

UK Government Minister goes back to the future on Orkney



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Clean energy and tourism were top of the agenda as UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart took a fact finding trip to Orkney at the end of August 2021.

The Minister met with Orkney Islands Council leaders and key stakeholders as he toured the archipelago to see first hand how it's using its Neolithic ruins and world leading renewables expertise to deliver a bright future.

He heard how the UK Government's £50 million contribution to the Islands Growth Deal will help Orkney stay at the cutting edge of green energy and boost tourism.

The £335 million Islands Growth Deal is a partnership between the UK and Scottish governments and organisations across Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides.

Among the facilities the Minister visited in Stromness were the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus for renewables research and Aquatera/European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) who have established the Islands Centre for Net Zero to pool efforts in the race to reach net zero.

The Minister met with Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd at Kirkwall Airport to hear about the development of electric planes and saw a Hydrogen Filling Station in action at Hatston, before meetings with council leaders for a discussion on energy, digital connectivity and COP26, which Shetland Islands Council also joined.

Minister Iain Stewart visits Orkney's Green Sector

He completed his visits with the world famous, 5,000-years-

old Skara Brae village and heard about plans to increase visitor numbers to boost the local economy.

Minister Iain Stewart visits Skara Brae

Minister Stewart said:

It was a great experience to visit Orkney and I'm delighted the Islands Deal Growth deal is going to help develop the future of the archipelago alongside Shetland and the Outer Hebrides.

I saw how Orkney has the potential to generate through wind, waves and tides, a vast amount of the renewable energy that the UK needs to get towards net-zero. I really do believe that Orkney can be a trailblazer.

But it's not all about the present and future. Skara Brae, a 5000-years-old Neolithic village, is an incredibly important tourist destination, not just in Orkney, but a World Heritage Site. I look forward to seeing how, with the help of UK Government funding, experts will develop this as a destination both to make it more sustainable and cope with hopefully ever-increasing numbers as tourism returns after the pandemic.

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