

# First ever Islands Forum agrees next steps on net zero



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First Islands Forum takes place in Orkney to work together on shared opportunities and challenges

Representatives from island communities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all participated

Forum agrees next steps to improve cooperation on net zero, with next meeting set for six months' time

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, Nadhim Zahawi, has hailed the first ever UK Islands Forum as a major success.

The Forum, which took place at the Orkney Research & Innovation Campus, focused on the opportunities for islands around net zero and was attended by council leaders and chief executives representing all eligible island communities from across the UK.

Mr Zahawi chaired the Forum on behalf of the UK Government and was supported by Levelling Up Minister Dehenna Davison and Scotland Office Minister Malcolm Offord. All of the devolved governments were also represented, with Northern Ireland Minister John O'Dowd, Scottish Government Minister Richard Lochhead and Welsh Government Minister Julie James taking part.

Delegates from island authorities also saw at first hand a number of renewable energy projects on Orkney and had the opportunity to engage with the energy regulator, Ofgem including on how the regulatory framework can support net zero ambitions on the UK's islands.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, said:

The inaugural UK Islands Forum has been a wonderful way to bring together people from across our islands discuss our shared challenges and seize new opportunities to work more closely together.

The talks I've led in Orkney have left me in no doubt that this Forum is an innovation that is being embraced by islands from across the UK, and it was fantastic that our colleagues in the devolved governments were part of the discussion.

There is clearly a strong appetite to continue working together on issues from the deployment of renewable technologies to the importance of creating strong partnerships between the public and private sector to drive forward investment. I look forward to seeing the real difference this makes to our island communities and beyond.

Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison MP, said:

The UK Government is determined to increase opportunities and raise standards across every part of the UK, and this includes our island communities.

People on our islands often have to overcome geographical and logistical challenges just to go about their daily lives. Bringing island leaders together on a regular basis will help us to share successful ideas and face up to common problems.

I am really encouraged that this first Islands Forum here on Orkney sets us on a path that will pay real dividends in the years to come.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord said:

The inaugural Islands Forum was a tremendous opportunity to meet and share ideas about the unique challenges and opportunities for the UK's island communities.

Net Zero is a journey we are on together and the islands can be centres of excellence, developing concepts and systems

that can be scaled up and exported globally.

There's no doubt the energy market is going through a transition and our island communities are right at the heart of that. Rich in renewables and pivotal to the vital oil and gas sector, the Forum will help islands navigate the way ahead.

Further information:

Officials from the UK Government will progress actions on net zero, working closely with islands leaders and the devolved governments.

The next Islands Forum will take place in six months and the location decided in due course.

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