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Refuge or retreat: resilience and the mediatization of Scotland’s island space

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ABSTRACT
Islands are significantly on the agenda in Scotland. Media accounts – news, features, and other creative narratives – textually frame the representational terrains of island policy, agency and community. Such mediatization informs and responds to certain ideas and discourses of our island geographies. It typically includes what could be considered good islandness: that is, islands as good lifestyle havens, sites of social resilience and adaptive social renewal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, certain spaces and geographies were notably re-evaluated. Sites of ‘isolation’, ‘remoteness’ and places considered ‘far from’ occupied a heightened position of desirability and potential refuge. A purposive sample of stories and features is presented here to capture case exemplars of how Scotland’s island space and place geographies were variously textually framed by media news across the initial lockdown and subsequent significant travel restriction phases (March 2020 to October 2020). The discussion explores how a short-view media framing of Scotland’s island spaces specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic spoke to aspects of islandness as refuge and as resilience. The paper offers a longer-view perspective whereby the complexities and complicities of media framing of Scottish rural and island spaces as resilient is considered more broadly.

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Introduction
Ideas of islands as places of refuge or retreat are entwined within complex narratives of islandness represented variously, not least by media news and factual features. Islands may be celebrated as strategic and resilient havens, and island communities – perhaps especially the small ones – as resourceful and adaptive. Islands are alternatively seen as places of limited capacity, occupying the margins of survival, remote and isolating. The events of the COVID-19 pandemic ‘shone a light’ on how we variously valued our mobilities and spaces in ordinary and extraordinary terms. This included rural, remote and island spaces. Sharing insight from Scotland on transformational rural futures and new knowledge on rural resilience (including islands) in a post-COVID world offers some
comparative experience for reflection and debate (Scottish Government, 2022). The mediatization – the complex integration and interplay of media technologies, economies and ideological construction – of Scotland’s island spaces is explored with attention given to narratives of both islandness and resilience. The longer view of representational and media reporting legacies of Scotland’s island spaces ordinarily as both sites of refuge and resilience is considered. The COVID-19 pandemic context was extraordinary, however. Analysis of the media framing of Scotland’s islands as notable spaces of resilience and refuge in this pandemic context’s early key phases is therefore especially examined. The time frame of late-March 2020 – UK (and Scottish) lockdown¹ - to late-October 2020 was selected for a scoping of island-related news stories.

On 23rd October 2020, the Scottish Government announced its revised response to the initial emergency responses and route map for managing the virus and its impact. The announcement of the 5-level Strategic Framework was recognized as a milestone of pandemic response planning following the initial seven months of tiered restrictions. It heralded the necessity of a regional and national COVID-19 exit strategy to mitigate complex harms emerging from restrictions, and the continued necessity of variable ‘opening-up’ across the country’s urban, rural and island spaces. Furthermore – and notably for rural and island regions – the Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce (2020) published its recommendations for the tourism sector’s recovery in late-October 2020.² This wider policy response marked a point of formal reflection on the wider economic implications of limited travel to and from rural and island areas across the seasonal months of the summer. How unrestricted travel in and out of small island and/or ‘isolated’ communities could and should be was a complex capacity picture during the pandemic yet it is one that continues to evolve beyond the COVID-19 context, not least with ongoing issues over island ferry transport provision by Caledonian McBrayne on Scotland’s west coast at crisis point (c.f. Boreland, 2022; Campbell, 2019; Corral, 2022; Meek, 2023).

This paper is organized accordingly: first, by way of background, a brief context about rural Scotland’s regional islandness and regional resilience is offered. Second, the cultural representational framing of islands more broadly, and Scotland specifically, as good spaces of retreat, refuge, resilience and renewal is examined. Thirdly, the interrogative value of the textual aspects (mediatization) of island space and resilience is noted. Analysis of specific media stories follows. This takes the form of an interpretative critique of four separate cases of media news account (written and visual data elements as presented via digital web-based news platforms). Each was purposively sampled from a wider pool of gathered data of news and media discourses circulated during the heightened UK and Scottish Government’s initial phase of emergency governance and significant travel restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic (circa late-March 2020 to the end of October 2020). A final discussion section and concluding remarks suggest how mediatization via news media plays an impactful role in a wider contextual understanding of our rural and island geographies and their representation. Texts generated, appropriated, pivoted, and circulated by media actors (on and off islands) engender, reinforce, and reposition Scotland’s islands variously. Such framing is potentially informing of how rural actors ‘do’ island and rural resilience commentaries in research, policy and journalistic discourse (lexicon, visual imagery, and evaluation) and across all sectors and spheres seeking to position new knowledge on island futures.
Scotland: spaces of islandness and regionalness

Small island research includes a focus on the geographic (Ratter, 2018; Royle, 2001) and the inter-disciplinary (Baldacchino, 2018). The scientific and epistemological interest in island sites, and the cultural allure of island places, has generated rich conceptual explorations of islands as islandness (McCall, 1996; Ronström, 2013, 2021) and their anthropogenic entanglements (Pugh & Chandler, 2021). Such work provides a conceptual underpinning for island representational, discursive and textual geographies. How we ‘do’ islands (Vannini & Taggart, 2013), or indeed how various genres (the cultural texts of creativity) perform islands (Crane & Fletcher, 2016), are some aspects informing this textual geography. This paper looks to the factual reporting and news stories of islands as a textual frame for interpretative focus in contrast to the more usual anticipation of literary and screen texts as especially powerful in framing islandness. Embedded in their insular situation, connectivity and their locality, Scotland’s islands are commonly understood as spaces set apart from a mainland. Yet, as the interdisciplinary landscape of island studies richly illustrates, islands are much more than a land mass separated by and surrounded by water. Islands are complexly (meaningfully) understood more in their connectedness than their isolation. How we speak of and represent our rural spaces of transition currently, for example in ‘post-COVID’ commentaries and research agenda, invites further reflection not least regarding how we might appreciate the regional and intra-regional spaces of islands.

Scotland’s regional islandness has fostered considerable research and debate that includes locational-specific policy and governance innovation such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) of the 1960s (followed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in the early 1990s) and the formation in the 1970s of Scotland’s three distinct island local authorities (Shetland Islands Council, Orkney Islands Council, and the (then named) Western Isles Islands Council, renamed in 1997 as Comhairle nan Eilean Siar). Scotland’s three island-only authorities now operate together with Argyll and Bute, Highland, and North Ayrshire local authorities (i.e. each with regional responsibility for small island communities across the Inner Hebrides and the Firth of Clyde) to manage the everyday undertaking of sustaining and advancing Scotland’s island places. Furthermore, the Scottish Government’s Islands (Scotland) Act (2018) offers strategic mitigation to island-proof policy subject to ongoing evaluative critique (Atterton, 2019) to better understand, account for and counter island and rural development challenges such as rural deprivation, fuel and transport costs, ageing, depopulation, cultural ‘survival’ concerns, ecological protection measures, and housing and skills shortages. Resilience (community, personal, local and regional) and islandness are conceptual fields informing of these aspects. Notably, and by way of further introductory comment, the complex legacy of locational resilience and place-specific adaptive success long associated with Scotland’s rural, ‘remote rural’ and small island experience is detailed further below. But first the paper turns to the COVID-19 pandemic and the events that interrupted, stalled and indeed disrupted what had become an increasingly expansive and celebrated Scottish island space of ‘good’ mobilities (of goods, services, experiences and people).
Islands ‘interrupted’: restriction and protection

The COVID-19 pandemic delivered an intensifying and enhanced circulation of island refuge and retreat accounts and experiences (Gugganig & Klimburg-Witjes, 2021). In Scotland, COVID-19 impact and recovery key expertise (Currie et al., 2021, Currie et al., 2022; De Lima, 2021; Glass, Shucksmith, Chapman, & Atterton, 2021) each report on the complexity of rural (including island) residents and stakeholders negotiating the pandemic response in regard of island and ‘remote rural’ locational effects. The lived experience for many islanders was to be protected by and protective of the island and rural space boundary. Media debate and commentary (by experts and the public) engaged with and invoked both specified and imagined boundaries that included policy regulation with national and regional mapping reported in the media and perceived to be variously simple, clear, readily breached, or easily confused. Tensions arose concerning varying interpretations of rules and mobilities between place of residence and ideas of home, as well as rules on tiers across different regions and countries. Within Scotland’s regional local authorities with islands the mobilities were sometimes bound by different tier restrictions for example. Media accounts often highlighted the conflicts emerging with headlines drawing attention to ‘differing perceptions’ and policy impacts varying across the ‘west coast’ for example: ‘Covid: Arran pubs forced to close despite four months with no cases’ (Sleight, 2020).

COVID-19 created exacerbated pressure on resources and environments while briefly reprieveing some other aspects through the likes of reductions in transport pollution (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2020). All communities experienced stress and anxiety as the pandemic ’took hold’. Capacity issues to cope and counter the pandemic were of acute concern (as explored later) and this included early notable pleas that non-residents of islands needed to ‘stay away’ from island areas (Duffy, 2020); and to avoid placing the local medical facilities capacity ‘at risk’. Most island communities with their more particular locational and infrastructural access by either fixed links and/or singular entry points (i.e., via ports, bridges, causeways, or airports) had to negotiate the advantages and disadvantages of these more defined boundaries of island space entry and exit. Infection rates were kept low in Scotland’s island communities generally although spikes of infection, which included mediatized suggestions of travel ban flouting, became somewhat symbolic of breaches to the otherwise widely applauded island community compliance narrative and inevitably became newsworthy (Scott, 2020). Socio-cultural resilience (variously expressed not least as ‘the island way’) and community cohesion and strength were notably recorded within rural and island regions, with collective social capital widely evidenced (such as high rates of volunteering). Nonetheless, policy research notes the exacerbation of other ‘remote’ realities compounded throughout the COVID-19 restriction period (Currie et al., 2021; Currie et al., 2022; De Lima, 2021), such as extremely limited goods and services availability, a shrinking economy, and enterprise challenges. This line of evaluation includes a review of the islands’ impact assessments (ICIA), travel restrictions, economies, and social well-being (Crook, 2020).

Disruption to rural and island culture and lifestyle sector dependencies were also acute for the tourism, arts, culture and creative industries (Carden, 2020). Loneliness and mental health impacts (Broadfoot et al., 2022; Bryce et al., 2020), as well as rural poverty and financial hardship (Glass et al., 2021), were exacerbated by the pandemic.
across Scotland, and throughout the UK rural experience more broadly (Phillipson et al., 2020). What was ‘good’ about ‘the place you were in’ had become a heightened narrative of global and hyper-local spatial significance.

**Islands as good places to be**

Island communities – as ‘good places’ – have been seen to be doing ‘good things’ for themselves, and for Scotland, for some decades now. The nature and degree of resilience (Magis, 2010; Steiner & Markantoni, 2014) notably articulated as a community strength, and locally empowered (i.e. as endemic within the rural, remote and/or island place), are understood as key factors. Resilience is widely seen as sustaining a viable resident community. It is expressive of an island place’s adaptative and socially transformative competencies and confidences, whereby community and individual resilience dimensions especially coalesce within ‘small-face-to-face’ island settings (c.f. Glass et al., 2020).

Policy and governance countering structural challenges of isolation and ‘fragility’ aim to rural-proof and legislate for Scotland’s islands as places where one can live well (community), and for others to enjoy as visitors (destination), each on a sustainable growth basis. Resilience is framed within narratives of island ambition and success. Such ambitions and realisations are not without tensions, complexities, and challenges, however (Skerratt & Steiner, 2013). Nonetheless, Scotland’s wider sector promotion is that the country generally offers good travel destinations (tourism) and good location options (investment, skills and workforce), with islands and remote rural places strongly rated for overall good lifestyle indicators. Again, media plays a key role in framing this understanding not least in terms of islands as ‘good places to be’. Following Covid-19 and a ‘post-pandemic’ analysis, assessment of Scotland’s people, places and everyday processes, has included considered evaluation (and heightened appreciation) of Scotland’s ‘escape’, ‘well-being’, and ‘emotional’ space geographies (VisitScotland, 2021).

From wild places to no-wheres; from safe places to be-heres, the capacity for media to frame our relationships – affective and ideological – with island space, variously expressed as ‘good for us’ in terms of community, economy and environment, is considerable. Islands as spaces of isolation, retreat, safety, and refuge are well-established in our modern psyche in both factual and fictional terms. Mediatization impacts across all sectors of activity (Kho et al., 2014). The production narratives of Brand Scotland (tourism, food and drink, arts and culture) but also energy, health and well-being, and ‘innovative technologies’ each operationalize Scotland as a good place to visit, live in and work in. Such promotional policy seeks to engage audiences – consumers and agencies – and is especially media-driven. Rural areas and their assets – encompassing the islands – being ’good for’ Scotland (and the UK) is a vocal discourse generated from within the rural and island regions looking to capitalize on the significant growth potential of energy, tourism, and marine resource across (as well as for) island spaces and communities (c.f. Islands Growth Deal, 2023).7

**Islandness and resilience narratives: informing a textual approach**

Contextualizing this socio-geographic account of island mediatization and resilience narratives is the conceptual frame of ‘islandness’, a term circulating especially within global
island studies scholarship (Baldacchino, 2018; Grydehøj, 2017; Hay, 2006; Pugh, 2018; Stratford, 2008: and see Burnett et al., 2021 for commentary on Scotland). As with other such fuzzy conceptual categories of thought and critique, the term is informed and underpinned by extensive multi- and trans-disciplinary reach. The conceptual frame of islandness informs this paper. The term refers especially to those social-cultural narratives of island places and spaces as variously and complexly particular and different from the non-island. Scotland’s islands further share analytical territory with the geography of rurality (Halfacree, 2012), especially the ‘remote rural’.

Islandness as a symbolic asset, and a tool for value creation, is deployed widely. Ideas, images and imaginings of islands continue to sell, intrigue, and inspire. A traditional geographic definition of islands as a place surrounded by water remains empirically useful (Butler, 2012). Islandness is an affective term evoked not by empiricism alone, but rather by what is experienced across the senses and emotions (Stratford, 2008), and/or as phenomenological and geopoetic (Riquet, 2019). The metaphoric (Moles, 2009), literal geography and sociological experiencing of islands informs the contextual messiness of islands both as epistemological category and in their mediatization.

As noted earlier in this discussion, what is said and understood as islandness aligns with what are understood as island and rural vulnerabilities, and also the capacity and competencies for island resilience. Notably Skerratt and Steiner (2013), and Steiner and Markantonini (2014), speak to an appreciation of integrated global resilience to risk and adaptation capacity in Scottish rural community contexts, for example. Elsewhere Boyd and Wilson (2019, 2021) provide an analysis of island nations as refuge in extreme pandemic situations (including food security but also speak of other risks such as nuclear winter impacts) where Australia, New Zealand, and Iceland figure variously as relatively ‘good’ island nation refuges. Baum and Adams (2022) refer to the expansion of higher-order global catastrophic risk and critical policy imagining and realities of island refuge sites; meanwhile, Kennedy (2023) speaks to islands as financial refuges. The complexities of social behavior, imagineering (e.g. island place as performed, privileged) and resource policy that islands experience and engender globally were nonetheless heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, as Gugganig and Klimburg-Witjes (2021, pp. 332–333) explain:

… the Covid-19 pandemic made visible the contours, epistemologies and politics of islands. Other crises have also shown that islands and archipelagos are anything but simple, ‘small’ (Hau’ofa, 1993) land masses: while for many European tourists the Greek islands are a welcoming escape from work and winter, for refugees they become the last resort for survival, or a dead-end on their way to Europe and better living conditions. Escaping to and escaping from islands are thus deeply political imaginations and endeavours that illustrate different, often conflicting island imaginaries … .

COVID-19 and the emergency measures impacted actual and perceived mobilities to (and from) island, rural and remote destinations, and locations globally. A widespread reliance on key island sectors such as tourism was thereby brought into stark relief. The pandemic compounded inequities and vulnerabilities (United Nations, 2020). Empirically, and widely, the evidence of people ‘wanting to go’ to islands was identified and debated, and it generated tensions in a UK context too. Critical perspectives on wider acute global inequities are important, however. How the representational technologies of media platforms position ideas of islands as remote or resilient (for example) is skewed
and distorted across material and digital space. Nonetheless, specific focus on the COVID-19 pandemic event as informing and impacting on both literal and symbolic mobilities in Scotland – and of remoteness, refuge and resilience frames of island space – is considered further below.

**Materials (data) and method**

A purposive sampling frame was undertaken to identify a range of digital media textual examples of news stories and features on Scotland’s islands – their spaces, communities, and practices – regarding COVID-19 impacts, mobilities, and mediatized ‘moralties’ (c.f. Dahmen, 2016). To facilitate data selection and its analysis, certain thematic frames (following Aiello et al., 2022) were identified to scope what constituted news stories: (i) island place, community, and space as ‘refuge’ and/or as ‘resilient’; (ii) accounts of the literal mobilities of people traveling to and from (e.g. onto/into) island and ‘mainland’ spaces; as well as (iii) the symbolic framing of island spaces and places as an imagined mobility of ‘retreat’ or ‘refuge’. Four stories are selected for focus here. Each was sourced during the time frame of early-March 2020 to late-October 2020, and selected from a wider qualitative research scoping of the digital news platforms (that is, their web platforms) of UK and Scottish newspapers, and UK and Scottish broadcasters, and their reporting of specifically Scottish island-related stories and features. The stories discussed were purposively sampled on the basis that each was featured either by BBC ONE UK national news program, followed also by BBC Scotland’s ‘nation-regional’ news programming, and/or by Scotland’s STV news: i.e. evidencing the newsworthiness and news value of the stories.

Given the ‘unprecedented’ and extraordinary context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impactful media event nature, attention is drawn to the contextualizing capacity of media. Mediatization invites analysis of the nature of media production and platforming, including the circulating of iconic (memorable infrequent images) and generic (unremarkable, widespread) visuals (c.f. Aiello et al., 2022). The repetitive nature of generic visuals and the associated symbolic, semiotic codes and patterns are considered (i.e. Scottish islands as mediated geographic space). Images and discursive frames (texts) of island geographies and social practice spoke to the immediacy of COVID-19 geographies, but also to longer ordinary representational legacies. This framing in the recent coronavirus crisis and its communication across the public sphere (including external and internal islandness complicities) invites further attention.

Media representation via news platforms reporting on COVID-19 contributed to a powerful global and local discursive framing of the coronavirus itself, to infection rates, and to mobility impacts in terms of both its ordinary and extraordinary textual aspects. Aiello et al. (2022) demonstrate the parallel emergent frames of COVID-19 mediatization as both an extraordinary local spatial framing (e.g. mapping infection) and a direct appeal to geographic ‘familiarity’ (ordinariness) through visual codes of regional or area demarcation:

Examples of data represented include area-by-area infection rates within regions, data about neighbourhoods with the highest case rates in a region, or data predicting the lockdown status of different areas. These generic visuals invite a more localized sense of belonging, symbolically reiterating the geographic contours of an area or region, contours which
themselves are most likely to be familiar to the people who reside therein (Aiello et al., 2022, p. 323).

Accounts and narratives were circulated and platformed via policy, research and media coverage in Scotland too (Currie et al., 2021; 2022), and throughout the UK and beyond, all platforming actual and perceived COVID-19 impacted rural mobilities and accessibility tensions. This process was supplemented by anecdotal evidence, including widespread social media sharing, as research suggests:

> There is emerging anecdotal evidence that COVID-19 is opening up new tensions within and between communities over social distancing and purchasing behaviours, including examples of ‘othering’ of commuters and urban visitors to the countryside over fears of disease spread and scarcity of provisions ... For instance, in the UK there has been widespread media coverage of roadside signs asking visitors to stay away from the Lake District and rural Wales, sometimes reinforced by police checkpoints. Visits to second homes as rural sanctuaries have been especially divisive (Phillipsen et al., 2020, online).

The recent pandemic event delivered both an intensifying and enhanced circulation of media narratives and representational framing of island sites, spaces, and communities as places remote yet accessible and variously as spaces of refuge and resilience, as the following accounts and mediatized exemplars illustrate.

**Analysis: mediatizing islands as remoteness, resilience, and refuge**

The following four examples of media accounts are drawn from the short-view\(^\text{13}\) framing of UK and Scottish COVID-19 lockdown emergency measures between March 2020 and October 2020. At the earliest stages of lockdown in the UK, Scotland (re)encountered a long-running ‘bone of contention’ around how island space (and ‘remote rural’ space more broadly) was resourced, protected, and sought to be appropriated. This situation was heighted during the ‘restrictions’ and ‘opening up’ phases. The official policy narratives included appeals to personal common sense and often emotional dialogues, and various registers and modes of communication spoke to the complex issue of where the pandemic impacted the boundaries of resources, and where resilience lay, both personally and collectively.

**Example: ‘endangering lives’**

Concerning how rural areas and islands were discoursed as key spaces for refuge or retreat within the early stages of the pandemic, we begin with a media story linked with Fergus Ewing, Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) and the Scottish National Party (SNP) Government Rural Economy and Tourism Secretary at the time. Here a sense of extraordinary times, and good and bad mobility moralities (‘angry’, ‘irresponsible behaviour’, ‘crystal clear’), was officially platformed by the Scottish Government (2020). Mr Ewing’s ‘plea’ was then reported by broadcast, press and social media widely across Scotland and the UK:

> Rural Economy and Tourism Secretary Fergus Ewing is urging people to stop travelling to the Highlands and Islands in a bid to avoid the Coronavirus.
People with second homes and campervans have been reportedly travelling to the area in recent days.

Mr Ewing said:

‘I am furious at the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of some people travelling to the Highland and Islands. This has to stop now. Let me be crystal clear, people should not be travelling to rural and island communities full stop. They are endangering lives. Do not travel.’ (Scottish Government, 2020).

The alarm generated by the pandemic infection risk – and by concerns over inconsiderate or indeed reckless mobility and movements, especially into (and out) of the island communities, potentially placing the island communities (i.e. health and support services) ‘at significant risk’ – was heartfelt. Indeed, such narratives of protecting island communities against external pressures sit against a longer-view context of island resilience challenges and concerns over the ownership, management and deployment of Scotland’s islands as assets, including as symbolic spaces, from outwith the island areas.

Before the pandemic (and since) experiences and accounts (i.e. stories and reports) of islands as refuge and retreat circulated by media – broadcast, news, and periodicals – are expressive and reinforcing of an island allure that celebrates distance and regions of isolation. A digitally saturated public sphere media, albeit skewed most especially around travel and lifestyle news and features, repeatedly offer commentaries on what those ‘not so lucky’ to live on islands might seek and desire. Encouragement to us all to access (easily) and appropriate (widely) good islandness is widespread, and the commodification of Scotland’s remote rural islands – as well-being and ‘wild’ space solutions for today’s ‘modern’ stresses and challenges – has been little altered within the media discourse over some decades (Calidas, 2020; Frean, 1991; Russell, 1991: see also Psychologies, in association with Visit Outer Hebrides, 2022).

In the pandemic’s early lockdown phase Scotland’s islands that were ordinarily mediatized as health-giving and life-affirming spaces and key resources shifted to being publicly discoursed (debated) and extraordinarily renegotiated as ‘not for everyone’ after all. Rather, through media accounts, the islands’ local, regional and then national voices sought to reclaim and protect island spaces for the greater good (and refuge) of the resident local island communities against unwelcome, indeed ‘reckless’, incursions. ‘Island voices’ were amplified via social media, exemplified here by a tweet by the Isle of Barra community Twitter account: ‘ISLANDS OF BARRA AND VATERSAY ARE CLOSED. Don’t travel here, don’t put unnecessary strain on our medical staff and limited resources. We will open again and be delighted to see you. But in the meantime, we are looking after our community, the thing that makes us so special’ (BarraIsland, 2020).

Of course, island residents and island stakeholders create, use, and seek out media platforms to promote and privilege islandness too. It raises profile and attention such as addressing concerns (problematic demographics or rural/remote injustice) or offering good news stories such as vibrant community enterprise or island-derived business innovation. Despite island-based media activity (press and broadcasting) and/or their and other residents’ social media from within the islands, external othering of island places (and experience) remains dominant. Narrative accounts of both imagination and realities remain significantly skewed beyond island community control in
terms of persistent journalistic island tropes. The remote/island hermit trope embracing self-imposed isolation (‘I have everything I need’) suggests a Robinson Crusoe ‘stranded yet surviving’ narrative, and is regularly reworked within global journalistic and cultural commodification practice of promoting ‘escapes’ to islands for ‘survival’ narratives.

Illustrations of island space as isolation narratives are further examined below. The early phase of the pandemic lockdown impacted significantly the spatial discourse and framing of Scotland’s social geography. We were all required to ‘stay at home’ with unprecedented limits on both non-essential and ‘essential’ travel. Concerns to ensure and reinforce literal isolation from each other ‘across the country’ were complexly intertwined by pandemic media narratives of individual self-reliance and heroic resilience that were nevertheless inherently social, encouraging ‘connection’ and emblematic of ‘community’ and social cohesion values.

**Example: ‘I couldn’t be in a better place’**

Before lockdown, a sole traveller (accompanied by his dog) had travelled to Shetland whilst undertaking a coastal ‘around Britain’ charity fundraising walk. As lockdown restrictions came into place in late-March 2020, the visitor was legally restricted (i.e. limited) in available travel options. The walker was offered refuge locally on one of Shetland’s uninhabited islands (although a dwelling is there). The story ran across the digital wires with much of the main body of text reporting replicated (itself a now accepted journalistic and editorial practice of convenience) with the inevitable discursive reinforcement.

CNN, the American broadcaster, platformed the story early on (Hardingham-Gill, 2020) notably on its online Travel segment (it should be noted that this media sector’s new stories inevitably and immediately became about being ‘stuck’, not mobile, in the pandemic). With direct quotes from Chris Lewis, the former paratrooper turned charity walker/fundraiser, the story explains his reasoning for being on the island offshore of mainland Shetland:

> … ‘I knew the lockdown was coming,’ he explains. ‘I had to make a real decision. I can’t go home, because I have no home to go to. … So with the help of some fellow Shetland people, who lent me a boat, I came to the island and started living off the land.’ (Chris Lewis, quoted in Hardingham-Gill, 2020)

Within such news accounts, a narrative plays out whereby ‘finding oneself’ in an isolated setting was not only the best option (‘I couldn’t be in a better place’) to avoid COVID-19 (as many fearfully and legitimately desired) but also offered the ‘lone traveller’ a solution, albeit undertaken with notable resourcefulness and personal resilience, for other critical non-pandemic challenges such as ‘having no home to go to’.

The ‘kind offer’ by the owner of the ‘only house’ on the island to ‘isolate there’ throughout the lockdown offered a mediatized example of extraordinary island-dwelling resilience. Lewis is quoted and the story was digitally platformed widely (e.g. *The Guardian*, PA Media, 2020). In Cassidy’s (2020) reporting for *The National*, we are offered a story of rural spatial ‘margins’ as isolation that speaks to the reassurance of both self and collective resilience from within them:

> ‘I’ve mainly been in isolation for the past two years due to the nature of the places we’ve been walking,’ Lewis said. ‘When I heard there was going to be a lockdown, I was kindly given a
boat to get over to Hildasay, which is an uninhabited island. I thought it would be better if I wasn’t on the mainland – I didn’t want to be in the way.’

‘There is one house on the island and the family of the man that used to live there heard I was camping and offered me the keys. Everybody is in isolation at the moment – it’s the one thing I can do. This will be over for me when it’s over for everyone else.’ (Cassidy, 2020)

A key aspect of this media narrative was how the individual (as a non-Shetland resident) posed a potential threat to the resident Shetland population (by being unable to ‘go home’). Lewis himself was expressively concerned to avoid being ‘a burden’ on the local community. This pandemic narrative speaks to wider ‘fears’ of problematic immigration, including that of urban to rural spaces. Notably, some who had the means and varying moral dispositions to elect to ‘escape’ or retreat from the pandemic’s risk, or impact, quickly reconfigured their claim to where ‘home’ was, and where might be found the ‘best place to be’. These concerns mapped across to deeper tensions over rural ‘second home’ ownership, for example, as well as to pandemic inequities and countering dispositions (means and the opportunity of relocation) more generally (c.f. the Scottish Government’s Fergus Ewing’s concerns).

Supported by a local fisherman who first took him to the uninhabited island of Hildasay, provided with essential supply drop-offs when the weather ‘allows’, Lewis endured significant (extraordinary) isolation with only occasional forays to the nearby Shetland mainland (island). This story was circulated and platformed variously, not least by Lewis himself (via PA Media association) and by necessity – given the lockdown restrictions – by producing and sharing his own photographs, video, and digital record (e.g. via the fundraising page set up for the mental health charity for which he was undertaking his coastline walk). Across some media platforms, different visual images from media library stock were editorially selected to embed the written narrative further as indicative of Scotland’s (and Shetland’s) rural and island life. The ‘selfie’ and other self-shooting by Lewis going about his everyday island lockdown ‘survival’ further storified his ‘alone’ and private (yet textually shared) embrace of the ‘tiny island’ environment of Hildasay. This lone account for wider consumption15 (Lindon, 2022) was expressive of a heroic embracing of one’s situation: ‘I’ve learnt that it was isolation that fixed me. You have to look at it in a very positive way,’ and ‘You have to make the best of it.’ (The Scotsman, 2020). Personalized quotes from the ‘stranded’ Lewis, and the (visually compelling) companionship of his dog Jet, only added to the personal/human interest aspects. This story nonetheless spoke to immediate national and regional pandemic narratives of isolation as the complex negotiation of individual (self) resources supported by a collective social capital and the common good.16 The story in its reporting style and codes typified longer-view discourses of island and ‘remote rural’ residents (significantly those most often represented as ‘incoming’) as being more or less competent to cope. This story was emblematic of the survival disposition often framed as ‘necessary’ to ‘island life’ challenges that include both the feelings (affect) and the empirical categories (effect), of perceived isolation.

**Example: ‘we always have quite a lot in the larder’**

This next story clearly draws on (and performs) an ‘island way’ narrative of collective resilience. Across the global pandemic mediatization landscape, islands were often
singed out as having handled the pandemic especially well. In Scotland, the narrative was exemplified thus in Carrell’s report headlined ‘How Outer Hebrides were perfectly primed to tackle coronavirus’:

Residents of the Outer Hebrides are experts at surviving through harsh weather, cancelled ferries and social isolation. And it seems to have paid off, after it emerged that the islands may be the only area of the UK where no one has yet died from Covid-19.

Unlike Scotland’s other island groups, such as Orkney and Shetland, the Western Isles have had remarkably few confirmed cases: so far, only six people out of a population of nearly 27,000 are known to have contracted coronavirus. (Carrell, 2020)

In this story the by-line speaks to Scotland’s island communities as having ‘a lot in the larder’. This metaphorical journalistic framing refers to a direct quote from a Shetland General Practitioner (GP) (unrelated regionally to the Outer Hebrides) yet an expert rural health voice speaking to an endemic island community ‘preparedness’. Journalistic textual conflation produces a recognizable narrative of countering vulnerabilities and planning for locational remoteness impact (such as bad weather, transport issues, and indeed pandemics):

‘People have been amazing at self-isolating, and they went into self-isolation at least two weeks before the rest of the UK,’ she said. Her neighbours ‘keep a lot of full freezers. We always have quite a lot in the larder.’ (Susan Bowie, GP, quoted in Carrell, 2020)

Digitally platformed stories often include key visual images, anchoring the text. In this story a headline and an image of a (Hebridean) coastal crofting township (by professional photographer Murdo MacLeod) are used to link the story in visual and spatial terms: the ‘Residents of Western Isles, which have yet to record a Covid-19 death, have plenty experience of isolation’. Such textual coding privileges the newsworthiness of the Western Isles recording ‘no-deaths’ at that point, suggestive of exceptional COVID-19 ‘good’ community practice borne by locational geography and a particular context of island resilience.

The ‘larder’ reference further ties symbolic meaning with the image. The visual crop – a few houses – of an island coastal crofting township is suggestive of a ‘close community’ and of small population density. Historical and current realities (remote location, weather, power and transport disruption) result in most island households having to plan resiliently and to negotiate the availability of food supplies. A narrative of islands as resilient in their degree of isolation is strongly implied. The public discourse of strategic pandemic policy and islands ‘doing well’ (i.e. the locking down early and islanders being well-prepared to counter isolation) is reinforced further in the story. A Western Isles MSP is also interviewed/quoted to add official ‘weight’ to the island voice. This government spokesperson account sits alongside comment from another key stakeholder namely, the National Health Service (NHS) Western Isles Health Chief Executive who speaks to the social and cultural capital "up here" that fostered a wealth of good practice and disposition by island locals regarding COVID-19 emergency measures compliance:

‘When you’re living in fairly remote island communities, you find that people come to terms and adjust very rapidly to anything that happens up here,’ he said. ‘At the very beginning there was an immediate and very high level of compliance with social distancing and
Moving from a sense of island resilience at a local scale, one last story is further suggestive of how mediatization flows in and around ‘our islands’, ‘your islands’ or indeed ‘their islands’. Given the global nature of the pandemic that nonetheless heightened our hyper-local contexts of space and opportunity this last story highlights broader media framing of island spaces as local yet embedded (entangled) in global spatial mobilities, and the mediatization of refuge and resilience across our island spaces in Scotland, the UK and beyond.

**Example: ‘realistic [...] locations’**

Islands have been a pre and modern refuge and resource for millennia, with a history and praxis of modern mobilities that are complex (c.f. Kennedy (2023) on global journalistic narratives on island refuges as ‘wealth havens’ and ‘refugee prisons’). Scotland’s rural and island spaces have been long represented as both ‘good spaces’ and as sites of tension for immigrants (incomers), not least for those requiring refugee asylum and the complex realities of refugee experience (De Lima, 2021; McKenna, 2017). A final example considers a story that reports that the islands of Scotland (along with other UK island sites and territories) appear to be useful ‘assets of convenience’ that offer a spatial ‘solution’ to ‘problematic’ global migrant mobilities (c.f. Gugganig & Klimburg-Witjes, 2021).

In late-September 2020, against the backdrop of the global pandemic, a reassertion of UK territorial governance attitudes – and what could be considered as ‘remote’ handling of the offshore spaces of ‘our islands’ – (re)emerged. Furthermore, the trope of Scotland’s islands being more or less usefully ‘on and off the [UK] map’ circulated once again when the UK Conservative Government’s then Home Secretary (Priti Patel) outlined the policy implications of ‘where to put’ the ‘surge’ of migrants crossing the English Channel to ‘our islands’.

The story framed a discourse that ‘unwelcome’ migration and the crossing of the channel to ‘our islands’ would be a ‘problem solved’ by putting ‘them’ on (our) ‘other’ ones. This story was exemplified in an online news feature by UK tabloid newspaper *The Sun* (Dathan, 2020). Anchored typically as a situating news story of place juxtaposition the story deploys media codes of distinctive difference such as: (a) an image of a ‘Hebridean blue sea’ and a white sand ‘empty’ beach; and (b) a map graphic of Scotland highlighting ‘the Hebrides’ island locations (space) relevant to the ‘rest of the UK’. Its headline – ‘MIGRANT ISLAND PLAN Asylum seekers could be housed in Outer Hebrides to deal with surge in migrant Channel crossing’ – and subsequent reporting indicated that UK offshore islands (not just Scottish) are territories that potentially offer ‘realistic’ solutions to asylum migration challenges:

… But the Home Office dismissed reports in the *Financial Times* that asylum seekers could be shipped as far as the Ascension Island – a British overseas territory 4,000 miles away.

A source said the remote volcanic island in the South Atlantic was put forward by the Foreign Office after the Home Secretary asked for a list of offshore locations – but she swiftly discounted it as ‘implausible’.
More realistic locations to set up asylum detention centres are the Western Isles off the coast of Scotland, the Isle of Wight and the Isle of Man, a government source said. (Dathan, 2020)

This complex intertwining narrative of islands as both creating and solving migration and mobility ‘problems’ is only touched upon here, but it is included to reinforce again the ‘longer view’ contexts of Scotland’s island spaces as variously valued and indeed mediatized.

**Discussion**

Throughout the extraordinary media events of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the media reporting continued to produce and circulate standard (ordinary) framing techniques and deployed tropes and codes of recognizable Scottish islandness (e.g. crofting townships, empty beaches, ‘pull-outs’ on maps of island location relevant to wider UK contexts). The media examples explored here suggest that COVID-19 events effectively reinforced Scotland’s island spaces as remote yet alluring spaces of refuge and retreat. It also raised questions over the wider claiming and accessing of such spaces. Balancing Scotland’s islands’ variable demographics with resilience challenges (economics, logistics, ‘fragility’) remains intertwined with both intended and other multiplier consequences of island allure wherein such spaces are narrativized as exceptionally ‘good places’ to live and visit. The examples of media accounts touched on here briefly illustrate some of these aspects.

During the pandemic all policy sectors evaluated their relationship with regional structures more widely. Opportunities to access UK rural spaces to ‘keep going’ during the pandemic restrictions revealed certain privileging such as how economic sectors were perceived to be more or less facilitated, encouraged to pivot, and ‘carry on’. Interestingly, this included the media sector itself. UK rural and ‘remote’ spaces were useful replacements for some film and television production, not least in Scotland, and this replacement generated comment and some tension. The UK’s (and Scotland’s) media production sector was somewhat criticized for morally circumventing ‘lockdown’ (even though it was ‘allowed’ and all legal requirements were adhered to). The film and television industry’s retort to the pandemic’s global travel grip was a rapid reorienting of ordinarily international filming schedules to domestic location possibilities. Amazon Prime’s *The Grand Tour: Lochdown*, filmed in October 2020, was one such example of pandemic production pivoting. The tour to the highlands and islands (with the finale filmed on North Uist) generated media attention that included fandom and celebrity profiling but also ‘backlash’ (Bendoris, 2021). Islands as assets – as appropriated by screen (and other production) media – fuels wider rural leisure and lifestyle allure (Bliss, 2020) but in pandemic times it was further contextualized and contested. As the pandemic progressed calls for an ‘opening up’ by struggling rural business sectors against ‘managing risk’ were platformsed against deeper legacies and mediatized debates over conflicts of rural and island spatial commodification and value. Legacies of media misrepresentation of island realities, contested policy and perceptions on rural viability and rural capacity, including more recent island and remote rural over-tourism concerns, were all powerfully embedded in the narrative landscape.

Social distance from others was coded repeatedly across lockdown mediatization. The hyperlocal space of home environments was often stretched to include what might be
considered lockdown-approved outdoor spaces, such as the permissible walking of dogs, a rediscovering of local ‘childhood haunts’, or the reassessing of ‘on my doorstep’ options for regular exercise routes. Media reports included narratives from all sectors of society enduring lockdown and displaying resilience. Yet, the privileging of certain experiences is noted. Across lifestyle and leisure media, homeowners of ‘outdoor space’, celebrities (actors, performers), and key agents (including government ministers and journalists, for example) were featured as making the best of ‘being here’ in the (rural) UK, and indeed ‘lucky enough’ to be ‘at home in the country’.

There has been significant incremental countering within Scotland to both the suggestion and the reality of highland and island legacies as ‘problem places’. Media unquestionably activates the agency and voice of island communities as good spaces to live and to encourage others to visit, but it is not without challenge and complexities, not least when voiced with integrity from within island communities (Meek, 2023). Scotland’s island communities and geographies are increasingly and widely mediatized as available and accessible personally restorative spaces (i.e. lifestyle narratives and well-being experience tropes of things ‘remote’, ‘island’ and ‘wild’, or where islands offer sporting conquest or physical personal achievement in ‘difficult terrain’). Some of the stories cited in this discussion – such as the stranded ‘lone walker’ – illustrate this more personal resilience theme. Regular ‘ordinary times’ media reporting on Scotland’s small island communities – as collectively responding to locational challenges, their necessity of innovation, and to be stoically and/or celebratory resilient ‘together’ – was notably carried through as enduring mediatization, reinforced in the pandemic and exemplified by tropes of reporting such as those in the ‘a lot in the larder’ story.

Islands as a category of things are variously defined, yet offer distinction from other non-island geographies. Scotland shares similarities with other ‘small island’ (more especially cold-water) geographies. Islands as rural and remote are often made representative of a social common good but simultaneously signified as spaces of ‘remote’ interest. Throughout the UK, including Scotland’s notable regional variance of tier restrictions, the periods of ‘lockdown’ and ‘opening up’ generated a pandemic geography of extraordinary (‘stranded’; ‘drawbridge’) and ordinary hyper-localised mobilities (‘our village’, ‘my street’, ‘the kitchen table’, as well as ‘our islands’). It also generated a media grammar of resilience via the widely shared platforming and subsequent archiving of ‘everybody’ and ‘everyday’ degrees of coping and compliance. This paper has therefore sought to highlight just some aspects of how island spaces were configured as resilience and refuge across media texts in ‘lockdown’.

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the media textuality and reporting discourse of Scotland’s islands more generally, and exemplars of the key lockdown timeframe of COVID-19 more particularly. Outwith COVID-19 events, the mediatization of Scotland’s ‘remote island’ communities is a significant media narrative of island pasts and ‘futures’, of key success and of challenged island spaces (communities and economies) restored. Media stories over the last two decades have offered frequent examples of codes and accounts of collective cooperative resilience by island communities countering both locational geographies and historical socio-economic challenges. Such island resilience success most especially features
the ongoing stories of ’remote’ buy-out communities and offers a particular framing of Scottish good islandness as ‘good for all’. Covid-19 and the pandemic lockdown extraordinarily impacted the access and availability of Scotland’s island spaces for all, however. Across the pandemic media event, and the initial lockdown phases in particular, Scottish island communities were signified as good exemplars of a community’s capacity to ’look to within’ and a collective community competency of ‘just getting on with it’.

From a media framing perspective, unsurprisingly several media stories positioned accounts of island resilience through a lens of individual ‘heroism’, and personal endeavor (such elements remain core to popular media conventions of privileging the human interest angle). Nonetheless, these stories were invariably configured as representative and signifying of broader Scottish island geography as socially-culturally strong (i.e. an ‘island way of life’) and as spatially special (i.e. island communities as deeply experienced ‘together’ in locational resilience).

Following lockdown announcements, islands as assets ‘for all’ were subject to a highly mediatized tension of claim (‘who is resident’) and negotiation (’stay away’, ’keep us safe’), not least with infection risk and the challenge to small island community infrastructural health (and socio-economic) capacity. In the lockdown stages of Covid-19, and regarding the media narratives sampled here, mediatization of Scotland’s islands variously positioned these spaces as sites of heroic retreat and conflicted refuge in a manner suggestive of complex complicities around how we see, do and perform islands (c.f. Vannini & Taggart, 2013). The islands (and other ‘remote rural’ spaces) are widely signified as key places for restorative lifestyle and well-being but the pandemic has raised further questions over Scotland’s island capacity to provide this ‘service’ unequivocally, to whom and to what end.

In conclusion, this paper has sought to illustrate how the COVID-19 pandemic events offered a continuation of ordinary media framing of Scottish islands against a backdrop of an unprecedented and extraordinary revision of everyday mobilities and access to island and ‘remote rural’ spaces. Accounts spoke to themes of islands as sites of refuge and retreat, and to the implications of such spaces as available to ‘escape’ or ‘avoid’ the pandemic. The now well-established ordinary narratives and cultural textual framing of Scotland’s islands as ‘good places to be’ was continued in the pandemic reporting despite extraordinary changes to actual mobility and travel circumstances. Scotland’s island textual space and geography, therefore continues as a complex near yet ‘remote’ cipher widely mediatized for immediate and longer-term good living, well-being and good resilience concerns and solutions. The examples explored, drawn from a particular time frame of Scotland’s COVID-19 phases of lockdown experience (March 2020 to October 2020), illustrate just some of the transformational resilience capacities of ‘island space’, offering comment on Scottish islands’ mediatization particularly, and on such small island contextual and regional geographies more broadly.

Notes
1. Scotland’s COVID-19 timeline of key governance milestones can be viewed here: https://spice-spotlight.scot/2022/12/16/timeline-of-coronavirus-covid-19-in-scotland/. Early-March 2020 brought the first key milestone of note for Scotland with the first positive Scottish case of COVID-19 confirmed. On 16th March 2020 there was cancellation of all mass
indoor and outdoor events of 500 people or more by the UK Government, a day after the Scottish Government’s own announcement to this effect (15th March 2020). The UK Government also begins daily press briefings. 23rd March 2020 was a significant timeline moment with Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in a ‘UK wide’ televised address, stating that people should ‘only go outside’ to buy food, to exercise once a day, or to go to work if they absolutely cannot work from home and that people will face police fines for failure to comply with these new measures. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon then announces Scotland’s ‘lock down’ via her own media address to the Scottish public: ‘Let me blunt. The stringent restrictions on our normal day to day lives that I’m about to set out are difficult and they are unprecedented. They amount effectively to what has been described as a lockdown.’ COVID-19 impacts continue and by 23rd October 2020, the Scottish Government had published the five-level Strategic Framework indicating different levels of protection proposed based on different levels of transmission for the virus. This was a significant milestone in the Scottish COVID-19 timeline and response.

2. This was to consider and to deliver a set of recommendations for Government (Scotland and UK, Westminster) regarding the immediate effects of COVID-19 on tourism but also to deliver on key new tourism strategy themes around ‘sustainable businesses’, the ‘importance of people and communities’, and ‘green tourism’.

3. In Japan, and the Ryukyuan archipelago for example, island as a term is expressed as shima and to speak of island is to also express territory and a community sphere of influence (Suwa, 2007). Such thinking of island as regional territory – commonality – and community identity as sustaining and integral is variously experienced and somewhat similarly articulated in Scotland. The Island (Scotland) Act (2018) informs such articulation currently and in regard of island and rural futures.

4. The Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) requirement of the Act provides an enhanced mechanism to hear the ‘islander voice’ for ‘when a piece of legislation, policy strategy or service will likely affect island communities in a different way than how it would affect communities on the mainland or other island communities’ (Scottish Government, 2022).

5. See Scottish Rural Action Rural & Island Economy – the recording and outputs from the vSRP Session (11th March 2021). The session was curated by Inspiralba and GrowBiz Scotland and chaired by Professor Sarah Skerratt, Director of Programmes at the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) and Scientific Director of the Scottish Consortium for Rural Research (SCRR): https://www.sra.scot/our-work/scottish-rural-parliament/vsrp-2021/rural-and-island-economy.


7. Scotland’s rural economy is important to wider ambitions for net-zero growth and sector diversification, see more at https://www.scdi.org.uk/ruralcommission/; see also the https://www.islandsdeal.co.uk/.

8. Despite questions that might arise as to its value and its academic application, islandness is a fuzzy category of thought and understanding increasingly circulating, applied and debated. Islandness as a conceptual category to ‘think with’ is useful. It offers a term whereby island space, experience and representational forms materially and symbolically can be engaged with beyond a simple geographic idea of islands as places of land surrounded by water. Consider geographer (and creative writer) Pete Hay’s impactful discussion on the phenomenology of islands (Hay, 2006); see also Grydehøj (2017), and Pugh (2018); or Hall (2012) on the biogeography of islandness and tourism notably in the Pacific.

9. Islands in reality are nonetheless similar to and notably familiar with other non-remote geographies (i.e. the urban, city) and small islands of Scotland also experience their own ‘urbanised’ rural configurations such as the island regional ‘capitals’ of Kirkwall, Lerwick or Stornoway or small island towns such as Tobermory, Portree, Rothesay, or Bowmore.

10. The ‘island related’ stories include data extracts from Scottish national broadcasters and their digital media web platforms and also those of major UK newspaper platforms (and as appropriate their Scottish editions) (i.e. The Times/The Sunday Times; The Guardian, The Observer, and The Sun/The Scottish Sun were scoped for example), as were

11. BBC ONE news and STV news are equally significant (at joint 42% survey share) for Scottish news consumers in the year 2020 (Ofcom, 2020); it should be noted that television (with key stories digitally platformed more widely) still commands considerable power in regard of how we see, hear and engage with news about, of and from Scotland.

12. This includes Scotland’s islands (as with other ‘Celtic peripheries’) represented as dislocated places (regions) apart, historically dismissed as ‘other’ yet simultaneously a space of resource, capable of reinvention and of disruptive resistance (c.f. Harvey et al., 2002).

13. A focus only on the short view is to run the bigger risk of not locating our understandings today as predicated on past learning of our success and failures for future application. It should be noted that the longer view of rural ‘othering’ is crucial in the underpinning of the continued mediatization of rural, and more especially ‘remote rural’, and Scottish island places. This paper has sought to present examples from media account that speaks to both the COVID-19 context and a longer view of media framing of Scottish island spaces as ‘remote’.

14. Isolation and islandness were variously storified, emphasizing the numeric discourse of COVID-19 (‘lone’ versus ‘hoards’) but this story also speaks to the personalization – he was ‘on his own’ – hooking tactics for engaging audiences (storification).

15. Lewis has spoken about the role (and interest) media played in his own story (Lindon, 2022), and a book based on his coastline walk and broader experiences is due to be published in 2023.

16. Elsewhere the story ‘spins’ towards a later rebound in June 2020 as Lewis leaves ‘the uninhabited island’ following island lockdown restrictions easing. The story is an example of how island isolation is reinforced as of exceptional (anyone living alone on an island was of potential key interest during lockdown) news value but compounded further by Lewis’s wider human-interest newsworthiness given his peripatetic living in a tent circumstances (albeit homelessness not being ‘that extraordinary’ for ex-services personnel) and escalated to further ‘good news’ by his charity work and a resourceful drive to ‘give back’.

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