



The Islands Growth Deal is a ten-year package of investment that will seek to drive economic growth and the creation of sustainable jobs across Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides. The Deal is jointly funded by UK and Scottish Government, both investing £50m

## CALANAIS



Construction works began in July 2024 at the Calanais site, part of the Destination Development programme. Securing £4m of Islands Growth Deal funding.

The project aims to deliver 823m<sup>2</sup> of visitor centre space, including a new café, shop, function room and major new exhibition. Recently window frames have been installed and the new roof is almost complete making the building watertight. Inside, the building is now fully insulated, the first-fix mechanical and electrical services are nearing completion, and ventilation ducting is well underway. Project Delivery Manager Mark Davies is satisfied with the progress, stating, “After 15 months of significant work, Lewis Builders are pushing to complete the project as early as

possible in 2026. We are very pleased with the quality of their workmanship; it's great to see a company that really cares about what they do.”

Calanais are also delighted to welcome Claire Bates as she takes up her new role of General Manager. Claire brings extensive experience from the tourism and cultural sectors, with a distinguished background in tourism and visitor attraction management. Her most recent role was as Head of Regenerative Tourism for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, where she led a diverse team across three different attractions in Southwest Wales. She championed the principles of Regenerative Tourism, ensuring that visitor experiences directly benefited local communities, culture and the environment.

Claire’s experience includes a role as Operations Manager for the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, where she was responsible for delivering a world-class frontline visitor experience. Prior to that she managed a local authority museum close to her home county of Derbyshire. Claire says, “I am delighted to join the Calanais team at this pivotal and exciting time, I look forward to settling down into life on the Isle of Lewis and being a part this vibrant community”.

An AGM was held in September at Breascleite Hall where 20 Urras nan Tursachan members were welcomed along with members of the local community. In addition to their usual governance and procedural updates, UnT were delighted to open the floor for questions and discussion with attendees. It was inspiring to reflect on how far the project has come over the past year—celebrating major milestones and receiving such encouraging feedback from our community. The meeting also provided an opportunity to introduce and welcome their new General Manager, hear the unveiling of exciting plans from their Heritage Manager, Kathryn Lamont Smith, and receive a full update on site developments from their Project Delivery Manager, Mark Davies. Since June they have welcomed four new members of staff to the Calanais team who will play vital roles in preparing for the centre’s eagerly awaited 2026 opening.

# Outer Hebrides Campus

In May the new state of the art Technology and Innovation Centre at UHI North, West and Hebrides' Stornoway campus was officially opened.

Completed on time and on budget the project received £1.5m funding from Scottish Government through the Islands Growth Deal, match funders included the Islands Programme Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

The redevelopment created a modern training facility for engineering students and apprentices including virtual welding simulators and a Future Energy Lab which will support research in renewable energy technologies.

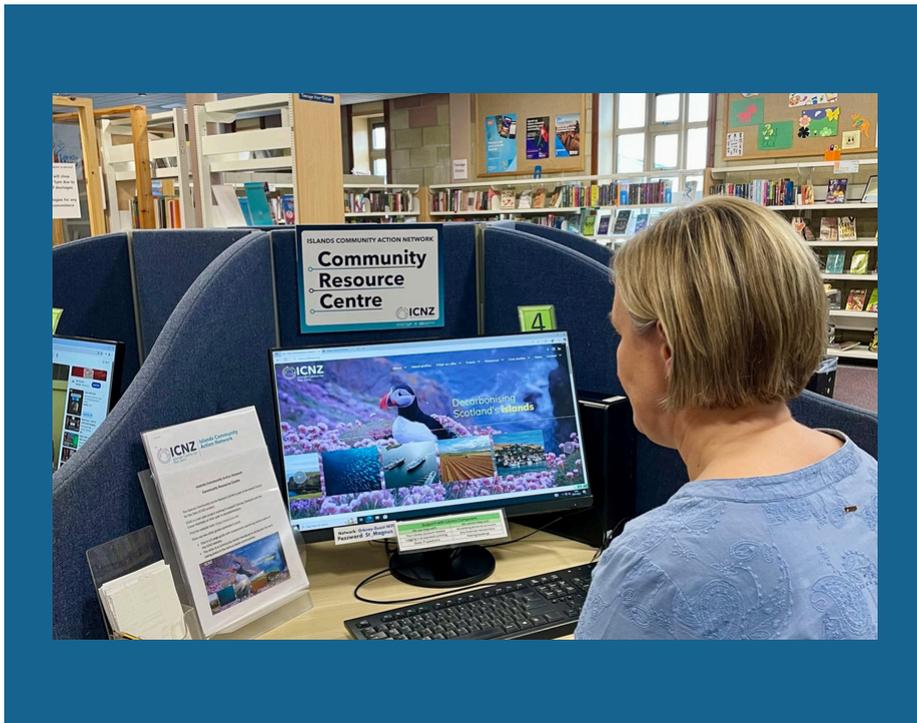
Additionally, a Newton Room will provide space for primary and secondary school pupils to gain hands-on experiences in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. The redeveloped facility will give UHI North, West and Hebrides capacity to increase the number of students on campus and further expand its curriculum into areas such as renewable energy, sustainability and net zero. This will assist to provide a skilled workforce which is needed by employers, developers and major investments in the renewable energy sector anticipated for the islands and throughout Scotland.



## ISLANDS CENTRE FOR NET ZERO

As part of the Islands Community Action Network (ICAN) ten new Community Resource Centres have been established across Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides. These will provide resources and facilitate knowledge sharing to inspire and support communities with decarbonisation projects.

Over the summer ICNZ exhibited at the International Island Games being held in Orkney. They had an interactive energy bike stand where the public could see how much pedal power they could produce in comparison to everyday appliances.

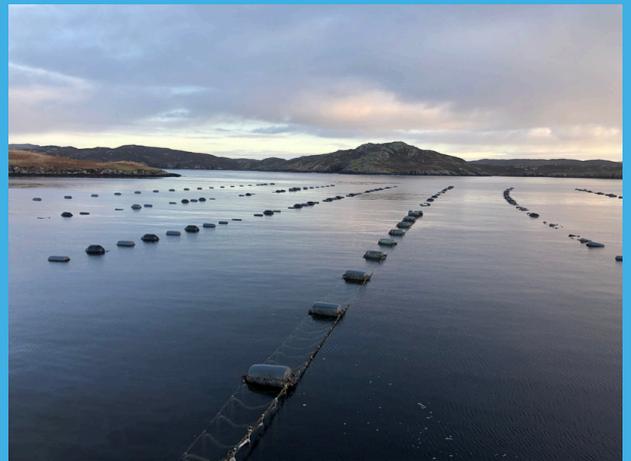


Further projects have been developed over the past year, including one focussing on agriculture and sustainable farming. This project supported individual farmers in Orkney to reduce reliance on fertiliser and monitor methane production to reduce emissions and increase efficiency. An ICNZ partner, Aquatera, have developed a carbon calculator and data exchange. This will address the lack of accurate island specific data for understanding, benchmarking and tracking carbon usage. The carbon calculator is available on the [ICNZ website](#).

In the Outer Hebrides construction started on the Creed Hydrogen Skills Innovation Centre at the start of 2025, this is the first capital energy transition project to commence within ICNZ. The Centre is focussed on green hydrogen production with the aim of increasing usage across the Outer Hebrides. Work continues on the Full Business Cases for further capital projects in Shetland and the Outer Hebrides. The projects included within the FBCs are due to commence in 2026.

## SHELL-VOLUTION

The UHI led project appointed a Project Director and Manager in April. The team are working closely with farmers to create practical solutions for the challenges faced within this sector. Through phased programmes of research and development it is hoped to increase farming outputs up to 18,000 tonnes by 2037. The most recent updates from Shell-Volution can be found on their [website](#), with further links to partners involved within the project.



The Islands Growth Deal Annual Report was published earlier this year. It can be viewed on the [website](#)

The TalEntEd programme has now successfully recruited for roles across the three academic partners. Courses have been advertised, including Women in Business, and will be delivered soon. The Creative Islands Wellbeing programme are also commencing their pan-island workstreams. They aim to facilitate original research, support island based creative practitioners and promote creative ageing. Additionally, the Pier Arts Centre in Orkney are working through the approval process for their capital projects. This will develop the old Post Office in Stromness to establish a creative hub and redevelop Links House to provide a residency centre.



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