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Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

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1 August 2025

Dear Finlay,

I am pleased to share with you a report detailing the findings of an independent evaluation of the Islands Programme capital funding scheme. It was published earlier today.

The report was commissioned to assess if the current system of competitive bidding and local authority-led applications remains the most effective mechanism to select projects that will provide value for money and deliver positive outcomes for island communities in line with the objectives of the National Islands Plan.

To inform the evaluation, researchers interviewed a variety of stakeholders and analysed a corpus of information including reports stemming from the work that your committee carried out in past years to examine the operation and impact of the Islands Programme.

I have instructed my officials to work with the Scottish Futures Trust to engage with the suggestions made in the report.

The Islands Programme is an important element in the delivery of the National Islands Plan and supports our efforts to work alongside communities to address their needs and ambitions.

The findings of this report will help to ensure that we are able to continue delivering on our shared vision of thriving island communities by investing in their locally led futures.

Yours sincerely,

**MAIRI GOUGEON**

