managed in a way that protects community wellbeing, maintains service resilience and supports a positive experience of Orkney for residents and visitors. The Plan also provides an evidence-based basis for determining where intervention, additional resource or future investment is required. • Maintain community access to shared services, infrastructure and public spaces, particularly during periods of high visitor demand; • Reduce avoidable pressure on Council services and assets by improving the management of visitor movement, behaviour and use of facilities; • Strengthen service and infrastructure resilience so that seasonal tourism pressures can be managed more effectively. • Improve coordination and decision-making, supported by better evidence on where visitor pressures occur and where intervention is most needed; • Support a better balance between resident needs and visitor use, ensuring that tourism does not compromise local access or community wellbeing;

	• Inform future investment and resourcing decisions where operational evidence identifies a need for additional capacity or infrastructure improvements. These outcomes are unlikely to be experienced uniformly across Orkney. Their significance will depend on the nature and concentration of tourism pressures in different places. Communities experiencing high visitor volumes may benefit more directly from measures addressing congestion, access, public facilities or visitor behaviour, while ferry-linked communities may experience different outcomes where visitor demand interacts with lifeline transport capacity and local infrastructure. The Plan is intended to support equitable rather than identical outcomes, with interventions reflecting the different circumstances and pressures experienced across Orkney.
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	The Plan is a new strategic framework for operational visitor management covering the period 2027-2037. It does not replace or withdraw an existing Council service.
Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Response
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	The Plan has been developed from a combination of primary and secondary evidence. Its principal sources are: • Our Orkney, Our Story community and industry research; • the Internal Operational Review of Council services; and, • the Orkney Islands Visitor Survey 2024

	The evidence provides a sufficiently robust basis for identifying the principal tourism pressures relevant to the Plan. Secondary evidence has also been used to validate and contextualise the issues identified through the primary research. There are, however, limitations in the geographic detail available. Tourism data is not consistently available at individual-island or community level, and the Council also has recognised gaps in its ability to distinguish resident and visitor use of some services.
Do you need to consult?	Consultation has already formed a substantial part of the development of the Plan. The public consultation from 10 September 2026 will provide an additional opportunity to test the draft Plan and identify any further island-specific concerns before it is finalised.
How does any existing data differ between islands?	Tourism data is largely collected at Orkney-wide level. Available evidence identifies variation in the nature and extent of tourism pressures across Orkney. Ferry-linked islands experience particular transport and capacity constraints, while consultation findings, Local Place Plans, and operational evidence identify differences in visitor volumes, infrastructure pressures, and service capacity between locations. The main limitation is the consistency and geographic detail of the available data. Evidence is sufficient to identify differences between communities, but these cannot always be quantified on a comparable island-by-island basis.
Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?	Yes. The Plan includes design features intended to allow delivery to reflect local circumstances, including community benefit, evidence-led decision-making and proportionate intervention.

	Actions can be adapted according to the nature and scale of tourism pressures, infrastructure, and any other identified factors in different locations, rather than applying a uniform approach across Orkney. The annual review process also allows actions to be reassessed.
Step 3 – Consultation	Response
Who do you need to consult with?	The Plan has already been informed by extensive engagement with the groups most relevant to its development. Consultees have included residents and community groups, visitors, tourism businesses and industry representatives, public bodies, transport operators, and Council services whose functions are affected by tourism. No material gaps in stakeholder coverage have been identified at this stage. The public consultation will provide a further opportunity for communities and stakeholders to comment on the draft Plan before it is finalised.
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	Engagement has been undertaken throughout the development of the Plan through a staged programme rather than a single consultation exercise. A combination of online and in-person methods has been used, including Our Orkney, Our Story, stakeholder discussions and workshops, engagement on tourism-related income generation, and consultation with relevant Council services through the Internal Operational Review. The draft Plan is subject to a five-week public consultation from 10 September to 9 October 2026. This will provide a further opportunity for communities, businesses and other stakeholders to comment on the Plan before it is finalised. Some actions also provide opportunities for further engagement during development and delivery, where some projects are intended to be shaped by local priorities and community-identified development needs.

What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	The public consultation will test whether the Plan reflects the tourism pressures experienced by communities and whether the proposed actions provide an appropriate response. Consultees will be asked whether: • the Plan clearly explains the Council's role and remit in visitor management; • the main tourism pressures affecting local communities, Council services, infrastructure and public spaces have been accurately identified; and • the Action Plan contains practical responses to those pressures. Each question provides an opportunity for further comment, allowing respondents to identify local circumstances, gaps in the evidence or concerns about how particular actions may operate in practice.
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	Consultation undertaken during development of the Plan has provided evidence on how tourism is experienced by communities and where tourism places pressure on local services, infrastructure and everyday use of places. This evidence has been considered alongside Local Place Plans and Orkney Matters to identify where concerns are persistent or specific to particular locations. Concerns relevant to island communities include: • seasonal pressure on public transport and inter-island ferry capacity, including difficulty securing vehicle space for essential resident journeys;

	• pressure on roads, parking, paths, public toilets and other infrastructure during peak periods; • concentrated visitor numbers at sensitive sites and the resulting effects on access, congestion and the local environment; • inappropriate parking, access and other visitor behaviours affecting community amenity and safety; • pressure on residential housing associated with short-term visitor accommodation; and • the need for communities to have a clearer role in tourism decisions and greater visibility of how concerns raised through engagement lead to action. The evidence indicates that these pressures are not experienced evenly across Orkney. Their significance depends on local visitor volumes, infrastructure and service capacity, with ferry-linked communities facing particular constraints where seasonal visitor demand competes with resident use of lifeline transport.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	At draft stage, the consultation and evidence-gathering process is considered robust and meaningful. The assessment is not reliant on one engagement exercise or one stakeholder group. Community experience has been considered alongside operational evidence, sector perspectives, and existing place-based evidence.
Step 4 – Assessment	Response
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	No unique impacts are anticipated for any individual island community.

	The nature and level of tourism pressure varies across Orkney, particularly in relation to transport connectivity, infrastructure capacity, visitor volumes, and access to services. These differences affect the relevance and scale of individual actions but do not alter the overall purpose or intended outcomes of the Plan. The Plan applies across Orkney and allows interventions to be targeted according to local circumstance. Variations in delivery are considered proportionate responses to differing levels and types of existing tourism pressure, rather than significantly different effects arising from the Plan itself.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	Potential differences in delivery may arise from variations in the scale of tourism pressure between communities, transport provision, infrastructure capacity, and service availability. For ferry-linked islands, the availability and capacity of local transport will be relevant to actions intended to encourage visitors to travel without a vehicle. Similar considerations will apply where infrastructure or service capacity differs between communities. These factors may affect the practicality, timing, or scale of individual interventions but are not expected to create a significant disadvantage for any island community. The Plan does not reduce existing service provision, or apply a uniform intervention irrespective of local circumstances. Limitations in island-level tourism data may restrict the extent to which impacts can be quantified in advance. This is mitigated through the use of consultation, operational evidence, place-based evidence, and ongoing monitoring.
How will you address these?	The Plan provides for proportionate and location-sensitive delivery, allowing individual actions to reflect local circumstances and available capacity. Actions will not require an identical approach across all communities.

	Where local capacity is relevant, this is reflected in how the action is designed. Proposals for car-free visitor travel to ferry-linked isles, for example, are intended to be phased and community-led, with initial activity based on existing provision and any subsequent development responding to locally identified transport and infrastructure requirements. Larger infrastructure requirements can be considered through the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan and associated funding routes. Further engagement can be undertaken where detailed development of an action requires local input. The Plan's annual review process will also allow for emerging evidence and any unintended effects to be considered and actions adjusted where necessary.
You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). If your answer is No to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and you can proceed to Step 6. If the answer is Yes, an ICIA must be prepared and you should proceed to Step 5. To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered: • Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)? • Are these different effects likely? • Are these effects significantly different? • Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups?	

Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	Not applicable. The Step 4 assessment concluded that a full ICIA is not required.
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	
Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	Delivery mechanisms and mitigations may vary where a standard approach would not produce an appropriate or workable result. The Plan allows sufficient flexibility for delivery to take account of local circumstances and the practical requirements of individual communities. Any variation would be considered in relation to the purpose of the intervention, the intended outcome, and the potential implications for residents. These actions will allow the Plan to maintain a consistent strategic direction, while avoiding unnecessary or unsuitable application of measures across all parts of Orkney.
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	Further engagement may be required where community participation would materially improve the development or implementation of a proposal.

	This would be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the extent to which residents may be affected and whether consultation could influence the final approach. The intention is to ensure that engagement is meaningful and relevant to the decision being made, rather than undertaken as a procedural requirement where there is limited scope for community input.
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	The Plan has been informed by evidence drawn from residents, community organisations, Council services, visitors, and existing place-based research. This provides an understanding of how tourism-related pressures are experienced across different parts of Orkney and where the consequences for communities are most evident.
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	No specific island-level indicators or targets have been established within the Plan. Current evidence does not provide a sufficiently consistent basis for setting comparable measures across individual islands. The Plan does, however, include provision to strengthen the Council's monitoring of tourism impacts and improve the availability and use of relevant data. This may allow more locally focused measures to be developed in future where they would provide meaningful evidence of progress or emerging pressure.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	Outcomes will be considered through the annual review of the Plan, drawing on progress against the Action Plan, service information, monitoring data, and feedback received through ongoing Council and stakeholder engagement. The review will consider whether the issues which prompted intervention are improving, remaining unchanged, or becoming more pronounced, and whether the response remains appropriate. Where evidence can be meaningfully disaggregated, differences between locations can also be considered as part of this process.

How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	The Plan has not yet been implemented and no actual effects can be reported at this stage. Its intended effect is to improve the Council's response to tourism-related pressures that affect everyday use of services, facilities, and public spaces. Over time, this is expected to support more reliable access for residents, reduce avoidable pressures at peak periods, and improve the Council's ability to respond where tourism places additional demands on local provision.
How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	The screening highlights the importance in recognising variation between communities within Orkney when developing policy, rather than relying solely on an Orkney-wide position. Future policy and service planning should consider whether available evidence is sufficiently detailed to support decision making, how proposals might affect different communities, and if further engagement is required before implementation. Findings can also inform subsequent reviews of the Plan and related areas of Council policy and service delivery.
Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA	Response
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	No.
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No.
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	The Orkney Islands Council website, sitting alongside the draft Plan.
Who will sign off your final ICIA and why?	Sweyn Johnston – Head of Service (Enterprise and Economic Growth), in line with requirements.

ICIA completed by:	Catherine Kriisa
Position:	Sustainable Tourism Officer
Signature:	
Date complete:	03/09/2026

ICIA approved by:	Sweyn Johnston
Position:	Head of Service
Signature:	
Date complete:	4/9/26