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HERITAGE AND ARTS | 27 August 2026

Scottish Government Opens Consultation On National Performing Company For Traditional Music

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scottish-government-opens-consultation-on-national-performing-company-for-traditional-music/>



The Scottish Government has begun consultation work on a new National Performing Company for traditional music. The proposed body would become Scotland's sixth National Performing Company, joining the National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. The consultation asks

how a national organisation could support and represent traditional music.

A new National Performing Company is to be established for Scotland's traditional music sector. The Scottish Government announced the next steps on 26 August 2026. A public consultation has been launched, seeking views on how a flagship organisation could raise the profile of Scottish folk music internationally.

The Government said early feedback is being sought from the traditional music community and wider audiences to understand priorities for future support and what a national performing company might look like.

The First Minister held a reception for the traditional music sector at Bute House and attended the Sound of Scotland folk music showcase at Edinburgh's Queen's Hall. Culture Secretary Mairi McAllan is also to chair a roundtable with leaders in traditional music.

The new company would become Scotland's sixth National Performing Company.

The Existing National Performing Companies

Scotland's existing National Performing Companies are the National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

The Scottish Government's report on the five companies for April 2016 to March 2018 described their role as producing and performing work across Scotland and internationally, supporting education, participation and cultural engagement.

A 2026 FOI release on National Performing Companies recorded the 2025-26 grant allocation from the Scottish Government as £24,607,000. It also stated that in 2022-23 the companies worked with more than 1,600 creative practitioners in 373 venues across Scotland, delivering 2,047 live performances to more than half a million people across all 32 local-authority areas.

The traditional music proposal would place a further cultural form inside that national performing-company framework.

The Traditional Music Record

The Scottish Government's announcement states that a VisitScotland survey in 2024 found that 79 per cent of Scots said Scottish traditional music gave them a sense of cultural connection, while 88 per cent believed it should be preserved for future generations.

The same announcement says music businesses in Scotland reported turnover of £27.4 million in 2023.

Traditional music in Scotland covers a wide range of forms, including Gaelic song, Scots song, piping, fiddle, clarsach, accordion, traveller tradition, ballad, dance music, community music, festivals, sessions, teaching and contemporary folk performance.

The announcement was also issued in Gaelic. The Gaelic version described support for traditional music and the establishment of a new national performing company.

The Gaelic element places the proposal near recent public funding for Gaelic culture. On 11 August 2026, the Scottish Government announced support for Cnoc Soilleir in South Uist, describing Gaelic language and traditional arts as part of Scotland's history, culture and identity, particularly in rural and island areas.

Culture Funding Context

The National Performing Companies sit inside Scotland's wider culture-funding system.

Scottish Government culture policy includes support for national collections, Creative Scotland, cultural organisations, museums and the performing companies. The 2026-27 Scottish Budget includes lines for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, including support for the cultural and creative sectors.

SPICe published analysis in 2023 on trends in culture funding. That briefing recorded the position of cultural spending, Creative Scotland, local authority culture services and public funding pressure.

The traditional music proposal therefore arrives within a culture-finance record that includes national-company funding, Creative Scotland portfolio funding, local-authority culture budgets, heritage spending and support for language and traditional arts.

Questions For The Consultation Record

The consultation will produce the next public record on design.

The Government's announcement says it is seeking views on what a national performing company might look like and how it can work for performers, groups and organisations across Scotland.

The final model has not yet been published.

Public records still to come include consultation responses, any analysis of those responses, the proposed structure, funding route, governance, remit, geographic approach, relationship with Gaelic and Scots language organisations, and relationship with existing festivals, teaching networks and community bodies.

Until those documents are published, the record establishes intention, consultation and the proposed national-company status. It does not yet establish budget, headquarters, governance, repertoire, staffing, touring model or grant arrangements.

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ENVIRONMENT | 27 August 2026

Third Just Transition Commission Established With Adaptation Remit Until 2031

Read online: <https://modern.scot/third-just-transition-commission-established-with-adaptation-remit-until-2031/>



The Scottish Government has established a third Just Transition Commission, running until 2031. The new Commission will focus on adaptation as well as net zero, with ministers linking its remit to wildfires, flooding, drought, workers, rural communities and vulnerable groups. The body follows earlier Just Transition Commissions established from 2019 and the second Commission's final report in February 2026.

Scotland's third Just Transition Commission has been established.

The Scottish Government announced the body on 26 August 2026. It will run until 2031 and brings together 15 experts in public health, economics and community engagement.

The Government says the Commission will focus on adaptation, reflecting the effects of extreme weather on daily life. It will also support work on the transition to net zero, including the effect of decarbonisation on jobs and industry, with reference to Scotland's offshore energy sector.

The Commission will engage with workers, rural communities and vulnerable groups to shape costed recommendations for government.

The Previous Commission Record

The first Just Transition Commission was established by Scottish Ministers in 2019.

The Commission's interim report recorded that its remit was to prepare practical recommendations on how just transition principles could be applied to climate change action in Scotland.

A call for evidence analysis was published in 2020. That process invited views from individuals, representative bodies, public bodies and businesses before the Commission's final report.

The second Just Transition Commission was appointed in December 2021. Its final report, *No Time to Lose*, was published in February 2026.

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan material records that the first Commission was established in 2019 and that the second Commission's 2026 report assessed Scotland's progress toward a just transition.

The third Commission is therefore part of a continuing advisory structure rather than a new policy term.

Adaptation Added To The Work

The 2026 announcement places adaptation at the centre of the third Commission's remit.

Adaptation covers preparation for the effects of climate change already under way or expected in future. In the Scottish Government announcement, the examples given are wildfires, flooding and drought.

Scotland's National Adaptation Plan for 2024 to 2029 was published in September 2024. It sets out Scotland's approach to adapting to climate change across communities, public services, economy, infrastructure, nature and place.

The annual report for 2025 to 2026 records progress under that adaptation plan. It includes work on communities, public services, environment, business and infrastructure resilience.

The Climate Change Committee is expected to publish an independent assessment of Scotland's adaptation progress by the end of 2026.

Wildfire In The 2026 Record

The Commission was established in the same summer as the Cairngorms wildfire response.

On 6 August 2026, the Scottish Government announced support for businesses affected by the Cairngorms wildfire. Highland Council later published information on a Cairngorms Fire Recovery Fund.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service published updates on the Glenmore area reopening after multi-agency assessment and later issued an incident timeline overview.

The wildfire record sits inside the adaptation context named by the Scottish Government's announcement. It shows the type of event now appearing in public, business and emergency-service records.

Climate Change Plan And Just Transition Indicators

The Scottish Government's climate change plan material for 2026 to 2040 places just transition principles within emissions-reduction policy and public assessment.

The Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment for the plan states that the 2024 Act amended climate change legislation to establish a carbon-budget approach to emissions reduction target setting. It also records the creation of the first Just Transition Commission in 2019 and the second Commission's final report in 2026.

The Government's announcement for the third Commission states that previous commissions helped shape policy on Grangemouth and informed creation of just transition indicators within Scotland's Climate Change Plan.

The new Commission therefore begins work inside a policy framework that now includes carbon budgets, adaptation planning, previous commission reports and indicator development.

What The New Commission Has Been Asked To Produce

The Government says the Commission will provide advice and costed recommendations.

Its stated engagement groups include workers, rural communities and vulnerable groups. Its subject areas include adaptation, net zero, jobs, industry and offshore energy.

The Commission will run to 2031. That timescale extends beyond the current 2024 to 2029 adaptation plan and sits inside the 2026 to 2040 Climate Change Plan period.

Documents still to come include the Commission’s work programme, membership details, minutes or evidence sessions, interim outputs, recommendations, government responses and any monitoring of implementation.

The dated record now consists of the first Commission from 2019, the second Commission and its 2026 final report, the 2024 adaptation plan, the 2025-26 adaptation annual report, the 2026 Climate Change Plan material and the third Commission announcement.

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HERITAGE AND ARTS | 27 August 2026

People's Palace Refurbishment Moves Forward With Conditional Scottish Government Support

Read online: <https://modern.scot/peoples-palace-refurbishment-moves-forward-with-conditional-scottish-government-support/>



The Scottish Government has announced up to £14 million in conditional support for the refurbishment of the People's Palace and Winter Gardens in Glasgow. The museum closed to the public in 2024. Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life are expected to submit a final business case, while the funding remains subject to due diligence and public-finance requirements.

The refurbishment of the People's Palace and Winter Gardens has moved forward with a conditional Scottish Government funding pledge capped at £14 million.

The announcement was made on 27 August 2026. The Scottish Government said the support remains subject to completion of due diligence, including submission of a final business case by Glasgow Life, funding conditions under the Scottish Public Finance Manual, and assessment for compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

The People's Palace museum closed to the public in 2024.

The Government said Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life are expected to submit a final business case in due course.

The Scottish Government also said it had convened a partnership group involving Glasgow City Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland to help progress the restoration.

The Funding Position

Glasgow Life said the project had built momentum through a funding package that includes Scottish Government support, Glasgow City Council investment, National Lottery Heritage Fund development funding and wider fundraising.

Earlier project material from Glasgow Life recorded National Lottery Heritage Fund development funding for the People's Palace and Winter Gardens and described plans for a major refurbishment.

Further fundraising has formed part of the project record. The National Lottery Heritage Fund project page describes the scheme as People's Palace & Winter Gardens: Glasgow's palace of the imagination.

In February 2026, STV and Museums Journal reported that the redevelopment had been delayed and that the reopening timetable had moved amid funding uncertainty and building-survey work.

In June 2026, the Scottish Parliament debated the People's Palace and Winter Gardens. Ministers referred to partnership working and the need to progress the project.

The August funding announcement now places a conditional Scottish Government contribution into that record.

The Building And Its Function

The People's Palace stands on Glasgow Green and is listed by Historic Environment Scotland as a Category A building.

The museum opened in 1898 and has long been associated with Glasgow's social history. Its collections and displays have covered the life of the city and its people, including domestic life, work, public culture and civic history.

Glasgow Life describes the project as a transformation of the People's Palace and Winter Gardens, intended to create an inclusive and accessible social-history museum and visitor destination in the East End.

The building's setting on Glasgow Green places it within a longer civic and public-space history. Glasgow Green is one of Scotland's oldest public parks and has been associated with public assembly, recreation, political gatherings and municipal life.

The People's Palace therefore sits within both museum history and public-space history.

The Recent Repair Record

The People's Palace closed as part of a major refurbishment process. Before closure, Glasgow Life ran a "last chance to see" campaign. The closure was presented as part of preparations for redevelopment.

By early 2026, public reporting described delay. STV reported on 20 February that the reopening had been delayed indefinitely. Museums Journal reported on 23 February that redevelopment had been delayed amid funding uncertainty.

The Scottish Parliament debate in June brought the issue back into the parliamentary record.

The August 2026 announcement records a new stage but not final delivery. The Government's own background note confirms that the support is conditional and that a final business case is still expected.

That places the project between funding announcement and completed restoration.

Public Cultural Estate

The People's Palace sits within Scotland's wider public cultural estate, which includes museums, galleries, libraries, archives, collections, historic buildings and local authority cultural services.

The Scottish Government's culture policy and annual culture-funding material record funding for national collections, national performing companies, creative organisations and industrial museums.

The Scottish Budget 2026-27 includes culture spending lines and support for cultural capital projects.

The People's Palace project is therefore one case inside a broader record of public cultural assets, capital repair, partnership funding and local authority cultural responsibility.

The next dated stages will be the final business case, funding decisions still outstanding, due-diligence completion and the published timetable for reopening.

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ECONOMY | 27 August 2026

Scottish Household Survey Records Tourism Support And Lower Local Involvement In Decisions

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scottish-household-survey-records-tourism-support-and-lower-local-involvement-in-decisions/>



The Scottish Household Survey's 2025 tourism sentiment results show that 48 per cent of adults agreed tourism was good for their local area, while 12 per cent disagreed. Island and rural areas recorded stronger agreement. The same survey found that 11 per cent of adults agreed that local people were involved in tourism decisions, while 24 per cent disagreed.

Scotland's latest tourism sentiment figures record broad support for tourism alongside lower agreement

that local people are involved in decisions about it.

The Scottish Government published the Scottish Household Survey tourism sentiment results for 2025 on 27 August 2026. The publication contains responses to questions on tourism benefits, visitor pressure, tourism impact management, local involvement and tourism and hospitality jobs.

The Scottish Household Survey is an annual survey of the general population in Scotland. It has been carried out since 1999.

In 2025, 48 per cent of adults agreed that tourism was good for their local area. Twelve per cent disagreed.

Agreement was higher in rural and island areas. In rural areas, 63 per cent of adults agreed that tourism was good for their local area. In island areas, 87 per cent agreed.

Visitor Pressure

The survey also asked whether visitors were putting too much pressure on local areas.

Across Scotland, eight per cent of adults agreed that visitors were putting too much pressure on their local area. Fifty-five per cent disagreed.

In island areas, 39 per cent agreed that visitors were putting too much pressure on their local area. The local-authority results recorded higher levels of agreement in Orkney, Highland, Shetland and Na h-Eileanan Siar than the national average.

The survey results therefore show different patterns by geography. Island and rural areas recorded higher agreement that tourism was good for the local area, while island areas also recorded higher agreement that visitors were putting pressure on the local area.

Community Involvement

The community involvement question produced lower agreement.

Across Scotland, 11 per cent of adults agreed that people in their local area were involved in making decisions about tourism. Twenty-four per cent disagreed.

Many respondents selected neither agree nor disagree, did not know, or said the question was not applicable.

The result records public perception of involvement, not a direct audit of consultation processes, council decisions, destination-management groups or tourism organisations.

The same publication includes results on perceptions of tourism impact management and tourism and hospitality jobs.

The Strategy Record

Scotland's current tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, was launched in March 2020.

The strategy was developed through collaboration involving the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Government, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland.

Scotland Outlook 2030 describes a vision for Scotland to become a world leader in 21st-century tourism. The strategy uses the language of responsible tourism, sustainable growth, community, place and visitor experience.

The national strategy has since been tracked through a performance framework. The Scotland Outlook 2030 tracker, published by VisitScotland, includes measures linked to regional spread, responsible tourism, visitor experience, business resilience, workforce and community.

Tourism policy therefore sits between national economic objectives and local experience of visitor numbers, services, housing, infrastructure and seasonal pressure.

The Rural And Island Record

Rural and island tourism has its own policy context.

The Scottish Government's tourism policy sits beside islands policy, transport policy, housing, short-term lets regulation, visitor management, ferry services, local-authority capacity and the work of destination-management organisations.

VisitScotland's visitor management work has included a national visitor management group. The group brings together public bodies and partner organisations to consider pressure at visitor hotspots, public messaging and local management.

The Scottish Household Survey results do not identify the causes of visitor pressure in each local area. They record public sentiment across different geographies.

The local-authority and rural-island breakdowns add a current data point to a record that has changed since the Covid period, when tourism and hospitality moved through closure, reopening, domestic travel surges, staffing pressure, short-term-let regulation and inflation.

What The Survey Adds

The 2025 survey results add a public-perception measure to Scotland's tourism record.

The figures show agreement that tourism benefits local areas, especially in island and rural Scotland. They also show higher reported visitor pressure in island areas and low agreement that local people are involved in tourism decisions.

Those findings now sit alongside Scotland Outlook 2030, VisitScotland's tracker and visitor-management work.

The next survey results will show whether the pattern changes after further strategy delivery, local tourism planning and visitor-management activity.

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ECONOMY | 27 August 2026

Energy Prices Remain A Leading Concern For Scottish Businesses

Read online: <https://modern.scot/energy-prices-remain-a-leading-concern-for-scottish-businesses/>



The latest Business Insights and Conditions Survey for Scotland records falling demand and energy prices as the top concerns for September 2026 among businesses with 10 or more employees. More than three quarters of businesses were very or somewhat concerned about energy prices. The figures sit beside Scotland's renewable electricity statistics and the continuing record of energy strategy, grid investment and business cost pressure.

Energy prices remain one of the leading concerns for

Scottish businesses.

The Scottish Government's Business Insights and Conditions Survey for Scotland, wave 162, covers businesses with 10 or more employees and a presence in Scotland. The data covers the survey period from 3 August to 16 August 2026.

For September 2026, the top concerns reported by businesses were falling demand, at 14.9 per cent, and energy prices, at 14.6 per cent. An estimated 13.4 per cent of businesses reported no concerns.

When asked directly about energy prices, 76.4 per cent of businesses said they were very or somewhat concerned.

The figure was higher in some sectors. In Transport and Storage, 79.7 per cent of businesses were very or somewhat concerned about energy prices. In Accommodation and Food Services, the figure was 81.7 per cent.

Fuel prices produced a similar pattern. An estimated 73.5 per cent of Scottish businesses were very or somewhat concerned about increases in fuel prices. The figure rose to 86.8 per cent in Construction and 90.7 per cent in Transport and Storage.

Prices Bought And Prices Sold

The survey records cost pressure inside business supply chains.

For an estimated 26.3 per cent of businesses, the prices of goods or services bought in July 2026 had increased compared with June 2026. During the same period, 11.2 per cent of businesses increased the prices of goods and services they sold.

For September 2026, 11.8 per cent of businesses expected to increase prices. Among businesses considering price increases, the top reported factors were labour costs at 30.1 per cent and energy prices at 27.1 per cent.

The figures record a gap between input-price movement and selling-price movement. They do not identify business margins directly, but they show the categories through which businesses are reporting pressure.

Turnover also shifted during the period. Around 23.6 per cent of businesses reported increased turnover in July 2026 compared with the previous month. That was down from 32.2 per cent in June 2026 and 30.6 per cent in July 2025.

In August 2026, 27.7 per cent of businesses expected business performance to increase over the next 12 months. An estimated 9.8 per cent expected it to decrease.

The Energy Record Around The Survey

The BICS figures were published during a period in which Scotland's energy record is being measured in several ways.

The Scottish Government's Energy Statistics for Scotland for quarter one of 2026 recorded renewable electricity generation of 13.4 TWh in the first quarter. Earlier quarter four 2025 statistics recorded the scale of Scotland's renewable electricity planning pipeline.

Scotland's draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, published in 2023, set out a planned route toward a transformed energy system, including renewable generation, supply chains, hydrogen, energy demand reduction and a move away from fossil-fuel dependence.

Businesses experience that wider energy system through contract prices, fuel bills, transport costs, heating, cooling, refrigeration, production, delivery and customer demand.

The BICS release does not measure ownership of generation, exposure to electricity-market design, business contracts, network charges or the connection between Scottish renewable output and individual business bills.

It records reported concern and price experience among businesses during the survey period.

Recent Survey Pattern

The August Scottish Economic Bulletin recorded that BICS data from July showed the share of businesses expecting to increase prices had fallen for a third consecutive month. It also noted that energy prices and transportation or haulage costs as factors for price rises had risen following the increase in oil and gas prices since March, then eased as prices moderated in June and July.

Wave 160 of the BICS Scotland release, covering 6 July to 19 July 2026, recorded labour costs and energy prices as the top factors for businesses considering price increases in August 2026, at 30.9 per cent and 27.6 per cent respectively.

Wave 162 records similar categories for September, with labour costs at 30.1 per cent and energy prices at 27.1 per cent among businesses considering price increases.

The series therefore places energy costs within a continuing business-cost record rather than a single monthly result.

The Wider Scottish Economy

The BICS publication was released the day after Scotland's first estimate of GDP for the second quarter of

2026. That release recorded 0.7 per cent growth in Scotland's onshore economy during April to June.

The two releases describe different parts of the economy.

GDP records output. BICS records reported business conditions and expectations. Together they show an economy with increased output during the second quarter and continuing business concern about falling demand, energy prices, fuel prices and labour costs.

The next BICS Scotland publication, with data to wave 163, is scheduled for 10 September 2026.

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ECONOMY | 27 August 2026

Scotland's Onshore Economy Grew By 0.7 Per Cent In The Second Quarter Of 2026

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scotlands-onshore-economy-grew-by-0-7-per-cent-in-the-second-quarter-of-2026/>



Scotland's onshore GDP grew by 0.7 per cent in real terms between April and June 2026, after growth of 0.1 per cent in the previous quarter. Services, production, construction and agriculture, forestry and fishing all grew during the quarter. The figures exclude offshore oil and gas extraction and form part of Scotland's official output record.

Scotland's onshore economy grew by 0.7 per cent in real terms during the second quarter of 2026. The first estimate of GDP for April to June was published by the

Scottish Government's Chief Statistician on 26 August 2026. The estimate follows growth of 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of the year. In the UK as a whole, GDP grew by 0.4 per cent during the second quarter of 2026, after growth of 0.6 per cent in the previous quarter.

The Scottish figure relates to onshore GDP. Offshore oil and gas extraction is not included.

The second-quarter estimate records growth across major sectors. Services output grew by 0.6 per cent, production grew by 0.9 per cent, construction grew by 0.3 per cent, and agriculture, forestry and fishing grew by 1.7 per cent.

The Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants sector made the largest contribution to quarterly GDP growth.

The Monthly Path Through The Quarter

The monthly GDP estimate for June 2026 shows output growing by 0.5 per cent during the month.

April recorded growth of 0.5 per cent. May recorded a fall of 0.1 per cent. The first estimate for the quarter therefore contains a pattern of growth, contraction and renewed growth across the three months.

GDP statistics measure the output of the economy in Scotland. The first quarterly estimate is produced to provide early information on economic performance and is subject to revision as more complete data becomes available.

The Scottish Government's publication states that the estimates are official statistics in development. That designation reflects ongoing work to improve methodology, data sources and quality.

Recent GDP Record

The second-quarter figure follows a period of weaker recorded growth.

Scotland's onshore GDP grew by 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2026. The second quarter of 2025

recorded growth of 0.2 per cent after 0.4 per cent in the previous quarter.

The August 2026 Scottish Economic Bulletin reported that business activity had weakened through the second quarter according to the monthly Purchasing Managers Index survey, although the pace of contraction eased slightly in June.

The same bulletin recorded that economic conditions remained shaped by inflation, energy prices, interest rates, labour market conditions, business investment and global uncertainty.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission's January 2026 forecasts expected GDP growth of 1.3 per cent in 2026 and 2027. Its work provides the economic and fiscal forecasts used for Scottish Budget scrutiny.

Sector Movements

The second-quarter estimate records growth in services, production, construction and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Services form the largest part of Scotland's onshore economy. A 0.6 per cent increase in services therefore has a large effect on the total figure.

Production includes manufacturing, electricity and gas, water supply, waste management, mining and quarrying. Its 0.9 per cent quarterly increase contributed to the overall rise.

Construction grew by 0.3 per cent. Agriculture, forestry and fishing grew by 1.7 per cent, although that sector represents a smaller share of overall output.

The Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants sector made the largest contribution. That sector includes retail, wholesale, motor trades, accommodation and food services.

The figure therefore sits near several other current indicators: business concern about falling demand and energy costs, tourism sentiment, household spending pressure and continuing interest in public and private infrastructure investment.

The Longer Output Record

Scotland's GDP figures are part of a statistical series used to track output over time.

The Scottish Government states that GDP statistics measure the output of the economy in Scotland. They do not measure household income, business profitability, regional distribution, public-service quality, job security, company ownership or local retention of value.

For that reason, the GDP release gives one part of the economic record.

The second-quarter figure records higher onshore output during spring 2026. The supporting documents record sector movements and the monthly path through the quarter. The wider economic record includes business surveys, fiscal forecasts, labour-market data, inflation, productivity and public-finance assessments.

The next monthly and quarterly releases will show whether the second-quarter growth is revised and whether the pattern continues into the second half of 2026.

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POLICY AND GOVERNMENT | 27 August 2026

Scotland Moves Toward Compulsory Purchase Reform After 2025 Consultation

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scotland-moves-toward-compulsory-purchase-reform-after-2025-consultation/>



The Scottish Government has confirmed that it will bring forward legislation in this Parliament to reform compulsory purchase in Scotland. The proposed changes follow consultation in 2025 and a longer policy record stretching back to the Scottish Law Commission's 2014 discussion paper. The reforms cover approval procedures, electronic service of notices, new rights and temporary possession, compensation rules and further work on compulsory sale and lease orders.

Scotland's compulsory purchase system is to be

reformed during the current parliamentary term. The Scottish Government published its way forward on 26 August 2026, following a consultation on proposed reform that ran from September to December 2025. The Government says the current legal framework is old, complex and fragmented, with core parts of the legislation dating back almost two centuries. It states that this contributes to compulsory purchase orders not being used to their full potential.

Compulsory purchase orders allow authorised bodies to acquire land without the consent of the owner where statutory powers and public-interest tests are met. The Government describes them as a tool that can help deliver projects ranging from major infrastructure and regeneration schemes to the refurbishment of individual empty homes and derelict properties.

The proposed reforms include a single Compulsory Purchase Act for Scotland, changes intended to make approval procedures faster and more certain, electronic service of notices and documents, and powers allowing authorities to create new rights or take temporary possession rather than acquire land permanently in all cases.

The proposals also include a single mechanism for taking possession after a CPO has been approved, codification of compensation rules, repeal of outdated legislation and measures intended to encourage quicker settlement of compensation claims and advance payments.

The Earlier Reform Record

The reform programme has a long paper trail.

The Scottish Law Commission published Discussion Paper 159 on compulsory purchase in December 2014. That document examined the law governing compulsory purchase in Scotland and invited views on reform.

The Scottish Government published a progress report on compulsory purchase reform in December 2024. That report recorded the work already undertaken and set out the Government's intention to develop a reform package.

A consultation paper was then published in September 2025. The consultation closed in December 2025. A post-consultation update followed in February 2026.

The consultation responses summary and the Government's way forward were both published on 26 August 2026.

The sequence shows a policy subject moving from law-reform discussion to legislation planning over more than a decade.

Compensation And Hope Value

The consultation responses summary records strong support for the principle of equivalence in compensation. Under that principle, compensation is intended to put a person whose land is acquired in the same financial position, so far as money can achieve, as if the land had not been acquired.

The Government says compensation rules will be codified while outdated and anomalous legislation is repealed.

Some issues remain under further consideration. The way forward paper identifies statutory loss payments and the extent to which compensation takes account of "hope value" as areas needing further work.

The Government says it will commission research to build a stronger evidence base on hope value.

Hope value refers to value based on the prospect of future development or alternative use, rather than only the current use of the land. The treatment of hope value can affect the cost of acquiring land and the financial position of owners whose land is taken.

Compulsory Sale And Lease Orders

The way forward paper also covers compulsory sale and lease orders.

The Government says it will further explore the case for compulsory sale orders, drawing on evidence gathered through the consultation.

Compulsory sale orders have previously been discussed in Scotland as a possible tool for bringing vacant, derelict or neglected land and buildings back into use by requiring sale rather than public acquisition.

Compulsory sale and lease orders sit beside other land and property measures already present in Scottish public policy, including community right to buy, vacant and derelict land work, housing delivery and town-centre regeneration.

The Scottish Parliament Information Centre published a briefing on community right to buy in May 2026. That briefing forms part of a wider recent policy record around land, ownership, local control and community-led development.

The Land Uses Involved

The Government's own framing places CPO reform across several policy areas.

The publication is listed under building, planning and design, economy, energy, housing, public sector and transport. The examples given by the Government include infrastructure, regeneration, empty homes and derelict properties.

Those areas now overlap with several current pressures in Scotland: housing delivery, derelict land, public

infrastructure, transport projects, energy networks, net zero projects and town-centre repair.

The reform proposals are procedural, but the uses of the powers are practical. They concern land, title, compensation, objections, possession, project delay, infrastructure delivery and the ability of public authorities to assemble sites.

The Government says the reformed system will need to ensure that those affected are given opportunities to challenge, are treated with respect and are compensated fairly.

The next dated stage will be legislation introduced to the Scottish Parliament.

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POLICY AND GOVERNMENT | 27 August 2026

Scotland's GP Walk-In Pilot Expands To Forty Planned Or Operational Services

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scotlands-gp-walk-in-pilot-expands-to-forty-planned-or-operational-services/>



The Scottish Government has announced 24 further areas for GP-led walk-in services, bringing the number of centres planned or operational to 40. The pilot has been extended until April 2029. The programme began in February 2026 and is intended to test same-day care from GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners and other clinicians without a pre-booked appointment.

Scotland's GP-led walk-in pilot has been expanded to 40 planned or operational services.

First Minister John Swinney announced 24 more areas

for the programme on 26 August 2026. The announcement was made as he marked the official opening of the 11th service at Randolph Wemyss Community Hospital in Buckhaven, Fife.

The Scottish Government said work is under way with health boards to establish new walk-in services for communities including Angus, Dumbarton, East Kilbride, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Glasgow, Inverness, North Ayrshire, Paisley, Shotts, Tweeddale and West Lothian.

Proposals are also in development for Ayr, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, Glasgow North East, Glenrothes, Grangemouth, Inverclyde, Musselburgh, North Lanarkshire and Oban.

The pilot has been extended until April 2029.

The services are designed to provide same-day care from GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners or other clinicians at a wider range of times. The Scottish Government says they provide more choice for patients and are intended to relieve pressure on wider NHS services.

According to the Government, more than 10,500 walk-in cases had been seen during the first six months after the first service opened in February 2026.

The Services Already Opened

The Government's background note lists 11 services opened since February 2026: Aberdeen City, Benbecula, Buckhaven, Cardonald, Dunoon, Hawick, Invergordon, Lerwick, Lochee, Stranraer and Wester Hailes.

Further centres had already been announced in February and are open or in delivery at Wester Hailes, Lochee, Benbecula, Stranraer, Lerwick, Hawick, Invergordon, Aberdeen, Cardonald, Dunoon, Moray, Sauchie, Inverurie, Lanark, Kilmarnock and Buckhaven.

The list shows the pilot being placed across urban, rural and island areas.

Benbecula, Lerwick, Stranraer, Invergordon, Hawick and Dunoon place the pilot outside Scotland's largest

urban health settings. Aberdeen City, Cardonald, Wester Hailes and Lochee place the same model inside more concentrated population areas.

The service model therefore sits across different practical geographies. Opening hours, transport, public awareness, staffing and onward referral routes will shape how each local service operates.

The Access Problem The Pilot Is Testing

The pilot is being introduced within a primary-care system that has already been under public and parliamentary scrutiny.

The Scottish Government's GP recruitment and retention action plan update, published in March 2026, described work on workforce planning, GP training, recruitment, retention and general-practice capacity. The update sat within an action plan covering 2024 to 2026.

Public Health Scotland publishes regular data on general-practice list sizes and practice populations. The latest list-size publication before the walk-in expansion was released on 28 July 2026.

The walk-in pilot does not replace registered GP practices. The Government says it complements the GP practice network and has linked the programme to additional investment for recruitment of more GPs, with £531 million to 2029.

Public Health Scotland began publishing management information on general-practice walk-in centres in July 2026. The first publication covered the period to 30 June 2026. Public Health Scotland said 6,792 cases had been seen at the centres by the end of June.

The publication is management information. It provides early activity data rather than a full evaluation of outcomes, workforce effects, hospital impact or pressure on existing practices.

The Public Record To 2029

The pilot now has a longer timetable.

With an extension until April 2029, the record can cover more than initial openings and monthly case totals. It can include seasonal demand, staffing, cost, repeat use, patient routes into the service, onward referral and any changes in pressure on GP practices, NHS 24 or emergency departments.

The Government's announcement says the services are intended to offer same-day access without a pre-booked appointment and to relieve pressure on wider NHS services.

Those claims create measurable categories for the pilot period.

The first category is activity: how many cases are seen, where, at what times and by which staff.

The second is access: who uses the services, whether use varies by deprivation, age, geography, transport access or rurality, and whether patients are using the service instead of another route.

The third is system effect: whether walk-in cases reduce pressure on GP practices, urgent care, NHS 24 or hospital services.

The fourth is staffing: whether the model adds capacity or draws clinical time from other parts of primary care.

By 2029, Scotland will have a dated record of whether walk-in access became a durable part of primary care or remained a pilot operating beside the existing appointment system.

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ENVIRONMENT | 27 August 2026

Scotland's Drinking Water Quality Fell Slightly In 2025 As Complaints Rose

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scotlands-drinking-water-quality-fell-slightly-in-2025-as-complaints-rose/>



Regulatory testing found that 99.88 per cent of samples taken from consumers' taps met required standards in 2025. The Drinking Water Quality Regulator also recorded more consumer complaints, a slight rise in water-quality incidents requiring detailed investigation, and continuing concern about discoloured water. The figures arrive as Scotland prepares the next charging and investment settlement for public water and wastewater services from 2027 to 2033.

Scotland's drinking water continued to meet

regulatory standards at a high rate during 2025, although performance at consumers' taps fell slightly from the previous year and complaints to Scottish Water increased.

The Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland reported that 137,947 regulatory tests were carried out on samples taken from consumers' taps during 2025. Of those tests, 99.88 per cent met the required standards.

In 2024, 156,814 regulatory tests were carried out at consumers' taps and 99.92 per cent met the required standards. In 2023, compliance at consumers' taps was also recorded at 99.88 per cent.

At water treatment works, 22 out of 62,134 tests on samples of water leaving works failed to meet standards in 2025. The Scottish Government said that figure was comparable with recent years.

The regulator also recorded 36 water-quality incidents requiring detailed investigation during 2025, compared with 34 in the previous year. The regulator described the 2025 figure as too high.

Scottish Water received 17,558 complaints from consumers about drinking-water quality during 2025, a five per cent increase on 2024. Most complaints concerned discoloured water.

The Drinking Water Quality Regulator said consumers expect tap water to look, taste and smell good, and that incidents of discoloured water continue to affect some customers. The regulator linked action on the issue to maintaining public trust and confidence in Scotland's drinking-water supplies.

The Public Water Structure Created After Devolution

Scotland's present public water structure dates from the early years of devolution.

The Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002 set up Scottish Water, the Drinking Water Quality Regulator and Customer Consultation Panels. Scottish Water became the public corporation responsible for public drinking-water and sewerage services, taking over from the previous regional water authorities.

The Drinking Water Quality Regulator was created at the same time. It is independent of Scottish Ministers and is responsible for ensuring that Scottish Water complies with its drinking-water quality duties. It reviews water-quality data from samples taken by Scottish Water, carries out targeted audits, and supervises local-authority enforcement of the private water-supply regulations.

The regulator also reports annually on drinking-water quality. The 2025 report is the 24th annual report.

The Water Services etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 then strengthened economic regulation, introduced the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, and introduced retail competition for non-domestic customers.

The resulting structure kept Scottish Water in public ownership while opening non-household retail services to licensed providers in a competitive market.

Public Water And Private Supplies

The Scottish Government describes Scottish Water as the public company providing Scotland's public drinking-water and sewerage services. Private water supplies remain the responsibility of owners and users and are regulated by local authorities.

The annual public-water report describes performance across Scottish Water's public supply. It does not mean that every household, farm, croft, rural business or settlement is connected to the public network.

The consultation material for the next water-services period states that Scottish Water supplies clean water to 97 per cent of households and businesses in Scotland and provides wastewater services to 93 per cent.

That leaves a minority outside the public-supply system for either water, wastewater or both. For those users, the public-water model is not the whole practical experience of water access, treatment, testing, maintenance and repair.

The Charging Review Now Under Way

The 2025 drinking-water figures have been published during the same period as the next strategic review of water charges.

The Scottish Government has published analysis of responses to its consultation on water services from 2027. The consultation covered ministerial objectives and charging principles for the 2027 to 2033 regulatory period.

The consultation was open from 6 January to 30 March 2026 and received 58 responses, including 21 from individuals and 37 from organisations.

Seven in ten respondents who answered the relevant question agreed that the ministerial objectives identified the type of investment activity Scottish Water should undertake between 2027 and 2033. The analysis recorded support for investment in infrastructure and for the draft objectives. It also recorded calls for improved accountability and monitoring, stronger climate resilience, and balancing affordability of charges.

Respondents most frequently identified safe, reliable and accessible water and wastewater services, environmental protection, and public ownership as aspects they valued. When asked about concerns, the most commonly mentioned issues were affordability, ageing infrastructure and climate change.

On charging, 42 per cent of those answering agreed that the draft principles of charging remained appropriate for 2027 to 2033. Thirty-five per cent were neutral and 24 per cent disagreed. The Scottish Government's analysis said themes in open comments included support for the proposed approach, concern about the continued use of council-tax bands to determine charges, and affordability.

Scottish Water's operations, including service maintenance and improvement, are mostly financed by customer charges. Household charges are collected alongside council tax. Business customers pay through licensed providers in the retail market.

WICS Draft Determination

The Water Industry Commission for Scotland published its draft determination for 2027 to 2033 on 30 June 2026.

The draft determination sets out WICS's draft decision on the maximum amount Scottish Water can charge customers during the period. WICS said the draft decision supports £7.9 billion of investment while capping charge increases at CPI plus two per cent. The draft decision also includes the possibility of an additional conditional allowance of up to 0.3 per cent in the final three years where evidence justifies costs outside Scottish Water's control, including energy.

Scottish Water had proposed charges increasing by CPI plus 21.5 per cent by 2033. WICS's draft decision set a lower charge path of up to CPI plus 13.6 per cent by 2033.

WICS also reduced Scottish Water's proposed £8.1 billion investment programme to £7.9 billion after challenge, set a £216 million cost challenge over the period, and added conditions before customers pay for major project costs that remain uncertain.

The draft decision includes proposed investment of £1.118 billion to deliver water quality and resilient water supplies, £1.284 billion to reduce pollution, improve wastewater treatment and protect rivers, coasts and the wider environment, and £4.926 billion to renew pipes, mains and treatment works.

The regulator also set out performance expectations. These include saving 67 million litres of water currently lost through leaks each day by 2032-33, reducing serious pollution incidents from Scottish Water's forecast of eight in 2026-27 to four in 2032-33, and reducing sewer flooding in homes from a forecast of 421 houses in 2026-27 to 342 in 2032-33.

For drinking-water quality, Scottish Water proposed 99.95 per cent compliance by the end of the regulatory period. WICS's draft decision set an enhanced target of 99.97 per cent compliance.

What The 2025 Figures Add To The Record

The 2025 drinking-water figures add another dated entry to the record of Scotland's public water system.

They show continued high compliance with drinking-water standards at consumers' taps. They also show slightly lower tap-sample compliance than 2024, more complaints about drinking-water quality, and a small increase in water-quality incidents requiring detailed investigation.

The figures do not show a public-water system failing its regulatory standards. They show a system with high measured compliance and continuing operational issues visible to consumers, particularly through discoloured water.

The wider public record now contains three connected elements.

The first is the annual quality record, which measures drinking-water performance during 2025.

The second is the charging and investment review for 2027 to 2033, which will determine the financial framework for Scottish Water's next period of operation.

The third is the public-water structure created after devolution, in which Scottish Water, the Drinking Water Quality Regulator and WICS occupy separate roles inside a publicly owned water model.

Scotland's water system is being assessed on more than one timescale. The annual report records what happened in 2025. The strategic review sets the financial limits for 2027 to 2033. The structure itself comes from the settlement made in 2002 and amended by later legislation.

The tap-water figures are part of that longer public record.

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Drinking water in Scotland 2023, 20 August 2024

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Water — Scottish Government policy, accessed 27 August 2026 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/water/>

60% of Scotland's News Publications Controlled Outside Scotland and Only 8.5% of Scottish-Owned Titles in Google News

[illegible]

A Scottish name above a newspaper tells the reader where it wishes to be recognised. It does not

The second concerns Google.

The Google News Divide

Google no longer operates the old system under which a publisher could apply to be included in Google News and establish its publication manually through Publisher Center.

Since March 2025, Google News publication pages have been generated automatically. Google says eligible journalism is identified and ranked algorithmically according to factors including relevance, prominence, authoritativeness, freshness, usability, location and language. Some publications may not receive an automatically generated publication page at all. Google also says that it cannot provide much feedback about ranking.

That requires an important qualification to this census.

There is no longer a public master register called "Approved Google News Publishers" against which every Scottish title can simply be ticked off. Modern Scot therefore checked every publication in this census individually against Google News on 21 August 2026. Titles shown in bold blue were present in Google News at the time of the audit. Titles shown in black were checked and were not present. Google News is algorithmic and can change, so this records a dated snapshot rather than a permanent status.

On that title-by-title audit, the difference is considerable.

Of the 71 confirmed Scottish-owned or Scottish-controlled publications, six (8.5 per cent) were present in Google News when checked.

Of the 108 publications controlled outside Scotland, 31 (28.7 per cent) were present in Google News when checked.

One additional Google News source, North Edinburgh News, remains in the ownership-verification category and is therefore excluded from either ownership tally.

In the 21 August 2026 audit, a Scottish publication controlled outside Scotland was about 3.4 times as likely to be present in Google News as a Scottish-owned or Scottish-controlled publication.

The disparity does not by itself establish that Google deliberately suppresses Scottish-owned journalism, nor does it prove political discrimination. It does establish a measurable difference in Google News presence between the two ownership groups on the date examined. The question is why that difference exists.

But a disparity of that size is sufficiently large to ask what the architecture of news discovery is doing to Scotland's internal communications.

When Scale Becomes Authority

Google says that Google News aims to promote original journalism and expose readers to diverse perspectives. It says publishers cannot pay for better ranking. Those are important safeguards and ought to be acknowledged.

The difficulty lies elsewhere.

Consider the signals Google itself says its systems use: prominence, authoritativeness, freshness and usability.

A large newspaper group can maintain extensive publishing systems, technical staff, search specialists, large

archives, multiple daily publishing shifts and a constant stream of new material. It can cross-reference stories, build enormous domain authority and produce content at a frequency that a two-person community newsroom cannot begin to imitate.

A community newspaper publishing once a fortnight may be the most authoritative source on a planning dispute in Wester Ross. A volunteer newsroom may understand a proposed school closure better than anyone outside the village. A locally owned reporter may have attended the council committee, spoken to the families and read the papers.

None of those things necessarily produces prominence at internet scale.

The danger is therefore not that Google needs to dislike Scottish independent journalism.

The problem need not be prejudice. It can be architecture.

An algorithm designed to identify authority across billions of documents can rationally use signals which repeatedly reward organisations that already possess scale. The result can be perfectly neutral in computer terms while producing a highly unequal civic result.

There is a further problem peculiar to Scotland.

Google lists location among its ranking factors. But geographical relevance and media ownership are entirely different things.

A newspaper owned from the United States can be intensely relevant to Glasgow. A newspaper controlled from London can cover Edinburgh. An English-controlled company can own newspapers in Inverness, Wick and Shetland.

To an algorithm concerned with geographical relevance, all of those can quite reasonably look Scottish.

To an ownership census, they are not.

Google has no obvious reason to distinguish between a story about Inverness produced by a locally controlled Highland publisher and one produced by a Highland newsroom ultimately controlled through companies elsewhere in Britain. Yet for Scotland's media ecology, the distinction is considerable.

It determines where commercial power accumulates, where decisions are made, where investment can be withdrawn, and whether the survival of a newsroom ultimately rests with people who live within the society it reports upon.

Scotland Can Lose Its Conversation Without Losing Its Newspapers

This is the larger communications problem.

A functioning country does not communicate internally merely because information about it exists somewhere on the internet.

Its towns must know what neighbouring towns are doing. Its islands must remain visible to the mainland. Decisions made in Edinburgh must reach communities in Caithness, Dumfries, Skye and Shetland. Reporting from those places must also travel in the other direction.

Local newspapers, specialist publications, community titles and independent national journalism form part of that connective tissue.

Google News has become one of the machines sitting between the publisher and the reader.

Personalisation makes the problem still more complicated. Google says sections including For You, Picks for you, local news, notifications and parts of Following can be personalised using interests expressly selected by a reader or inferred from previous activity across Google products and YouTube.

That is useful when the objective is personal relevance.

It is less obviously useful when the objective is a common civic conversation.

A council budget is not necessarily interesting because somebody previously clicked on council budgets. A ferry cancellation does not become civically relevant because an algorithm has inferred an enthusiasm for ferries. The closure of a rural bank, the loss of a surgery, a planning decision, a sheriff court case or a proposed electricity transmission line can matter to a community whether or not its members have trained a recommendation system to expect it.

The more public information is distributed according to previous individual behaviour, the greater the possibility that neighbours living in the same town cease to encounter the same civic facts.

That is a subtle form of communications fragmentation.

Scotland is particularly exposed because its media ownership is already concentrated elsewhere.

The Public Interest News Foundation counted 149 qualifying local news outlets in Scotland in its 2025 Local News Report and found that 59 per cent still operated in both print and digital form. But PINF uses a deliberately narrower local-news definition: publications covering five or more local authority districts are excluded. National and broad regional publications can therefore fall outside its map altogether. (Public Interest News Foundation)

PINF also found that more than one in three UK local outlets belonged to only three groups: Newsquest, Reach and Iconic Media. (Public Interest News Foundation)

Those ownership structures matter in Scotland.

Newsquest is a wholly owned subsidiary of USA TODAY Co., Inc., the Delaware corporation formerly called Gannett. (SEC)

Reach plc is incorporated and domiciled in England and Wales, with its registered office at Canary Wharf. Its Scottish subsidiaries include Media Scotland, Scottish Daily Record and Sunday Mail and Scottish and Universal Newspapers. (Companies House)

The former National World publishing operation, including The Scotsman estate, was bought by Media Concierge in May 2025 and has since become Iconic Media Group. Iconic Media Group Limited has its registered address in London. (printweek.com)

Highland News & Media presents an especially instructive case. Highland News & Media Limited is controlled by Highland Media Group Ltd. Companies House records Highland Media Group's controlling corporate shareholders as Stephen Austin (Holdings) Ltd, with more than 50 but less than 75 per cent, and Iliffe Media Group Ltd, with more than 25 but not more than 50 per cent. Their correspondence addresses are in Hertford and Cambridge respectively. Under the strict test used here, its Scottish titles therefore sit in the outside-controlled column. (Companies House)

No conspiracy is required to produce a communications imbalance. Corporate consolidation at one end and

algorithmic distribution at the other can do it quite efficiently.

Google Is Now A Matter Of Public Infrastructure

The Competition and Markets Authority has already concluded that Google's general search operation has sufficient strategic market power to justify intervention under the UK's digital markets regime.

In June 2026 the CMA imposed a fair-ranking conduct requirement requiring Google, in general search, to use objective and non-discriminatory criteria, provide greater transparency about ranking and material changes, and give businesses a means of raising concerns about actions capable of producing adverse market effects. A separate publisher requirement addresses attribution, publisher controls and the use of news content in Google's generative-AI search features. (GOV.UK)

Those requirements concern general Search. They are not evidence that the CMA has found Google News discriminating against Scottish publishers.

They do, however, establish an important principle: when a digital intermediary becomes powerful enough to determine whether businesses and publishers can be found, ranking is no longer merely an internal technical matter.

For Scotland, the next question ought to be considerably more precise.

Google should be able to show, at source level, how Scottish news publishers are represented across its News surfaces. Independent publishers should have meaningful diagnostics showing whether their journalism is being recognised, whether a publication page has been generated and what technical or policy issue is preventing normal discovery when it has not.

A nation should not have to reverse-engineer the visibility of its own press.

Scottish public bodies should also be wary of outsourcing the circulation of public information to any single commercial discovery system. RSS, newsletters, direct subscriptions, public-interest directories and links from trusted civic institutions are rather old-fashioned technologies. This is sometimes another way of saying that they work.

The purpose is not to engineer a Scottish political filter. It is not to demand favourable treatment for publications merely because their owners happen to live here. Nor should an American-owned newspaper be pushed down a ranking because its proprietor is American.

The proper objective is ownership-neutral discoverability: a small Scottish newsroom producing original, locally authoritative reporting should not become functionally invisible merely because a much larger corporate publisher has more scale with which to manufacture the signals an algorithm recognises as authority.

That is worth examining.

And it begins by finding out who actually owns the press.

THE CENSUS

Key: A bold blue linked publication title indicates that the publication was found in Google News during Modern Scot's individual title-by-title audit on 21 August 2026. Titles shown in black were individually checked and were not present in Google News at the time of the audit. Google News status can change, so these markings

record the position found on that date.

Establishment years and political or editorial orientation are included where they can be stated with reasonable confidence. No political leaning has been invented for publications that do not declare one.

I. SCOTTISH-OWNED OR SCOTTISH-CONTROLLED — 71 TITLES

- Am Pàipear — Established 1976. Uist community publication; Gaelic and English; community/social-enterprise orientation. VISIT
- Annandale Herald — DNG Media, Annan. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears inactive)
- Annandale Observer — DNG Media, Annan. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears inactive)
- Argyllshire Advertiser — Wyvex Media, Oban. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Arran Banner — Wyvex Media. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Bellman — The Bellman SCIO, Stonehaven. Community/public-interest journalism; no declared party alignment. VISIT
- Ben Ledi View — Community publication serving Callander and surrounding area; Scottish charitable structure. No declared party alignment. VISIT
- Broughton Spurtle — Established 1994. Independent Edinburgh community newspaper and website; civic/community orientation. VISIT
- C&B News — Established 1976. Currie and Balerno community publication; non-profit/community orientation. VISIT
- Campbeltown Courier — Wyvex Media. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Clydesider — Clydesider Creative CIC, West Dunbartonshire. Community and public-interest journalism; no declared party alignment. VISIT
- The Courier — Established 1816. DC Thomson, Dundee. General/regional news; no formal party alignment identified. Google News verified. VISIT
- Crail Matters — Independent Fife community publishing operation. Community/civic orientation. VISIT
- Daily Business — Established 2014. Hero Media & Entertainment. Scottish business, economics and current affairs; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- DGWGO — Established 2011. Dumfries and Galloway digital local news; locally based controlling interests identified. Google News verified. VISIT
- The Digger — Established 2004. Independent Glasgow publication concentrating on crime, courts and public-interest reporting; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (paywall)
- DRAM Scotland — Hero Media & Entertainment; acquired by the Scottish group in June 2026. Licensed-trade journalism; specialist rather than party-political. VISIT
- Dumfries Courier — DNG Media, Annan. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears inactive)
- Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard — Argyll Media. Local general news; no declared party alignment

identified. VISIT

- The Edinburgh Inquirer — Edinburgh Inquirer Ltd. Independent city journalism; current controlling individuals are resident in Scotland. No declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Edinburgh Reporter — Independent Edinburgh news operation. General local journalism; no declared party alignment identified. Google News verified. VISIT
- Energy Voice — DC Thomson. Energy and North Sea industry journalism; specialist rather than party-political. VISIT
- Envirotec — Peebles Media Group, Glasgow. Environmental technology and industry journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Evening Express — DC Thomson, Aberdeen. Regional general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (now redirecting to Press & Journal)
- Evening Telegraph — Established 1877. DC Thomson, Dundee. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified.
- The Ferret — Established 2015. Scottish investigative journalism co-operative owned through its member structure. Investigative and expressly non-party-political in institutional form. VISIT
- Fish Farmer — Wyvex Media. Aquaculture trade journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Fish Update — Wyvex Media. Aquaculture industry news; specialist. VISIT (now redirecting to Fish Farmer Magazine)
- Forres Local — Moray Local CIC. Community/local journalism; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Futurescot — Futurescot Media, Edinburgh. Technology, digital government and public-sector journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Gairloch & District Times — Established 1978. Gairloch & District Times SCIO. Community journalism; no declared party alignment. VISIT
- Glasgow View — Scottish independent digital publication associated with Midlothian View. General local news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears offline)
- Glenkens Gazette — Established 2000. Community publication in Dumfries and Galloway; community/civic orientation. VISIT
- Greater Govanhill — Greater Govanhill CIC, Glasgow. Community journalism with an emphasis on social affairs, representation and local participation; no party affiliation. VISIT
- The Hawick Paper — Locally owned Scottish Borders weekly. General local news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Highland Times — Established 2014. Owner confirmed local. Highland-based independent news publication. No declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Homes & Interiors Scotland — Peebles Media Group, Glasgow. Homes, architecture and lifestyle journalism; non-political specialist title. VISIT (Not a traditional news publication)
- Hotel Scotland — Hero Media & Entertainment; acquired June 2026. Hotel and hospitality trade journalism. VISIT
- Ileach — Islay-based independent community publication. Community news and island affairs; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT

- Isle of Bute News — Argyll Media. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Kingsbarns Eagle — Crail Matters publishing operation. Community publication. VISIT
- The Lochside Press — Established 2012. Independent Argyll and Bute digital news publication; local/public-interest orientation. Google News verified. VISIT
- Midlothian View — Independent Scottish digital publication. Local news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Migrant Women Press — Migrant Women Press CIC, Glasgow. Journalism centred on migrant women's voices and representation; no party affiliation identified. VISIT
- Modern Scot — Independent Scottish-owned national publication established in 2012, owned, edited and published from the Highlands. General Scottish civic and public-affairs journalism; no party affiliation. VISIT
- Moffat News — DNG Media, Annan. Local general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears to be offline)
- The Nairnshire — Nairnshire Community Newspaper SCIO. Community/local journalism; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Newstead News — Established 2020. Published through Newstead Village Community Trust. Community journalism; no declared party alignment. VISIT (Currently appears to be offline)
- The Oban Times — Wyvex Media, Oban. Long-established west-coast regional newspaper; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Orkney News — Independent, not-for-profit Orkney digital publication. Community/public-interest journalism; no declared party alignment. VISIT
- Packaging Scotland — Peebles Media Group. Packaging industry journalism; specialist. VISIT
- The Pittenweem Post — Crail Matters publishing operation. Community publication. VISIT
- The Press & Journal — Traces its roots to Aberdeen's Journal, first published on 29 December 1747. DC Thomson, Dundee. Regional general news; no declared party alignment identified. Google News verified. VISIT
- Project Plant — Peebles Media Group. Construction plant and machinery journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Project Scotland — Peebles Media Group. Scottish construction industry journalism; specialist. VISIT
- The Scots Magazine — Established 1739. DC Thomson. Culture, history, travel and Scottish life; non-party-political magazine. VISIT
- Scottish Beacon — Established 2023. Published by Greater Govanhill CIC as a collaborative network for independent Scottish community media. Public-interest/community orientation; no party affiliation. VISIT
- Scottish Construction Now — Hero Media & Entertainment. Construction-sector news; specialist. VISIT
- Scottish Field — Wyvex Media. Scottish culture, food, travel and lifestyle magazine; non-party-political. VISIT
- Scottish Financial News — Hero Media & Entertainment. Finance and business journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Scottish Grocer — Peebles Media Group. Grocery and retail trade journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Scottish Housing News — Hero Media & Entertainment. Housing, planning and property-sector journalism; specialist. Google News verified. VISIT
- Scottish Legal News — Hero Media & Entertainment. Legal-profession journalism; specialist. VISIT

- Scottish Licensed Trade News — Peebles Media Group. Hospitality and licensed-trade journalism; specialist. VISIT
- ScottishNews.com — Hero Media & Entertainment. Scottish general/current-affairs digital news. VISIT
- Shetland News — Independent Shetland digital news service. Local/general news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- The Splash Glasgow — The Splash Glasgow CIC; company established 2024 and publication launched subsequently. Community/local journalism. PINF records it as an independent Glasgow launch. VISIT (Currently appears to be offline)
- Stranraer & Wigtownshire Free Press — Established 1843. Independent south-west Scotland weekly. General local news; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT (Currently appears to be offline)
- The Sunday Post — Established 1914. DC Thomson, Dundee. Sunday general newspaper; no declared party alignment identified. VISIT
- Tie the Knot Scotland — Peebles Media Group. Scottish wedding/lifestyle publication; non-political specialist title. VISIT
- West Highland Free Press — Established 1972. Employee-owned publication based on Skye. West Highlands and Islands news and commentary; historically associated with Gaelic and Highland public affairs but not a party publication. VISIT

II. SCOTTISH PUBLICATIONS CONTROLLED OUTSIDE SCOTLAND — 108 TITLES

These publications may have Scottish editors, Scottish reporters and Scottish offices. They are placed here solely because their ultimate ownership fails the Scottish-control test.

- Aberdeen Live — Reach plc, London. General/local digital news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to Daily Record)
- Alloa & Hillfoots Advertiser — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. VISIT
- Angus County Press — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to Angus World)
- Arbroath Herald — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Long-established local newspaper. VISIT (Redirecting to Angus World)
- Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Ayr Advertiser — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Ayrshire Live — Reach plc. Digital local news. VISIT (Redirecting to Daily Record)
- Ayrshire Post — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to Daily Record)
- Ayrshire Today — Newsquest group. Digital/local news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Banffshire Advertiser — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirecting to Grampian)
- Banffshire Herald — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirecting to Grampian)

- Banffshire Journal — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT(Redirecting to Grampian)
- Barrhead News — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to East News Renfrewshire)
- Bearsden & Milngavie Extra — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to Glasgow World)
- Berwickshire News — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Borders local news. VISIT (Redirecting to The Southern Reporter)
- Blairgowrie Advertiser — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to the Daily Record)
- Border Telegraph — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Borders local news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Brechin Advertiser — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Angus World)
- Bylines Scotland — Bylines Network operation controlled outside Scotland. Editorially progressive/pluralist and explicitly alternative in outlook; separate from the large newspaper chains. VISIT
- Caithness Courier — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Part of the John O Groat Journal)
- Carluke & Lanark Gazette — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Glasgow World)
- Celtic Way — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Football/sport publication centred on Celtic FC. VISIT
- Central Fife Times — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. VISIT
- Clydebank Post — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Cumnock Chronicle — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Daily Record — Established 1895. Reach plc. Historically associated with Labour and the centre-left, although individual editorial positions vary over time. Google News verified. VISIT
- Daily Star of Scotland — Reach plc. Scottish edition of UK tabloid; no fixed Scottish party position assigned here. VISIT
- Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Reporter — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Dumfries & Galloway Standard — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Dunfermline Press — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- East Fife Mail — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Fife Today)
- East Kilbride News — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- East Lothian Courier — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Edinburgh Evening News — Established 1873. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. General city news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Edinburgh Live — Reach plc. Digital city news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Ellon Advertiser — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirects to

Grampian Online)

- Falkirk Herald — Established 1845. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Fife Free Press — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT
- Fife Today — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Regional digital news umbrella. Google News verified. VISIT
- Forfar Dispatch — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Angus World)
- Forestry Journal — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Forestry and rural-industry journalism; specialist. VISIT
- Forres Gazette — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT
- Galloway Gazette — Established 1870. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Currently appears offline)
- Galloway News — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- The Glasgow Bell — Launched 2024. The Millers Publishing Company, Manchester. Independent city journalism but ownership outside Scotland; no party alignment identified. PINF records its expansion into Glasgow in September 2024. VISIT (Currently appears offline)
- Glasgow Live — Reach plc. Digital city news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Glasgow South and Eastwood Extra — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Glasgow World)
- Glasgow Times — Established 1876. Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. General city news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Grampian Online — Highland News & Media; regional digital umbrella controlled through the outside-owned HNM structure. VISIT
- Greenock Telegraph — Established 1857. Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Hamilton Advertiser — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Hearts Standard — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Football publication centred on Heart of Midlothian. VISIT
- Helensburgh Advertiser — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- The Herald — Established 1783. Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. General national/regional news. It has no fixed party affiliation recorded here; historically it supported a No vote in the 2014 independence referendum while advocating further devolution. VISIT
- The Herald: Kirkintilloch & Bishopbriggs — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Glasgow World)
- Hibs Observer — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Football publication centred on Hibernian FC. VISIT (Currently appears offline)
- Highland News — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirects to the Inverness Courier)
- Holyrood — Scottish political and public-policy magazine whose corporate ownership is outside Scotland under

this census. Editorially focused on politics and public affairs; describes itself as politically independent. VISIT

- Huntly Express — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirects to Grampian Online)
- Inverness Courier — Established 1817. Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. Google News verified. VISIT
- Inverness Courier Nairnshire — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirects to Inverness Courier standard)
- Inverurie Advertiser — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirects to the Grampian Online)
- Irvine Herald — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Irvine Times — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- John O'Groat Journal (and Caithness Courier) — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT
- Kilmarnock Standard — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Largs & Millport Weekly News — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- Lennox Herald — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Midlothian Advertiser — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT
- Milngavie & Bearsden Herald — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Glasgow World)
- Motherwell Times & Bellshill Speaker — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to Glasgow World)
- The National — Established 2014. Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Explicitly pro-Scottish-independence editorial identity. Google News verified. VISIT
- North Star — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT
- The Northern Scot — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. Local general news. Google News verified. VISIT
- The Northern Times — Established 1899. Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. Google News verified. VISIT
- The Orcadian — Established 1854. Orkney Media Group. Classified here because its ownership structure includes an outside-Scotland interest; it therefore fails the deliberately strict Scottish-only control test. Local general news. VISIT
- Paisley Daily Express — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Peeblesshire News — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Borders local news. VISIT
- Perthshire Advertiser — Established 1829. Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Rangers Review — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Football publication centred on Rangers FC. VISIT
- Renfrewshire Gazette — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. VISIT (Currently appears offline)

- Ross-shire Journal — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- Rutherglen Reformer — Reach plc. Local general news. [VISIT](#) (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Scotland on Sunday — Established 1988. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Sunday current affairs; no fixed current party alignment assigned here. [VISIT](#) (The Scotsman)
- Scotland Rugby News — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Rugby journalism; specialist. [VISIT](#)
- Scottish Daily Express — Reach plc. Scottish digital/tabloid current affairs; editorially associated with the Express brand's conservative tradition. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- Scottish Daily Mail — DMG Media; ownership outside Scotland. Scottish edition of the Daily Mail; conservative editorial tradition. [VISIT](#) (The Daily Mail)
- The Scottish Farmer — Established 1893. Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Agricultural and rural journalism; specialist rather than party-political. [VISIT](#)
- Scottish Mail on Sunday — DMG Media; ownership outside Scotland. Sunday Scottish edition within the Mail group; conservative editorial tradition. [VISIT](#) (The Daily Mail)
- The Scottish Sun — Scottish edition launched 1987. News UK / News Corp; ownership outside Scotland. Populist tabloid with election-specific political endorsements rather than a permanent Scottish party affiliation. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- The Scottish Sun on Sunday — News UK / News Corp. Sunday tabloid; ownership outside Scotland. [VISIT](#) (The Scottish Sun)
- The Scotsman — Established 1817. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Current editorial leadership has described the title as having no formal political position; historically associated with unionist and centre-right editorial traditions. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- The Shetland Times — Established 1872. Acquired by Highland News & Media in 2025; ultimate corporate control therefore outside Scotland under this test. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- The Southern Reporter — Established 1855. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Borders local news. [VISIT](#)
- St Andrews Citizen — Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Local general news. [VISIT](#) (Redirecting to Fife Today)
- Stirling News — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Local general news. [VISIT](#)
- Stirling Observer — Established 1836. Reach plc. Local general news. [VISIT](#) (Redirects to the Daily Record)
- Stornoway Gazette — Established 1917. Iconic Media Group / Media Concierge. Western Isles local news. [VISIT](#)
- Strathearn Herald — Reach plc. Local general news. [VISIT](#)
- Strathspey & Badenoch Herald — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. Google News verified. [VISIT](#)
- Sunday Mail — Established 1919. Reach plc. Historically associated with centre-left/social-democratic politics and support for the Union; editorial positions may change between elections. [VISIT](#) (The Daily Record)
- Sunday National — Newsquest / USA TODAY Co. Sunday title within The National operation; explicitly pro-independence editorial family. [VISIT](#) (The National)
- Sunday Times Scotland — News UK / News Corp. Scottish edition of the Sunday Times; ownership outside

Scotland. VISIT

- The Times: Scotland — News UK / News Corp. Scottish edition of The Times; ownership outside Scotland. VISIT

- Turriff Advertiser — Highland News & Media; ultimate corporate control outside Scotland. VISIT (Redirecting to Grampian Online)

- West Lothian Courier — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to the Daily Record)

- Wishaw Press — Reach plc. Local general news. VISIT (Redirecting to the Daily Record)

III. UNDER VERIFICATION — 11 TITLES

These publications remain part of the census. They are not being counted as Scottish-owned or outside-owned until the present controlling legal or beneficial ownership can be established to the same standard applied elsewhere.

- 1919 Magazine — Established 2021. Published by 1919 Publishing Ltd and funded in connection with the Scottish Police Federation; justice, policing and public-affairs journalism. Under verification because the current ultimate-control position is insufficiently clear for this strict ownership test. VISIT

- Ayrshire Daily News — Established 2014. Describes itself as independently operated and locally staffed; general Ayrshire digital news. Under verification pending documentary confirmation of present beneficial ownership. VISIT

- Bella Caledonia — Established 2007 by Mike Small and Kevin Williamson. Political, cultural and current-affairs publication; independent of political parties but strongly associated with the pro-independence and progressive Scottish political sphere. Bella Caledonia Ltd's Companies House trail now records the former company as dissolved, while the publication continues to operate. Under verification until its current publishing/control vehicle is established. VISIT

- The Edinburgh Guardian / The Edinburgh Minute — Independent Edinburgh newsletter/digital news operation. Under verification pending confirmation of the present controlling entity. VISIT

- Fios — Isle of Lewis community publication. Community/Gaelic-area reporting. Under verification pending confirmation of current publishing and control structure. VISIT (Currently appears offline)

- Inverclyde Now — Established 2004. Long-running digital local news service. Under verification pending documentary confirmation of present beneficial ownership. VISIT

- Kyle Chronicle — Established 2019. Independent Sutherland community publication; its operation has been moving towards a CIC structure. Under verification until the present control structure is finalised and documented. VISIT

- Loch a Tuath News — Established 1997. Isle of Lewis community publication. Under verification pending confirmation of its current legal/control structure. VISIT

- North Edinburgh News — The NEN — Long-running north Edinburgh community news publication. The corporate history requires fresh resolution because the most recent identified company was dissolved while publication has continued. Under verification. Google News verified. VISIT

- reGlasgow / Glasgow's Not Finished — Independent reporting on Glasgow planning, development and the built environment. Under verification pending confirmation of current beneficial ownership/publishing vehicle. VISIT (Currently appears offline)

- Ullapool News — Established 1973. Long-running community newspaper. Under verification pending

confirmation of current legal control. VISIT (Currently appears offline)

What The Numbers Now Say

This census currently stands at:

190 Scottish publication brands identified

71 Scottish-owned or Scottish-controlled

108 controlled wholly or partly outside Scotland

11 under verification

Among publications with established ownership:

39.7 per cent are Scottish-controlled.

60.3 per cent are controlled outside Scotland.

The conservative Google News audit currently finds:

6 of 71 Scottish-controlled titles — 8.5 per cent — were present in Google News on 21 August 2026.

31 of 108 outside-controlled titles — 28.7 per cent — were present in Google News on 21 August 2026.

One further title present in Google News remained under ownership verification.

The figures are a dated census rather than a permanent measure. Google News changes algorithmically, and Google no longer operates a public approved-publisher register. The audit therefore records what Modern Scot found when every title was checked individually on 21 August 2026. A future audit may produce different numbers — which is itself one reason the distribution system deserves continued scrutiny.

But that opacity is itself part of the story.

A Scottish publisher can know who wrote an article, who edited it, who paid for it and who owns the publication. It can know precisely which town, council or community the article concerns.

What it cannot readily know is why the principal global news-discovery system has decided one Scottish source possesses sufficient "authority" or "prominence" to be shown while another apparently does not.

For a commercial recommendation engine, that may look like an engineering problem.

For a country trying to maintain a functioning internal conversation, that makes the opacity of the system a democratic communications problem.

Scotland still has a remarkably varied press. It has family publishers, employee-owned newspapers, co-operatives, community charities, tiny digital newsrooms, specialist trade publications, island papers and publications still assembled because somebody in a small place decided that somebody had better keep writing things down.

What Scotland possesses in abundance is journalism.

What it possesses rather less of is control over the machinery through which that journalism reaches Scotland.

The masthead is only the beginning of the story.

What The List Looks Like If We Remove The Ghosts

We have deliberately not cleaned the main census above. The redirects, inactive websites and absorbed mastheads are part of the evidence. They show what has happened to Scotland's newspaper landscape over time: local titles remain familiar names long after their independent digital presence has disappeared, while others now redirect readers into larger regional or corporate websites. A newspaper name can therefore survive on an ownership list even when the publication behind it has effectively been folded into something else.

Our present audit identifies 39 Scottish publication names in the outside-controlled section whose web presence has been absorbed into, or now redirects readers towards, another larger publication or group website. Every one of those 39 is controlled from outside Scotland.

That is a substantial finding in itself. These are not 39 foreign newspapers which happened to disappear from Scotland. They are Scottish local publication names — associated with places including Airdrie, Arbroath, Ayrshire, Banffshire, Bearsden, Blairgowrie, Brechin, Dumfries, East Kilbride, Fife, Forfar, Hamilton, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Kirkintilloch, Milngavie, Motherwell, Paisley, Perthshire, Stirling and West Lothian — whose distinct online presence has been folded into larger operations controlled elsewhere.

We are keeping them visible in the main census for precisely that reason. Removing them produces a cleaner contemporary count, but it also removes evidence of consolidation.

Where We Think The Numbers Will Land

These figures should be regarded as our current estimate of the eventual cleaned census, rather than the final total. We are still checking titles, ownership structures, redirects and publications which may have ceased or changed form.

If we remove publications currently marked as inactive or offline, remove titles whose websites now simply redirect into another publication, and exclude the one lifestyle title that does not meet the working news-publication definition, the census presently falls from 190 names to approximately 133 current qualifying publication brands.

Of those 133 current publications, we presently calculate that 60 are Scottish-owned or Scottish-controlled, 65 are controlled wholly or partly outside Scotland, and eight remain under verification.

That would mean approximately 45.1 per cent of the complete cleaned census is Scottish-controlled, 48.9 per cent is controlled outside Scotland and 6.0 per cent remains under verification.

Looking only at the 125 publications for which ownership has presently been established, approximately 48.0 per cent are Scottish-controlled and 52.0 per cent are controlled outside Scotland.

The Google News divide becomes considerably sharper if the dead and absorbed titles are removed. On the figures as they currently stand, six of the 60 Scottish-controlled publications — 10.0 per cent — were present in Google News when checked on 21 August 2026. Thirty-one of the 65 outside-controlled publications — 47.7 per cent — were present.

On that provisional cleaned list, a Scottish publication controlled outside Scotland was therefore about 4.8 times as likely to be present in Google News as a Scottish-controlled publication.

Scottish-Owned Or Scottish-Controlled — Approximately 60 Current Publications

Am Pàipear; Argyllshire Advertiser; Arran Banner; The Bellman; Ben Ledi View; Broughton Spurtle; C&B News; Campbeltown Courier; Clydesider; The Courier; Crail Matters; Daily Business; DGWGO; The Digger; DRAM Scotland; Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard; The Edinburgh Inquirer; The Edinburgh Reporter; Energy Voice; Envirotec; Evening Telegraph; The Ferret; Fish Farmer; Forres Local; Futurescot; Gairloch & District Times; Glenkens Gazette; Greater Govanhill; The Hawick Paper; The Highland Times; Hotel Scotland; Ileach; Isle of Bute News; The Kingsbarns Eagle; The Lochside Press; Midlothian View; Migrant Women Press; Modern Scot; The Nairnshire; The Oban Times; The Orkney News; Packaging Scotland; The Pittenweem Post; The Press & Journal; Project Plant; Project Scotland; The Scots Magazine; Scottish Beacon; Scottish Construction Now; Scottish Field; Scottish Financial News; Scottish Grocer; Scottish Housing News; Scottish Legal News; Scottish Licensed Trade News; ScottishNews.com; Shetland News; The Sunday Post; Tie the Knot Scotland; West Highland Free Press.

Controlled Wholly Or Partly Outside Scotland — Approximately 65 Current Publications

Aberdeen Live; Alloa & Hillfoots Advertiser; Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald; Ayr Advertiser; Ayrshire Today; Border Telegraph; Bylines Scotland; Caithness Courier; Celtic Way; Central Fife Times; Clydebank Post; Cumnock Chronicle; Daily Record; Daily Star of Scotland; Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Reporter; Dunfermline Press; East Fife Mail; East Lothian Courier; Edinburgh Evening News; Edinburgh Live; Falkirk Herald; Fife Free Press; Fife Today; Forestry Journal; Forres Gazette; Glasgow Live; Glasgow Times; Grampian Online; Greenock Telegraph; Hearts Standard; Helensburgh Advertiser; The Herald; Holyrood; Inverness Courier; Irvine Times; John O’Groat Journal and Caithness Carrier; Largs & Millport Weekly News; Midlothian Advertiser; The National; North Star; The Northern Scot; The Northern Times; The Orcadian; Peeblesshire News; Rangers Review; Ross-shire Journal; Scotland on Sunday; Scotland Rugby News; Scottish Daily Express; Scottish Daily Mail; The Scottish Farmer; Scottish Mail on Sunday; The Scottish Sun; The Scottish Sun on Sunday; The Scotsman; The Shetland Times; The Southern Reporter; Stirling News; Stornoway Gazette; Strathearn Herald; Strathspey & Badenoch Herald; Sunday Mail; Sunday National; Sunday Times Scotland; The Times; Scotland.

Under Verification — Approximately Eight Current Publications

1919 Magazine; Ayrshire Daily News; Bella Caledonia; The Edinburgh Guardian / The Edinburgh Minute; Inverclyde Now; Kyle Chronicle; Loch a Tuath News; North Edinburgh News — The NEN.

The cleaned figures tell us what the functioning Scottish news landscape may look like once the audit is complete.

The uncleaned figures tell us something else.

At least 39 Scottish publication names under outside-Scotland control now lead readers somewhere else.

Those names remain in the main census because disappearing them from our own list would repeat, on paper, exactly what happened to them online.

HERITAGE AND ARTS | 21 August 2026

Shortbread, Superstition And The Law: How Scots Married Before The Modern Wedding

Read online: <https://modern.scot/shortbread-superstition-and-the-law-how-scots-married-before-the-modern-wedding/>



Long before Scottish weddings became affairs of hotel packages, photographers and carefully arranged seating plans, marriage could involve banns from the kirk, a loosened shoe against witchcraft, neighbours supplying the feast and, in some places, a piece of shortbread broken over the bride's head.

The customs survive in an 1894 book that has largely slipped from ordinary reading: *Bygone Scotland: Historical and Social*, by David Maxwell. Rather than writing a conventional chronological history, Maxwell assembled a series of studies of Scottish life, including

a chapter devoted entirely to marriage customs.

Some of what he recorded belongs firmly to folklore. Other parts reveal something more substantial: marriage in Scotland was once governed by a peculiar mixture of law, church discipline, local custom and popular superstition.

Maxwell wrote that January and May were considered unlucky months in some parts of Scotland, preserving the old warning that a May bride might never prosper. Particular days could acquire their own reputation for bad luck, while wedding parties took considerable care over what happened during the ceremony itself.

One belief held that a dog must not pass between the bride and groom while they were being married. Another required the best man to loosen or unbuckle the groom's left shoe, supposedly to frustrate any witch attempting to cast a spell over the couple.

The measures sound picturesque now, but they belonged to a society in which supernatural interference was not always treated as harmless amusement. Scotland's long history of witchcraft accusation gave ideas about charms, curses and protection a far darker context than the modern wedding superstition about something borrowed or something blue.

The wedding itself also differed according to place.

Maxwell described Highland marriages as generally taking place in churches, while Lowland ceremonies were often held at the bride's father's house and, later, sometimes at the minister's manse. If two weddings were to take place at one church on the same day, efforts could be made to prevent the two parties meeting one another on the road.

Afterwards came the feast.

The bride and groom were expected to lead the first reel after supper. Maxwell gives its name as the "shemit", or shame-faced reel, supposedly because of the newly married couple's bashfulness.

Another late-Victorian collection of Scottish church history records the extraordinary scale on which some weddings could be held. Kirk sessions attempted to control festivities by regulating the number of guests and the hour at which celebrations should finish. Even then, gatherings of around 40 people could be regarded as an acceptable ceiling.

The community helped supply the table.

Landowners might contribute beef, mutton or venison; farmers supplied poultry or dairy produce; and ministers or schoolmasters could lend cooking utensils. Such arrangements belonged to the tradition of the “penny wedding”, in which the cost of celebration was spread more widely than it is in the modern model of one family paying a large commercial bill.

The bride’s arrival at her new home could bring another sequence of rituals.

One account describes bread and cheese being held above her as she crossed the threshold. Shortbread might then be broken over her head, with younger members of the gathering scrambling for the pieces. She could then be expected to sweep the hearth with a broom.

These were not uniform Scottish practices carried out identically from Shetland to the Borders. Maxwell himself was collecting traditions from different periods and places, and Victorian writers were sometimes too willing to turn local practices into national ones.

The legal history, however, is much firmer — and considerably stranger to modern eyes.

For centuries Scotland recognised forms of marriage that did not necessarily require either a church ceremony or a registrar.

National Records of Scotland explains that marriage by declaration before two witnesses could constitute a lawful marriage. These became known as “irregular marriages”. In its simplest form, Scottish law regarded the consent of the couple as the central element of the marriage rather than the presence of a clergyman.

That difference eventually made Scotland famous far beyond its borders.

England restricted clandestine and irregular marriage under Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1753. Scottish law did not follow it. Couples who could not or would not marry under English requirements began travelling north, producing the border wedding trade associated most famously with Gretna Green, but also with Coldstream and Lamberton Toll.

The reality was less romantic than later legend sometimes made it appear.

Some irregular marriages were perfectly serious unions carried out without the formal machinery of the church. Others generated disputes over whether a marriage had actually taken place. Kirk sessions might summon couples, require them to acknowledge the union publicly, rebuke them and impose a fine.

Records from Dalton in Dumfriesshire, for example, show irregularly married couples being called before the kirk session in the late 18th century. In one 1773 case, a couple acknowledged their marriage publicly and paid a guinea to the poor. The frequency of such cases irritated the kirk session sufficiently for it to consider increasing the fine.

The church’s displeasure did not necessarily make the marriage invalid.

That is the curious feature of the Scottish system. The kirk might regard the manner of marriage as improper while the law could still recognise the relationship itself.

Old parish records show the more conventional route as well. Banns of marriage were normally proclaimed before the congregation on three successive Sundays so that objections or impediments could be raised. Where the bride and groom lived in different parishes, banns could be proclaimed in both.

Compulsory civil registration did not begin in Scotland until 1 January 1855. From then, statutory marriage registers recorded considerably more information about couples, including age, address, occupation and parents.

Even that did not immediately end irregular marriage.

National Records of Scotland has a 1903 Perth register containing both a conventional church marriage and an irregular marriage by declaration before witnesses. The latter required a sheriff's warrant before it could be entered officially in the register.

The practice survived astonishingly late.

Irregular marriages were finally abolished under the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1939, with the change taking effect in 1940. The same legislation allowed Scottish registrars to conduct civil marriages.

One of the last generations to use the old system included couples whose lives would later become rather famous.

In January 1920, the Scottish woman Jessie Roberta "Rita" Cowan and Japanese chemistry student Masataka Taketsuru married secretly in Glasgow by declaration before witnesses. Taketsuru later helped establish Japan's whisky industry, and their marriage became part of the story of Nikka whisky.

The ceremony required neither a grand church nor the machinery now associated with a wedding. Their declaration, witnesses and subsequent legal registration were enough.

That old Scottish principle is perhaps the most striking survival beneath all the shortbread, reels and supernatural precautions.

Marriage could certainly be surrounded by ritual. Communities cared about banns, respectability and the kirk's approval. Families feasted. Brides crossed thresholds under bread and cheese. Shoes were loosened and dogs watched with suspicion.

Yet Scottish law retained, remarkably late, the much plainer proposition that two people themselves could create the marriage.

The elaborate wedding came and went around it.

Consent was the part that mattered.

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POLICY AND GOVERNMENT | 21 August 2026

Scotland's Prisons Hold More Than 8,600 People as Ministers Consider Sentencing and Release Reform

Read online: <https://modern.scot/scotlands-prisons-hold-more-than-8600-people-as-ministers-consider-sentencing-and-release-reform/>



Scotland's prison system has entered a new policy stage after consultation closed on proposals that could change the use of short custodial sentences, remand, community disposals and prisoner release arrangements.

The Scottish Government consultation closed at 23:55 on 20 August against a prison population that has been running well above the estate's design capacity. The most recent published Scottish Government projection report recorded 8,466 people in custody on 1 July, while

the population had reached a record 8,603 on 26 May. The prison estate's stated design capacity is 7,805.

That May peak put the prison system 798 people above design capacity.

The distinction between the record figure and the latest confirmed count matters. Scotland is not known from the latest published figures to be holding more than 8,600 prisoners today, but the government's own modelling shows that August 2026 could range between about 8,400 and 8,650, with further growth considered likely if current trends continue.

The consultation, published on 25 June, was presented as a response to what ministers describe as an unsustainable prison population. It draws on recommendations from the Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission and asks whether Scotland should change several points at which people enter, remain in or leave custody.

One proposal would require justice social work reports in all cases where a short custodial sentence is being considered. Another asks how confidence in community sentences could be improved, including through their availability, content and outcomes.

The consultation also examines remand and prisoner release arrangements, including the treatment of long-term prisoners serving determinate sentences of four years or more.

Those proposals sit against a prison population that has changed markedly over the past three years.

Scottish Government figures show that the prison population generally remained between about 7,350 and 7,650 from September 2020 until late 2022. It then began rising sharply. The population reached 8,361 in May 2024, fell after emergency early release measures, then climbed again through 2025 and into 2026.

The government has already altered release arrangements several times in an effort to control pressure on the estate.

Emergency early release in summer 2024 led to 477 people being released. Further legislation changed the release point for eligible short-term prisoners from 50% to 40% of sentence, taking effect in February 2025. Another emergency early release programme ran from November 2025 to April 2026 and released 614 people.

A further change, known as STP30, moved the release point for some eligible prisoners serving sentences of less than four years from 40% to 30%. Releases under that measure began in May and June this year. The Scottish Prison Service says 52 people were released in the first tranche alone.

Despite those interventions, the prison population reached 8,603 in May before falling to 8,466 by 1 July.

The pressure is not being driven evenly across the prison population.

The government says long-term prisoners now make up 36% of the population and that this proportion is expected to increase. It also says the average custodial sentence in Scotland rose by 37% between 2014-15 and 2023-24, partly because a greater proportion of serious crime has been prosecuted in court.

Remand remains another major component.

On 1 July, 2,217 people were being held on remand, while 6,249 were serving sentences. The remand population has generally remained between about 2,000 and 2,300 since its peak of 2,360 in May 2024.

That means overcrowding cannot be explained simply by short sentences.

A substantial part of the pressure comes from people waiting for cases to conclude, combined with a growing population serving longer sentences.

The Scottish Government itself acknowledges the operational consequences. Its consultation says overcrowding is placing pressure on staff, restricting rehabilitation and purposeful activity, and creating risks to the Scottish Prison Service's ability to maintain safe and lawful prisons. It also points to the increasing complexity of the population, including serious organised crime, substance misuse, mental-health needs, social-care needs and an ageing prisoner population.

That raises a harder question than whether another tranche of early release can temporarily reduce the headcount.

Scotland has repeatedly used emergency or accelerated release measures to create space. The new consultation instead asks whether demand for custody should be reduced earlier in the criminal justice process, through sentencing, remand decisions and community-based interventions.

A second justice consultation closed on the same day.

The statutory review of Scotland's National Strategy for Community Justice also closed on 20 August. That strategy is built around the principle that prison remains necessary for serious offending and people who present significant risk, while community interventions can in some cases reduce reoffending more effectively than custody.

Its review asks about early intervention, diversion from prosecution and the future direction of community justice over the next three to five years.

Taken together, the two consultations indicate that ministers are considering changes at both ends of the system: reducing unnecessary entry into custody while altering how some prisoners move through and out of it.

There is no guarantee that every proposal consulted upon will become law.

Nor is there evidence that sentencing reform alone would return the prison population below design capacity. The government's July projections show a wide range of possible outcomes. By March 2027, the average daily prison population could be anywhere between about 8,100 and 9,150 depending on court activity, remand flows and other factors.

Even the bottom of that range would remain above the estate's stated design capacity.

That leaves ministers with a problem which cannot be solved solely by changing one release date or building one additional prison.

The system is carrying more people, more remand prisoners, longer sentences and increasingly complex needs, while attempts to create capacity through early release have so far provided only temporary relief.

The consultation period is now over.

The next stage will show whether the government intends to make structural changes to sentencing and release policy, or whether Scotland continues managing prison overcrowding principally through periodic interventions after the pressure has already reached the prison gates.

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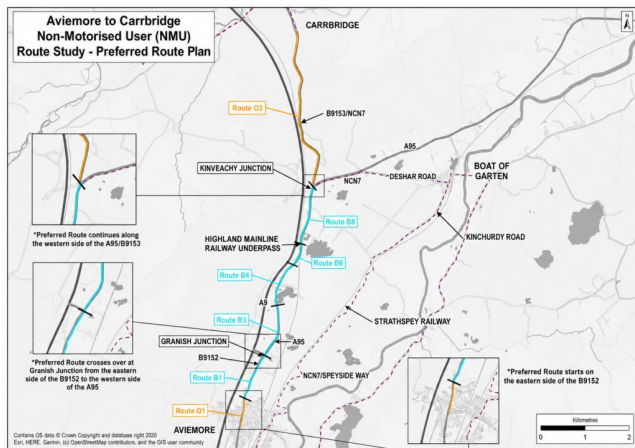
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TRANSPORT | 21 August 2026

Aviemore To Carrbridge Route Moves Closer To Planning Decision After Years Of Delay

Read online: <https://modern.scot/aviemore-to-carrbridge-route-moves-closer-to-planning-decision-after-years-of-delay/>



A long-promised walking, wheeling and cycling route between Aviemore and Carrbridge is moving closer to a formal planning decision after years of design work, consultation and uncertainty over whether the scheme would be delivered alongside the A9 dualling programme. [VIEW MAP](#)

The proposal is for a fully segregated non-motorised route running for about 10 kilometres between the two communities, following the B9152, A95 and B9153 corridors. Most of the route would be newly constructed, with some existing paths resurfaced and

widened to meet a three-metre standard.

The scheme has been promoted by Transport Scotland and was developed as a separate project from the A9 Dalraddy to Slochd dualling works. Transport Scotland has previously said that, if the route secured its statutory consents and necessary land in time, provision could be made for it to be incorporated into the wider A9 construction contract.

That qualification has become one of the central issues around the project.

The route has been discussed for years. A formal Proposal of Application Notice was considered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in August 2022, when planning members were told the scheme would create a new shared-use route between Aviemore and Carrbridge and that an Environmental Impact Assessment would be required.

The proposal is classed as a major development because its length exceeds eight kilometres.

Its intended alignment begins near Dalfaber Drive in Aviemore, continues north alongside the B9152, crosses the Granish junction and then follows the A95 and B9153 towards Carrbridge. The design seeks to keep closely to existing road corridors in order to limit woodland loss, disturbance to protected species and wider landscape impacts.

The route is not simply a leisure path.

Highland Council has described it as a future off-road connection for walking, wheeling and cycling between the two settlements, providing a safer alternative to existing road travel and linking with other routes in and around Aviemore. Cycling data published by the council has also shown substantial everyday use of bikes in Aviemore, including clear peaks around normal commuting times.

The project has nevertheless had an awkward relationship with the wider timetable for A9 dualling.

Cairngorms National Park Authority documents published this year show that the proposed route has not been

included in the latest draft Core Paths Plan because its final alignment has not yet been confirmed and not all the land required is currently within access rights.

The authority also questioned whether the route would actually be delivered within the lifespan of the current Core Paths Plan. It concluded that designation as a core path would add little to the delivery process because the scheme is already identified among the commitments associated with A9 dualling. The route could instead be added after construction is complete.

The route remains an identified transport commitment, but its existence on planning and policy maps is not the same thing as a completed path between the two communities.

Planning members recognised that problem as far back as 2022, when the Cairngorms National Park Authority agreed that officers should explore whether partners could take the Aviemore-Carrbridge route forward independently of the A9 dualling programme.

Four years later, the project remains closely tied to decisions surrounding the trunk-road works.

Sections of the proposed route lie beside or pass through parcels of woodland included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Although the alignment does not itself fall within statutory nature conservation sites, several protected areas lie in the wider vicinity. The planning process therefore has to consider habitat effects alongside the transport case for a safer off-road connection.

The project also has to negotiate junctions and transitions between dedicated path and public road.

Earlier design material shows that cyclists travelling north into Carrbridge would eventually transition back onto the B9153 carriageway. That means the claim of a wholly segregated route applies to the planned connection itself, while the onward journey within or beyond Carrbridge still depends partly on the existing road network.

The wider active-travel programme in Aviemore has meanwhile encountered its own limitations.

A Cairngorms 2030 delivery report published in March found that there was not enough room on part of Grampian Road for a bidirectional segregated cycle path without substantial land acquisition, removal of mature trees and realignment of the carriageway.

That section was consequently removed from the current Aviemore concept design. The revised work focuses instead on improved pavements, wheelchair access, public realm, bus-stop integration, traffic calming and an alternative cycle-friendly route on Dalfaber Road.

The same report says a short shared-use path north of Dalfaber Drive would help bridge the gap between the built-up area and the starting point of the Aviemore-Carrbridge route.

That makes the proposed inter-urban path more important to the overall network, but also exposes the dependence of one project on another.

The original case for the scheme is straightforward enough. Aviemore and Carrbridge are close enough for cycling to be a realistic everyday journey, but the existing road corridor is not an attractive option for many people on foot or bike. A continuous, segregated route would create a connection that currently does not exist in a consistent form.

The project has already passed through route appraisal, consultation, environmental assessment work and several years of planning preparation. Its connection to the A9 programme was intended to provide an

efficient route to construction, but the prolonged timetable surrounding the road scheme has also left the active-travel project exposed to the same uncertainty.

The immediate planning process now offers a chance to separate two questions that have often been treated together: whether the route should be allowed to proceed, and when somebody will actually build it.

For residents of Aviemore and Carrbridge, the second question is likely to be the more important one.

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ECONOMY | 21 August 2026

More Than A Third Of Great British Energy Staff Live Outside Scotland Despite Aberdeen Headquarters

Read online: <https://modern.scot/more-than-a-third-of-great-british-energy-staff-live-outside-scotland-despite-aberdeen-headquarters/>



More than a third of the people currently working for Great British Energy live outside Scotland, despite Aberdeen being designated as the headquarters of the publicly owned energy company.

Figures reported this week show that Great British Energy employs 132 people, of whom 46 live elsewhere in the UK. Only 53 of the total workforce are permanent staff, with the remainder made up of temporary assignments, loans, secondments and

contingent workers.

The figures do not mean that Great British Energy has abandoned Aberdeen. The company has confirmed Marischal Square as its permanent headquarters and says it intends to move there later in 2026. Fit-out work began in May.

What they do show is that the geographical distribution of the organisation's workforce remains some distance from the political promise attached to Aberdeen when the headquarters decision was announced.

When Aberdeen was selected in September 2024, the UK Government said the move would place the city "at the heart" of Great British Energy and allow the company to draw upon its engineering expertise. Smaller sites were also planned for Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Great British Energy's own careers material says the organisation expects to grow to a team of 300 people by 2030. Current vacancies include positions based in Aberdeen and others offered across Aberdeen and Edinburgh. The roles range from investment and project development to grid management, commercial functions, health and safety and supply-chain strategy.

That recruitment programme may eventually alter the balance substantially. It has not done so yet..

In May, a UK parliamentary answer showed Great British Energy then had 30 permanent staff, 37 people temporarily assigned from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 21 on loan from other government departments, 12 seconded from government or external organisations and 23 contingent workers.

Taken together, those categories amounted to 123 people at the time. Ministers said the company's workforce pay case had been approved and permanent recruitment was expected to increase significantly during the following financial year.

The current reported figure of 132 therefore indicates continued growth, while the rise in permanent employees to 53 suggests some of the organisation is beginning to move from its start-up staffing model

towards a more settled workforce.

The more difficult question for Aberdeen is where that permanent workforce will ultimately live and work.

The government's formal expectation, given in Parliament in February 2025, was that Great British Energy would employ between 200 and 300 people at its Aberdeen headquarters over the following five years. Ministers also said the company would support thousands of jobs more widely through its activities and investments.

That is narrower than some of the political language surrounding Great British Energy during its creation.

The larger ambition of around 1,000 direct jobs has increasingly been presented as a long-term objective rather than an immediate headquarters figure. Former chair Juergen Maier previously indicated that reaching that scale could take 10 or 20 years.

For Aberdeen, that changes the timescale against which delivery has to be judged.

A city facing the decline of employment associated with the mature North Sea oil and gas sector was offered more than an administrative address. The economic argument for placing the new public energy company in Aberdeen rested heavily on the ability to retain skills, attract new work and build a clean-energy employment base around an existing industrial workforce.

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POLICY AND GOVERNMENT | 21 August 2026

New 50MW Data Centre Rule Gives Ministers Sight of Scotland's Biggest Projects, but Not the Whole Pipeline

Read online: <https://modern.scot/new-50mw-data-centre-rule-gives-ministers-sight-of-scotland-s-biggest-projects-but-not-the-whole-pipeline/>



Scotland's largest proposed data centres will now have to be brought quickly to the attention of ministers, after the Scottish Government introduced a new notification requirement for developments exceeding 50 megawatts of power capacity.

The direction, issued on 17 August, requires planning authorities to notify Scottish Ministers within seven days of validating an application for a data centre above the 50MW threshold. Ministers say the change is intended to give central government a clearer view of

the developing national pipeline and its implications for infrastructure.

It is a material change in oversight, but it is not a moratorium, does not transfer every large data-centre decision automatically to ministers, and does not itself require every proposed data centre to undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment. Nor does the new notification direction cover developments of 50MW or below.

Scotland is trying to understand the cumulative consequences of a sector which has expanded faster than the national planning framework anticipated.

Only two months ago, the Scottish Government told Parliament that it had not undertaken a formal national assessment of the climate impact of hyperscale data centres. Ministers said they were instead working with the National Energy System Operator, SEPA, Scottish Water, councils and industry to understand combined demands for electricity and water, environmental effects and possible economic benefits.

The latest direction is therefore partly an information-gathering measure.

It allows ministers to see qualifying applications as they enter the planning system rather than relying upon a fragmented picture assembled from Scotland's individual planning authorities.

The Scottish Parliament Information Centre described the purpose as strategic oversight of the application pipeline and its wider infrastructure implications. Until now, councils have largely been considering individual developments within the normal planning system, even though the cumulative electricity demand of several projects may extend far beyond the boundary of any one council.

That is the central planning problem.

A local authority can assess the land, buildings, transport implications and environmental effects of a particular proposal. It is considerably harder for it to determine what happens when several large facilities in

different council areas seek grid connections, water supplies and supporting infrastructure at roughly the same time.

The scale being discussed is substantial.

During a Scottish Parliament debate in June, Alan Brown MSP said 24 data centres were proposed across Scotland. Laura Moodie MSP said six of them were in the South Scotland region. A separate parliamentary motion claimed the proposals could collectively require at least 6,000MW of power if all were developed. Those figures were raised by MSPs rather than independently established by the Scottish Government, and ministers cautioned that a number of projects were speculative and might never reach construction.

A planning pipeline is not the same thing as built capacity.

But speculative applications still create a planning problem when government does not yet have a complete national picture of what is being proposed, where it would connect and what infrastructure would be required if even part of the pipeline proceeded.

The 50MW threshold improves that picture without resolving it.

Projects below that level are outside the new notification requirement. A number of smaller facilities in one area could therefore create cumulative infrastructure demands without individually triggering the direction.

The direction also should not be confused with the separate 50MW threshold used in electricity-generation law. Under the Electricity Act 1989, Scottish Ministers generally determine applications for onshore generating stations exceeding 50MW. Data centres consume electricity rather than generate it, and the new data-centre direction operates through the planning system for a different purpose.

Alongside the national notification requirement, ministers have intervened directly in three individual cases.

The Scottish Government has recalled an appeal concerning a proposed green data centre at Redheughs Avenue in Edinburgh. That means ministers, rather than an appointed Reporter, will take the final decision after receiving the Reporter's recommendation.

It has also directed that Environmental Impact Assessments be undertaken for proposed data-centre developments at Wester Hermiston in Edinburgh and Auchtertool in Fife.

Those interventions show that ministers are prepared to use existing planning powers where they consider additional scrutiny necessary. They do not establish a blanket national EIA requirement for the sector.

The question of what constitutes a "green data centre" also remains unresolved.

National Planning Framework 4 supports the development of green data centres, but MSPs and councils have repeatedly asked how that term should be defined. Ministers have referred to renewable electricity, energy efficiency, lower water consumption and opportunities to reuse waste heat as relevant considerations, while acknowledging that planning authorities have been making those judgments case by case.

That leaves considerable discretion at local level.

A project can promise renewable electricity, for example, while still requiring a substantial grid connection. It may use efficient cooling technology while consuming large amounts of power overall. Backup generation can introduce separate questions about emissions and local air quality. Heat recovery may offer a public benefit, but only where there is somewhere practical for that heat to go.

The Scottish Government has also said community wealth building should form part of its consideration of the sector.

That raises another question which cannot be answered by megawatts alone: how much of the economic value remains in the communities carrying the infrastructure?

Data centres can involve very large capital investment, but the number of permanent jobs after construction can be considerably smaller than the construction workforce. The planning system therefore has to distinguish headline investment from lasting employment, local procurement, business-rate income, grid consequences and any public infrastructure required to support a site.

Ministers rejected calls earlier this summer for an immediate moratorium while those questions were examined. The government position has instead moved towards greater central visibility and selective intervention.

That is a more active position than Scotland had at the beginning of the summer, when ministers were still saying that no sector-specific planning guidance or regulatory changes were proposed and that the need for them would remain under review.

The new direction closes one obvious information gap. From now on, ministers should know quickly when a data-centre application above 50MW enters the Scottish planning system.

It does not yet answer the larger questions the pipeline has exposed: what cumulative electricity demand Scotland is prepared to accommodate, whether water and grid capacity should influence where projects are located, what minimum public benefit should be expected, how a green data centre should be defined, and whether developments below 50MW require similar national scrutiny.

Those are no longer theoretical questions. Scotland now has a mechanism for counting its biggest proposals. The harder task is deciding how many, where, and on what terms.

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POLICY AND GOVERNMENT | 21 August 2026

New Livestock Movement Laws Tighten As BSE And Bluetongue Hit Dumfries And Galloway

Read online: <https://modern.scot/new-livestock-movement-laws-tighten-as-bse-and-bluetongue-hit-dumfries-and-galloway/>



Dumfries and Galloway is confronting two separate livestock disease problems at once, with a new case of classical BSE confirmed in cattle and Scotland's first cluster of bluetongue virus serotype 3 concentrated around Newton Stewart.

The two diseases are unrelated in how they spread and how they are controlled, but their arrival in the same region within days of one another creates a difficult August for livestock businesses already making

decisions about sales, shows, breeding stock and cross-border movements.

On 19 August, the Scottish Government confirmed classical bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, in a cow on a farm in Dumfries and Galloway. Precautionary movement restrictions have been placed on the animal's offspring and its cohort at the affected premises while the source is investigated. The animal did not enter the human food chain, and Food Standards Scotland has said the isolated case presents no risk to human health.

The case matters because it is classical BSE rather than the atypical form detected in Dumfries and Galloway in December 2024. Scotland also recorded a classical case in Ayrshire in May 2024. In that earlier case, the Animal and Plant Health Agency investigated the source, while animals that had been in contact with the case were traced and isolated.

BSE remains one of the most heavily controlled livestock diseases in Britain. Scotland's surveillance system includes routine testing of cattle over four years old which die on farms. Food-safety measures include controls on animal feed and the removal from the food chain of tissues regarded as specified risk material, including those most likely to contain BSE infectivity.

The investigation in Dumfries and Galloway now has to establish where the infection came from. Scottish Government guidance records that BSE cases have occurred in cattle born after the 1996 feed ban and says some have been attributed to old contaminated feed persisting in storage, while others may have involved contaminated imported feed. That history makes tracing the origin of a classical case an important part of the response rather than a formality.

At the same time, bluetongue has moved from being a disease Scotland was trying to keep out to one now confirmed on four Scottish holdings.

The Scottish Government's latest figures, updated on 19 August, show four premises affected by BTV-3, all near Newton Stewart. Five animals have been confirmed infected: four sheep and one bovine. The affected holdings are dated 9, 12 and 14 August, with two premises recorded on 14 August. Scotland's first BTV-3 detection of the 2026–27 outbreak season was confirmed on 8 August in a single sheep.

Bluetongue is a notifiable viral disease affecting sheep, cattle, goats, deer, camelids and other ruminants. It is transmitted mainly by biting midges. It does not infect people and does not affect food safety, but the consequences for livestock can be substantial. Scottish Government guidance says infected sheep can suffer high mortality, while cattle can experience fertility and productivity problems.

Its appearance in south-west Scotland has brought a rapid tightening of movement rules.

From Saturday, 22 August, the existing four-day concession for Scottish animals attending shows or sales in bluetongue Restricted Zones will be suspended. Animals travelling from Scotland into those areas and returning under the concession will have to complete the outward and return journey on the same day, during daylight hours.

England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man are currently treated as bluetongue Restricted Zones for the purposes of movements into Scotland. Animals coming north to live are already subject to licensing, testing and other conditions according to species, vaccination status and purpose of movement.

A second change is due on 10 September. From that date, all animals susceptible to bluetongue moving from a Restricted Zone into Scotland to live will have to be vaccinated against BTV-3, subject to limited exemptions.

The precise vaccine used matters. Any authorised BTV-3 vaccine will satisfy the vaccination requirement, but the Scottish Government states that only cattle vaccinated with Bultavo-3 are exempt from certain testing requirements. Cattle vaccinated with other products, and other categories of livestock, may still require pre-movement testing.

That creates a practical timetable for farmers and livestock traders which is considerably more complicated than the word “vaccinated” suggests.

Government guidance says bluetongue vaccines can take up to six weeks to provide full protection, and some require two injections three weeks apart. Anyone contemplating cross-border purchases or movements therefore has to consider the vaccine used, the date administered, the completion of the course and whether testing remains necessary before transport.

The Scottish Government had designated 1 June to 9 September as the active control period for 2026 because warmer conditions generally allow midges to transmit the virus more readily. Those dates were intended to give farmers a degree of certainty, but ministers have made clear that planned relaxations remain under review as the disease position changes.

That caveat now carries considerably more weight than it did when the rules were drawn up.

For Dumfries and Galloway, the immediate economic exposure is less about food safety than movement, livestock management and confidence. Neither the confirmed BSE animal nor bluetongue poses the public-health threat that the names may suggest. The pressure falls instead on farms required to work around surveillance, movement restrictions, testing, vaccination and the possibility that controls will change again if further infections are detected.

There is also an important difference in what authorities are trying to establish. With bluetongue, the immediate concern is limiting onward transmission during the season when its midge vector is active. With classical BSE, investigators are looking backwards, attempting to determine how a disease controlled through decades of feed regulation and surveillance appeared in another Scottish animal.

Scotland’s livestock controls are therefore being tested in two very different ways in the same corner of

the country.

The next useful information will not be another reassurance that systems are operating. For BSE, it will be what the investigation establishes about the source. For bluetongue, it will be whether the four affected holdings near Newton Stewart remain a contained cluster or the beginning of a wider Scottish spread.

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TEA WITH GUNNS | 21 August 2026

Prince Harry and the Difficulty Of Coming Back After A Grand Exit

Read online: <https://modern.scot/prince-harry-and-the-difficulty-of-coming-back-after-a-grand-exit/>



I first heard that Prince Harry was coming back on the village WhatsApp group. At 7.36 on Thursday morning, Morag posted: PRINCE HARRY IS COMING HOME. There were no details. This was immediately a problem. Effie replied: To Scotland? Morag said: Britain. Elspeth: For good? Morag: Apparently. Agnes: Has he still got a house? Nobody knew. Then Jean, who has an admirable instinct for the practical difficulty hidden inside every international event, wrote: He'll need a kettle. American ones are different. I had not yet had breakfast. I put my phone face down and made tea. The reports, when I eventually read them for myself, were

slightly less dramatic than Morag's announcement but only slightly. Prince Harry and Meghan are expected to return to Britain with their children for an extended stay after six years in America. They are not returning as working royals and are expected to live privately. All perfectly straightforward. Except for one thing. Harry made a Grand Exit. And there is nothing more difficult in adult life than returning after one. I am not talking about leaving. Leaving is easy. Leaving has momentum. There are boxes. Decisions. Forwarding addresses. People asking whether you are sure. You are extremely sure. You have perhaps never been surer of anything. You close the door. You depart. If circumstances permit, you do this while wearing a good coat. The trouble begins years later when you change your mind. Most of us learn this on a smaller scale. We leave jobs we shall never return to. We storm out of restaurants we shall never patronise again. We tell hairdressers that after what happened to the fringe they will never see us again. Three months later we are standing outside the same hairdresser because everyone else is booked until October. This is why I have always believed that a woman should never make an exit so complete that she cannot return for her cardigan. A cardigan provides diplomatic cover. "I was just passing." "You live seventy miles away." "Yes, well, I remembered the cardigan." Nothing more need be said. Prince Harry unfortunately left on a scale beyond knitwear. There were oceans involved. California. Television. Books. Lawyers. Announcements. Once an exit has acquired international coverage, one cannot reasonably come back claiming to have forgotten an umbrella. I mentioned this to Mr Gunn. "What would you do," I asked, "if you had left Britain very publicly six years ago and were now coming back?" He looked up from his newspaper. "Come back." "Yes, but how?" "Plane, probably." "No. Socially." He thought about this. "Don't make another announcement." This is why I married him. By eight o'clock the WhatsApp group had moved from constitutional affairs to international removals. Rhona asked: Are they bringing all their furniture back? Morag said she had no idea. Agnes replied: They'll need a container. This was stated with the authority of a woman who once had a sideboard brought from Perth. Effie wrote: From California? That's generally how containers work, said Agnes. There followed several minutes during which the Duke and Duchess of Sussex ceased to be members of the Royal Family and became a couple attempting to move house across the Atlantic. Jean wanted to know whether you paid customs duty on your own sofa. Margaret asked whether any American electrical appliances would work here. Agnes advised against bringing the fridge. Too much bother. Different plugs. Effie pointed out that plugs could be changed.

Agnes replied: Not on a fridge the size Americans have. You'd need planning permission. This received eleven laughing faces and one thumbs-up from Roger, who had not said anything all morning. Then someone asked whether Harry would have to register with a dentist. There was a long pause. This was the first genuinely serious question. He wants to get his name down now, Jean advised. My daughter's been waiting eighteen months. Effie wrote: Maybe royals have their own dentist. Agnes: He's not doing that now. Morag: Doing what? Agnes: Royal-ing. I made another cup of tea. There is something very comforting about the Scottish ability to take a development involving monarchy, California and six years of public history and reduce it to whether a man has access to NHS dentistry. By half past eight, the group had established that Harry would require a kettle, new appliances, a dentist, possibly a GP and somebody to explain which bin went out on Tuesday. Nobody had been asked. This did not diminish our sense of responsibility. Then Effie raised the question that changed everything. What do you actually say when he gets back? The group went quiet. This was delicate. Because Britain is quite good at departures. We have railway platforms for them. Ports. Military bands. Farewell speeches. Handkerchiefs. Plaques. We understand the emotional architecture of leaving. Returning is more awkward. If somebody has been away six years, you cannot behave as though they merely popped out for milk. On the other hand, making too much of it can cause the returning person to reconsider the entire undertaking before the luggage has arrived. The Highlands has developed a method for this. Someone leaves. They may leave for London, Canada, Australia or, in one particularly ambitious case locally, Dundee. Before leaving, they explain that there is nothing for them here. The weather is impossible. The roads are terrible. The shops close too early. Everybody knows everybody's business. They require culture. Opportunity. Restaurants open after eight. They leave. Years pass. Then one afternoon you see them in the Co-op holding a loaf. There is a procedure. You do not say: "I THOUGHT YOU HATED IT HERE." You do not say: "WHAT HAPPENED TO AUSTRALIA?" You certainly do not say: "DIDN'T YOU TELL EVERYONE YOU WERE NEVER COMING BACK?" These are amateur mistakes. You look at them. They look at you. And you say: "Oh. You're back." That is all. Three words containing approximately six years of evidence. The tone is crucial. Too enthusiastic and you imply concern. Too flat and you imply judgement. It must sound as though their return is entirely unsurprising while simultaneously making clear that the village has retained the minutes of their departure. After that, you ask: "When did you get in?" Not why. Never why. Why will arrive eventually. Why comes after tea. Sometimes after several teas. The returning person may offer an explanation immediately. "We just felt it was time." You nod. "Right." "We missed the place." "Aye." "The children love it." "That's good." And there it is. Re-entry complete. No inquiry. No tribunal. No PowerPoint presentation entitled What We Have Learned Since Leaving. This, I think, is civilised. People ought to be allowed to come back. Leaving somewhere does not oblige you to dislike it forever. Nor does returning mean the leaving was a mistake. Sometimes you have to go somewhere else to discover what belonged to the place and what belonged to you. Sometimes life changes. Parents get older. Children grow. Priorities move around while nobody is looking. The person who left at thirty-five is not necessarily the person who comes back at forty-one. It would be a peculiar world if every decision had to remain permanently correct merely because we once made it confidently. By nine o'clock the WhatsApp group had become unexpectedly philosophical. Then Margaret spoiled it. Will he have to take another driving test? Rhona: Why would he? Margaret: Because he's been driving on the other side. Effie: You don't forget which side of the road. Agnes: Tourists do. Jean: That's different. Margaret: How? Nobody answered. At 9.14, a photograph appeared of a sheep standing in the road near Bettyhill. The monarchy was immediately abandoned. Whose is that? Is that Donald's? Donald's have blue marks. Zoom in. I am zooming in. That's not a blue mark, that's shadow. Can somebody ring Donald? Prince Harry had been back in Britain, at least conceptually, for one hour and thirty-eight minutes before being displaced from public attention by an unidentified ewe. I showed the exchange to Mr Gunn. He read it carefully. "What happened to Harry?" "Sheep." He nodded. This appeared perfectly reasonable. And perhaps that is the safest way to return after a Grand Exit. Come home quietly. Bring the children. Find somewhere to live. Buy a kettle if necessary. Do not explain everything on the first day. Britain will notice. Scotland will notice. The village WhatsApp group will certainly notice. But if you give it long enough, somebody's sheep will

get out. And then you are no longer the news.

Modern Scot - Distinctly Scottish

LM Bruce, Editor lm@bruce.scot +44 (0)7888013333