

Young Islanders Network

Transport Challenge Report 2023

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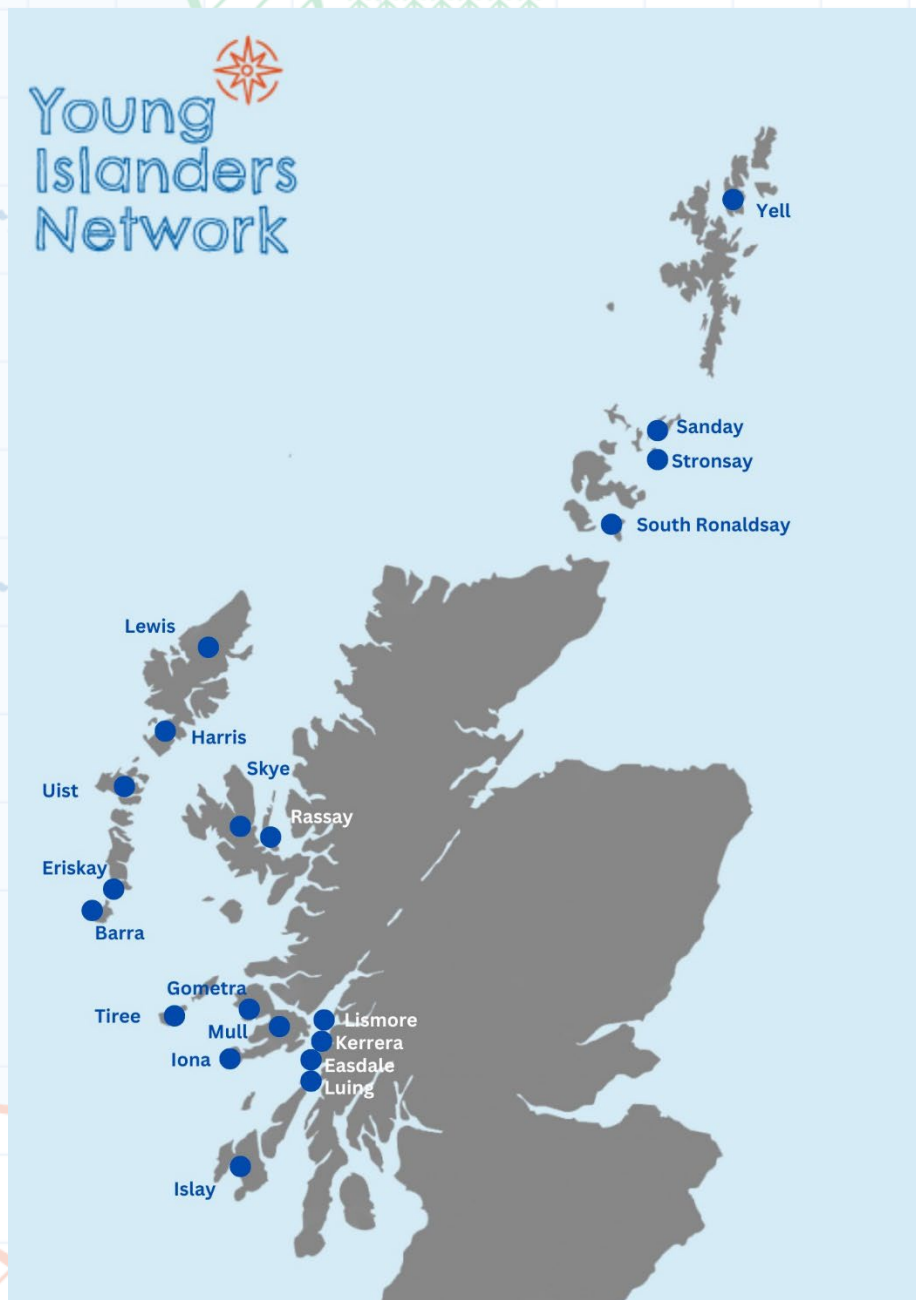
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Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of the Young Islanders Transport Challenge, which, between October 2022 and June 2023, was shared with young people between the ages of 5-25 years old across all of the island local authorities in Scotland to capture their views, concerns and ambitions for transport in Scotland's island communities.

Sample and Demographics

There were 99 online responses to the Transport Challenge online and in addition, 114 young people were consulted through in-person sessions. Islands represented in responses included: Barra, Easdale, Eriskay, Gometra, Harris, Iona, Islay, Kerrera, Lewis, Lismore, Luing, Mull, Raasay, Sanday, Skye, South Ronaldsay, Stronsay, Tiree, Uist and Yell.



Young Islanders Network

The Young Islanders Network is a Scottish Government funded youth work programme, devised and delivered by Youth Scotland, the national charity for community-based youth work. The Young Islanders Network (YIN), delivered in partnership with Scottish Government and the National Islands Plan, aims to build a network and community for young people to play a meaningful part in making the National Islands Plan work for young islanders.

In 2021, the Young Islanders Challenge sought to identify key areas of interest and concern for young people in Scotland's island communities. The challenge was created to give a voice to young people living in our island communities and asked them to tell us:

- Issues that affect their lives.
- What are the good and bad things about island life?
- What would they change?
- What would they like a Young Islanders Network to do and achieve?

Following a successful pilot, the Young Islanders Network was officially launched in August 2021 by Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon. Building on the Young Islanders Challenge, the newly-formed network consulted with young people on the most commonly-cited issue for young people – transportation.

Contextualising the Transport Challenge and the Scottish Government Transport Aims

The YIN is delivered as a youth work programme, meaning that it uses a youth work approach in setting any agenda or in consulting with its members on priorities and the National Islands Plan.

It's useful to understand this through the definition of the nature and purpose of youth work which has three essential and definitive features:

1. Young people choose to participate

The young person takes part voluntarily. They choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends and have fun. The young person decides whether to engage or to walk away.

2. Youth work must build from where young people are

Youth work meets young people where they are at. The young person's life experience is respected and forms the basis for shaping any agenda and development plan in partnership with peers and youth workers.

3. Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

Youth work is an equal partnership. The young person is recognised as an active partner who can, and should, have opportunities and resources to shape their lives. The relationship and dialogue between the young person and youth worker is central to the learning process.

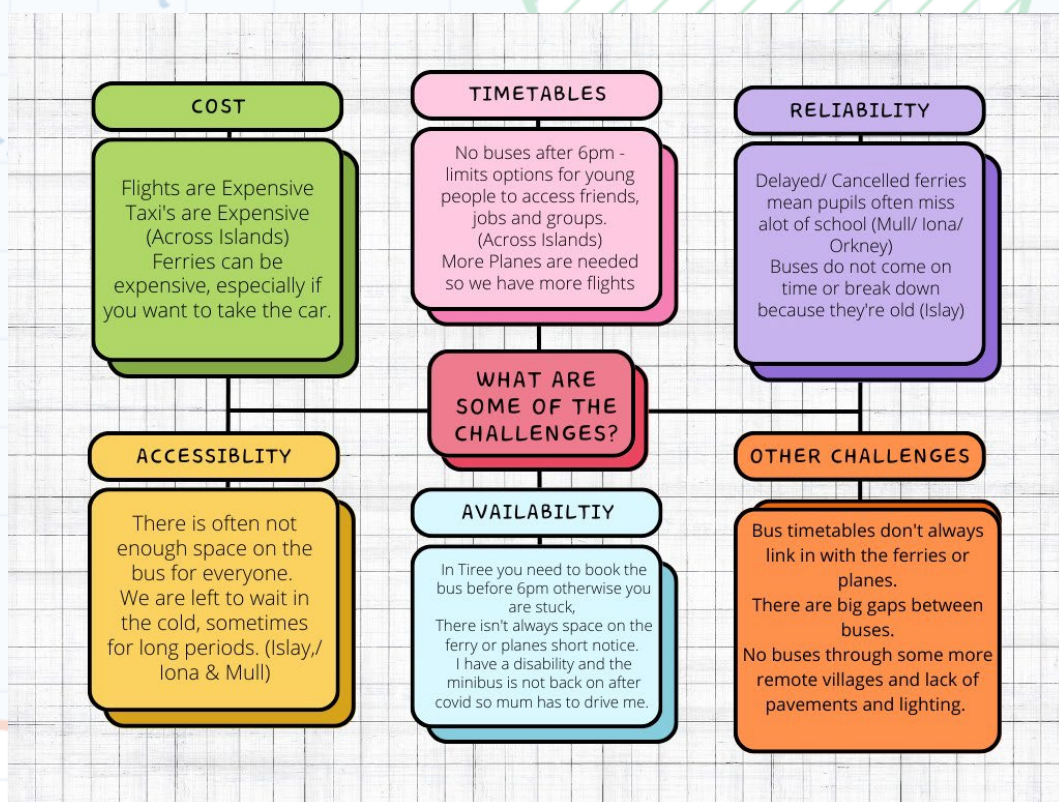
We believe that the net result for the findings of this report is that they are authentic, credible and, given the context of the youth work approach, given by engaged young people who are motivated to participate.

While the responses were given in the format set by the YIN membership, they align well to the Scottish Government Transport Aims.

Report Findings by Aims

Reduces Inequalities & Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth:

As highlighted throughout the report, Young Islanders ask that they have access to the same opportunities whether they live in a main town or village or a rural island community. Rural should not mean remote for the young people. They have asked that they can access Youth Groups, job opportunities and social events regularly through reliable, accessible and affordable transport.



Young people have highlighted the importance of recognising the value of the free buses under the National Entitlement Card Under 22 scheme, but also in communities which rely on ferries as much as buses as part of their daily commute, such as Raasay and some of the Orkney Islanders, that these ferry fares would also be free to all under 22. These ferries are the bus for the young people in these communities.

Young people in Islay expressed concerns of overcrowding on their school buses. This is a journey which many of them are taking most days and they have said that it is uncomfortable due to lack of space and that the service can be unreliable at times. With little other alternative, other than relying on cars and private hire taxis this may be a further barrier to some of the young people who find attending education challenging. For young people who experience adverse mental health or disability, overcrowding and unreliability of service could be a deterrent to using this provision. It therefore is not easy to use for all.

Young people were spoken to across the islands, and it was highlighted that they were not always aware of how to access the best value options on offer through schemes such as the NEC Under 22 Free bus scheme or the Air Discount Scheme.

It is imperative that young people get support to understand how to apply for and then how to utilise these when booking services. We must collectively ensure that no young person in the islands is at a financial disadvantage in comparison to their peers, due to barriers with access to digital booking platforms, telephone booking systems or in person experiences.

Young people spoke about wanting to access part-time jobs in town areas, but due to limited public transport options in the evenings, they were unable to pursue this without relying on other people with cars such as parents or family members to get them home at the end of their work shift, limiting them financially and experientially.

Many young islanders rely on buses, ferries and flights in order to be able to participate in opportunities only available to them off island such as sports, music, events and training. Young people often have to travel off island at weekends to access these opportunities. In the summer they are faced with competing with tourists for spaces on buses and ferries, along with increases in cost due to the seasonal increase and increase in costs for accommodation in areas where the travel times are limited.

During this consultation, young people identified the high cost and limited timetable for flights as a barrier to using these services. Where ferry travel is not suitable due to the duration and a quicker alternative is sought, young people feel it is then impeded due to the cost. There was also limited awareness of the Air Discount Scheme (ADS) across the network. It would be beneficial to promote this across the island's youth, particularly looking at those who are approaching 16 years of age and will be expected to have their own ADS card to travel.

Takes Climate Action:

Many of the young people are aware of the importance and need for clean, green and sustainable transport in their communities, with an emphasis on this also being reliable

and affordable. In the report, few of the young people identified choices such as cycling or walking as viable daily options for travel.

In discussions young people highlighted concerns over lack of safe routes to use greener options such as cycling or walking due to having no paths and in some places no streetlights during the Winter where it can be dark after school in many areas. In many of the islands they did not have access to greener alternatives to carbon fuelled vehicles; with a minority acknowledging the use of electric vehicles, mainly privately owned cars.

In workplaces there are the cycle to work schemes in place to support employees to access cheaper options to purchase or hire bikes through their employer and the scheme. However, this is not an option open to young people who are not working or who do not qualify in their workplace, for example, if they are only on short term/ part time or zero hour contracts. Should a young person wish to purchase a new bike to use as an alternative greener option, they must do this at full cost, and this is a further barrier to some, potentially those who rely on public transport as an affordable option. Many primary schools in Eilean Siar, Skye, Orkney and Shetland islands amongst others offer young people the Cycling Proficiency Bikeability qualification. Would a small grant to support cycle schemes for young people encourage more young people to be attracted to taking up this alternative option?

There was not a great deal of discussion during this consultation on Transport and Climate Action, but through the Young Islanders Network partnership - working with the Carbon Neutral Islands project team - this is an item we could explore further, and report back on at a later date.

Improves our Health and Wellbeing:

As highlighted in the last two items, access to affordable greener alternatives such as cycling and safe spaces to walk would be welcomed by the young people across the islands.

Being able to access extra-curricular, social and sports activities out with the school day is of great importance for the wellbeing to many of the young people involved in the discussions and reducing and removing many of these barriers through provision of reliable, accessible and affordable travel options.

"I am at school all week and would like to see friends at weekends but can only go on Saturday during the day and can't stay late. I would like to go swimming to after school or weekend but can't do that too."

Young people need to be able to access appointments in their community with discretion and know that they can travel home safely and independently. Relying on lifts from adults in their community could put in place barriers to them accessing support services confidentially and without question.

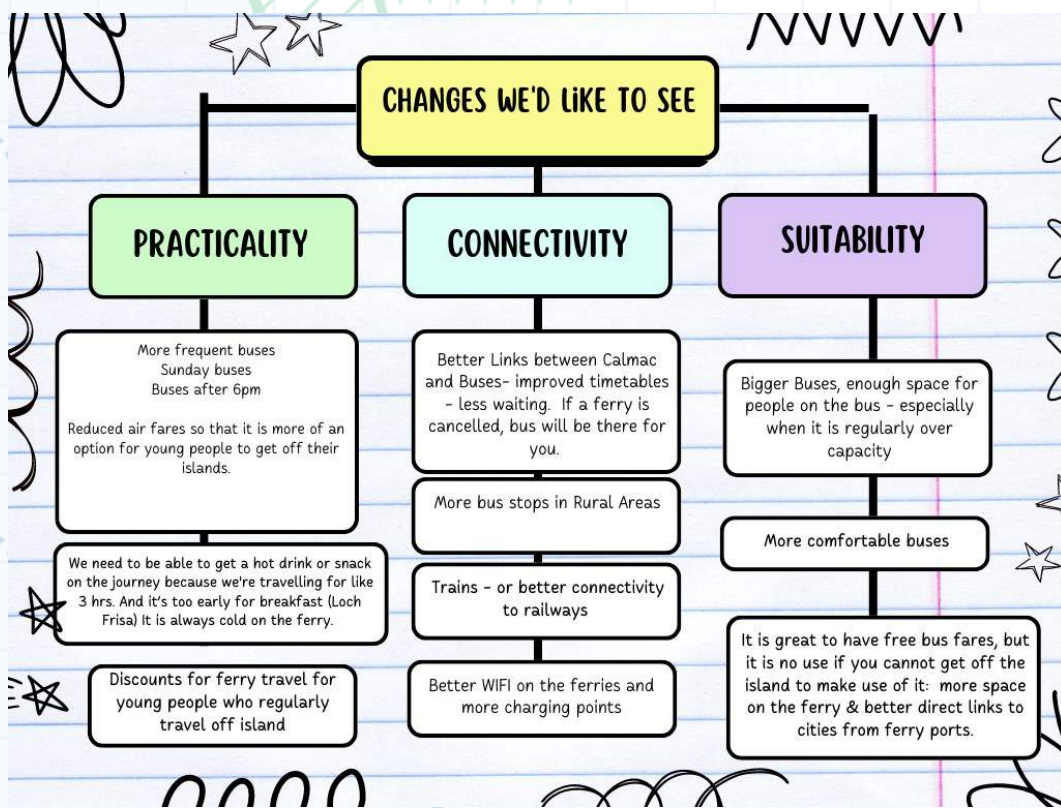
Referring back to the previous point from Islay, where young people expressed concerns of overcrowding on their school buses and young people who experience adverse mental health or disability, overcrowding and unreliability of service could be a deterrent to using this provision and impacting their feeling of inclusion and wellness.

In Mull, young people said:

"The temporary ferry CALMAC have used over winter from Craignure to Oban is not big enough & has no drink or food services. This means people often have to stand outside in freezing wet weather for the hour-long journey and we cannot get any breakfast or hot drink on journey to school when we have had to leave our houses at 6am."

and

"Because the journey to and from school is such a pain, it puts me off travelling at other times at the weekends or holidays. If it was more reliable and comfortable you wouldn't think twice of heading over to Oban to meet friends or do stuff that you can't do on Iona or Mull, but you are just completely put off."



Conclusion

In conclusion, the emergent themes from the consultation were that young people want to feel safe, they want to have a say on how the services are delivered in their communities and they want to be able to access opportunities without barriers due to timetables, cost, reliability and accessibility.

Supplementary

The Young Islanders Network

The Young Islanders Network has flourished since the official launch in August 2022. YIN representatives have met regularly online and in person, travelled to national events together and met with representatives of local and national government, including a breakfast meeting with then [Deputy First Minister, Mr John Swinney](#). The YIN has furthered its goal of connecting young people across the islands with a thriving social media community and dedicated website www.yin.scot

The Transport Challenge report can be seen in its original interactive format [on this webpage](#)

Youth Scotland

Youth Scotland is the national charity for supporting and delivering youth work in the community. We believe in changing lives through youth work.

We are the largest national youth work organisation in Scotland, supporting 97,018 young people, 1,999 youth groups and over 10,775 youth workers. Youth Scotland has been around since the early 20th century and has a diverse membership network – from small rural youth groups to large urban projects. The common goal that we all share is better outcomes for young people.

Our membership network is made up of local youth groups of all sizes, Area Associations and Youth Scotland staff who can provide support and training on a range of youth work topics. We are proud of the varied, universal youth work our network delivers and the innovative solutions our members create in an ever-changing youth work landscape.

You can find more information [on our website](#)