

Dunrossness Community Council Area Statement

See *Dunrossness Proposals Map*

Background

1.1 Dunrossness is the most southerly Community Council area in Shetland and includes Fair Isle located approximately 25 miles (40kms) south of the Mainland.



Looking to Sumburgh from the Ward of Scousburgh.

1.2 Dunrossness has the greatest expanse of fertile farmland in Shetland and consequently has traditionally been, and continues to be, a farming/crofting community. However, the considerable expansion of Sumburgh airport in the mid-1970s to serve the needs of the oil and gas industry created new employment opportunities and the need for additional housing.

1.3 Settlement in the area is fairly scattered with larger settlements located at Levenwick, Bigton, Boddam, Scousburgh, Quendale and Virkie.

1.4 This area of the south mainland is also rich in archaeology with Jarlshof, Scatness and St Ninian's Isle being the most notable examples. These unique attractions, together with numerous sandy beaches and spectacular nature sites such as Sumburgh Head, make Dunrossness a fascinating location for people to live in and for tourists to visit.



Levenwick Beach

- **Fair Isle**

1.5 The most isolated inhabited island in the UK, Fair Isle has a small population (around 70) of crofters and craftspeople scattered mainly over the southernmost part of the island. Renowned in ornithological circles, the island's bird observatory attracts significant numbers of visitors from around the world.

1.6 The inhabitants of Fair Isle have established strong links with many other remote communities, especially in Scandinavian countries.

Planning Context

2.1 The previous Local Plan which covered the Dunrossness Community Council Area was the West, South and Central Interim Local Plan approved in 1992. Another important document is the Dunrossness Community Profile (2000) that helped to give rise to the Ness 2000 conference. Local planning aims for Dunrossness are:

- **To seek ways to retain the local population**
- **To help promote and encourage sustainable economic growth by diversifying the local economy.**
- **To conserve, enhance and promote the natural and built environment.**

Natural and Built Environment

3.1 Dunrossness consists of an exposed, undulating, lowland landscape culminating in the dramatic cliffs at Fitful Head. The upland area that runs north to south is located in the centre of the South Mainland, forming a spine. The land cover is predominantly blanket bog with heather moorland and areas of improved grassland. Dunrossness also has areas of more intensive agriculture, which can support some arable farming as well as grazing. This land can be found around the settlements of Quendale, Bigton and Scousburgh. There are at least 11 beaches located in the area, the most impressive being the St Ninian's Isle tombolo.

3.2 Traditionally the farming economy in Dunrossness has heavily influenced the location of settlements. Rerwick and Bigton are good examples of this, where development has been confined to the higher ground leaving the better quality land for agriculture.

3.3 There are a number of small settlements and side roads on the low-lying ground around Bigton and Sumburgh with some crops grown here, but much of the rest of the area consists of steep hillside with improved grassland or rough grazing. There are sandstone, sand and gravel quarries at Quendale.

- **Land Designations**

3.4 Much of Dunrossness is included within Shetland's National Scenic Area. There is a SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) at the Lochs of Spiggie and Brow which is notified for biological interests. Both the Spiggie and Brow lochs are also a SPA (Special Protection Area), and Spiggie Loch is a RSPB reserve.

3.5 The Pool of Virkie is a SSSI for its intertidal sand and mud flats. Quendale links and adjoining land is a SSSI for botanical reasons (sand dune and machair complex) while Sumburgh Head is a SSSI for both ornithological and geological interests; Sumburgh Head is also a SPA and RSPB reserve. The St Ninian's Tombolo is a SSSI for geological reasons. There are also SSSIs at The Cletts, Exnaboe (geological interest) and Dalsetter (botanical and ornithological interest).



St. Ninian's Isle

- **Fair Isle Land Designations**

3.6 Fair Isle is a SPA and notified SSSI for botanical, geological and ornithological reasons and is also included within Shetland's National Scenic Area. The island is owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland. The island is also identified as a cSAC for its heathland and cliff vegetation.

- **Local Protection Areas (LPAs)**

3.7 LPAs have been identified by the local community at Scousburgh beach to protect the dunes and the adjacent headland. Other LPAs are at St. Ninian's Isle, Garths Ness to protect the birds, Peerie Voe, Colsay, Garthsness, Scatness and Jarlshof.

- **Built Heritage**

3.8 Dunrossness currently has 1,505 known archaeological sites with 181 of them scheduled. The prolific archaeology in the area indicates that there have been settlements in the area since Neolithic times. The multi-period site at Jarshof has long been among Shetland's major attractions. However, the site currently being excavated at Old Scatness may rival it in scale and complexity; Old Scatness will also, in time, have a richer story to tell because modern archaeology can reveal so much more about a site than was the case when Jarshof was excavated.

3.9 There are 26 Listed Buildings in the Dunrossness Community Council

area (including 5 in Fair Isle) including 3 category A, 15 category B and 8 category C(s).

3.10 The category A listed buildings include the Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, Quendale Mill and Jarlshof, which is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the care of the Scottish Ministers.

Development Opportunity

Sumburgh Head Lighthouse was purchased by Shetland Amenity Trust (SAT) in 2002. This important complex of buildings is one of Shetland's premier attractions with more than 30,000 visitors a year. Currently in a variable state of repair SAT, together with the RSPB intend to develop the Lighthouse buildings to form a high-quality centre for the enjoyment of the surrounding area's outstanding natural heritage. Efforts will also be made to link this site to the Dunrossness' other major attractions of Jarshof and Old Scatness.

3.11 The areas of **Maywick** and **Netherton** were suggested as potential Conservation Areas in the West South and Central Local Plan. The areas are notable for their traditional form and appearance and for the fact that recent building is mostly sympathetic to the original style of each area.

Coastal Management

4.1 Some coastal erosion is evident at the sand beaches in West Voe of Sumburgh to the south of the airport, where the dunes are moving northward. Options for coastal defence are currently being considered. The impact of any extension to the airport runway will have to be carefully considered given the vulnerability of the coastline to coastal erosion.

- **Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI)**

4.2 The Fair Isle Marine Partnership was launched to take forward the FIMETI initiative to establish the long-term protection and sustainable management of the marine environment around the island, including proposals for the management of fisheries and the establishment of a marine protected area.

4.3 FIMETI is also a partner of the SafeinHerit network that was established in 1999 in response to an EU/Norwegian Government initiative to stimulate community development and environmental protection in northern parts of Europe.



Boat Noost Fair Isle

Water and Drainage

- **Water Supply**

5.1 A new pipeline taking water from the Sandy Loch Reservoir Lerwick, to the south mainland, will and serve the Dunrossness community by 2002.

- **Fair Isle**

5.2 In Fair Isle the water supply is being improved during 2001/2002 via a new bore hole.

- **Wastewater**

5.3 There are existing wastewater (i.e. drainage) schemes serving; Hestingott, Exnaboe, Ninian Drive, Dalsetter Wynd, Boddam, Ireland, Bigton and the Old Schoolhouse and Ringesta, Quendale. Properties in the remaining areas have individual septic tanks.

5.4 During the period up to 2006, Scottish Water intend to construct new septic tanks at Colonial Place, Scatness and Scholland, Virkie. Extensions to the existing septic tank outfalls will be provided at Boddam, Dalsetter Wynd, Hestingott and Ninian Drive.

Waste Management

6.1 Rural Skips are available on a rota basis at various locations throughout the area, giving residents convenient

disposal points for bulky household refuse. There are recycling collection points for glass and a collection point for used batteries at the Quendale junction and Fair Isle.

Energy

7.1 There is potential for renewable energy on the Dunrossness mainland, but due to the scattered settlement pattern the effective placement of wind turbines would be confined to the hills.

7.2 In Fair Isle wind energy has been used effectively to provide power to the island's inhabitants for many years. Two wind turbines provided by The Fair Isle Electricity Company provide renewable energy. Two diesel generators back up the 100kw and 60kw turbines when conditions are unsuitable for the turbines to run.

Minerals

8.1 Sandstone rock is extracted from the Ratchie quarry as and when required. Planning permission was granted in 2001 for further sand excavation works at Quendale.

Business and Industry

9.1 Dunrossness has the best agricultural land in Shetland and consequently the agricultural and crofting industry is a mainstay in the area. Nevertheless, in recent years national and international difficulties have dramatically reduced agricultural incomes. There is therefore a need to diversify the local economy and create new employment opportunities.

- **Sumburgh Airport**

9.2 The other major employer in the area is Sumburgh airport. The relocation of Shell's oil related flights to Scatsta airport in 1999 was a major blow to the local community and triggered the Dunrossness Community Profile and Ness 2000 Conference.

9.3 The airport is still an important employer in the area and it is vital that it remains Shetland's main airport serving the domestic market.

Development Opportunity

The Council has recently commissioned a feasibility study into whether it would be economically viable to take over the operation of **Sumburgh Airport** from HIAL (Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd). Depending on the result of this study, the Council may or may not decide to proceed with taking ownership of the airport. In any event, there may be ways of using the buildings and facilities at the airport more intensively, for example by establishing office uses in the terminal and industrial uses in surplus hangers.

In order to remove constraints affecting existing services and to expand the types of aircraft that can use Sumburgh Airport, there is a need to extend one of the existing runways. The Council has undertaken a detailed feasibility study into this matter and firm proposals are being developed. See *Transport section*.

- **Aquaculture**

9.4 The exposure of the coastline and the restrictions placed on the area following the Braer tanker incident limited aquaculture in the South Mainland. However, these restrictions have now been removed and there is now potential for this industry to expand. Care will need to be taken to ensure that it is well balanced with the needs of the environment and the local community. The Council's emerging Coastal Management Plan will also have an important role with regard to the development of this industry in Dunrossness.

- **Industrial Estate**

9.5 The industrial estate at the Quendale junction has no industrial activity, although numerous commercial premises are based here offering a variety of services and products for sale. There is also a slaughter house operating at Boddam.

9.6 Whilst there are no plans to create additional industrial land in this area, further business and industrial developments would be welcome

providing that they conform with other policies contained in the Shetland Local and Structure Plans.

Tourism

10.1 Tourism is an increasingly important industry to Dunrossness. The outstanding natural environment together with a cluster of internationally important archaeological sites attract numerous day visitors. There are two hotels in the area and Shetland Amenity Trust operates a Camping Bòd at Scatness. There are also several self-catering premises, B&Bs and a campsite at Levenwick.

Development Opportunity

Although Dunrossness has a number of small and successful community-run museums, the Ness 2000 conference highlighted the need to create a new purpose built facility to serve the needs of visitors to Old Scatness, Jarlshof and Sumburgh Head. This might be best located at Old Scatness, where Shetland Amenity Trust already propose a visitor centre to interpret the archaeological site. The Sumburgh Head Lighthouse also offers a tremendous site for a visitor centre.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that ways and means of developing a new visitor centre(s) for Dunrossness' principal tourist attractions are taken forward with the local community, Shetland Amenity Trust and other funding and interested parties.

10.3 In Fair Isle there are self-catering cottages, B&Bs and the accommodation at the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. Of increasing importance to the island is the arrival of cruise liners in the summer.

Commercial Development

11.1 The main focus of commercial activity in the Community Council area is on the industrial estate at the Quendale junction where there is a general store and petrol station, hairdressers, off-licence, gift shop and agricultural and builders' merchants. There are also general stores at Toab, Bigton and Levenwick. Both

Bigton and Levenwick also have sub-post offices. Sumburgh airport also has retail facilities and a café/bar. Fair Isle has a shop.

11.2 The former craft centre at Bigton has now been changed into a Café.

Transport

12.1 The area enjoys relatively good transport links, with double track roads linking Dunrossness to Shetland's main places of employment and enabling commuting.

- **Road Improvements**

12.2 The Council proposes to carry out improvements to the **A970 Levenwick South** junction in 2003/2004 and the **Levenwick North** junction in 2002/2003.

- **Public Transport**

12.3 There is a bus service running from Lerwick to Sumburgh 7 days a week. It runs regularly from Lerwick beginning at 6:30 am with feeder buses provided throughout the day running to and from the Channerwick Junction through Bigton and Quendale. There is also a dial a bus service that operates on Wednesdays.

- **Fair Isle**

12.4 North Haven has a pier and small boat harbour, used by the Council operated ferries from Grutness and Lerwick, a few inshore fishing boats and visiting yachts.

Development Opportunity

The local community has identified a need to improve the harbour facilities at Grutness to provide additional facilities for the inshore fishing boats that use the facility and visiting yachts.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that ways and means of encouraging the further development of Grutness Harbour are investigated with the local community and other funding and interested parties.

- **Sumburgh Airport**

12.5 Sumburgh Airport is Shetland's only domestic air link to mainland Scotland. It provides daily services to various destinations including direct flights to Orkney, Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow. See *Business and Industry section*.

Population and Housing

13.1 The population of the Dunrossness Community Council area is falling. In 1981 the population was recorded at 1,512 persons and by the 1991 census this figure had fallen to 1,440. Recent population projections by the SIC Planning Service show that by the year 2011 it will have declined further to 1,244 people if current trends continue. This population loss has reduced the number of new house completions to an average of 3 per year in the period 1996/2001.

13.2 Dunrossness also has an ageing population with an average decline of 19.9% for all other age groups. There are approximately 535 households in the Community Council area. Of that number, the Council owns 58 and Hjaltland Housing Association owns 37 properties. There are also 11 sheltered housing units in the area.

13.3 The Council owned houses at Horseshoe Close, Virkie are to be refurbished in 2001/2. Environmental improvements will also be undertaken at the site and at **Toabsgeo** and **Windibrae** in 2007/8.

- **Housing Zones**

13.4 Within the framework of the Local Plan housing policies, the areas around Hestingott, Maybury, Toab, Exnaboe, Boddam, Bigton and Ireland are all identified as Zone 1 where new houses are actively encouraged.

13.5 Levenwick, Channerwick, Exnaboe and Virkie, and the Quendale area (stretching right up along the road to Bigton and Maywick) are all in Zone 2, where housing development will be favourably considered where it reflects the existing settlement pattern. An area of open land in the centre of Bigton and the rest of the Community Council area is identified as Zone 4 where new housing developments are strictly controlled. Further details of the housing zone requirements are set out in policy **LP HOU4** and shown on the Proposals Map.

- **Fair Isle**

13.6 The existing settlement areas of Fair Isle have been identified as Zone 1 where new housing is actively encouraged. The rest of the island is included in the Zone 4 area where new housing is strictly controlled. Further details of the housing zone requirements are set out in policy **LP HOU4** and the boundaries of these zones can be seen on the Proposals Map.

13.7 The National Trust, in partnership with Scottish Homes, proposes to create 3 properties for rent at the South Lighthouse buildings on Fair Isle. This proposal also includes the conversion of outbuildings to form craft units.

Proposal 3

The National Trust in partnership with Scottish Homes proposes to create 3 properties for rent and 2 craft units at the South Lighthouse Buildings on Fair Isle.

Community Services and Facilities

14.1 The Dunrossness Community Council area has 2 Primary Schools with associated nursery facilities. In 2001 the Dunrossness school roll was 172 pupils and in Fair Isle there were 16 pupils. Ness Computer Club runs basic ICT training.

14.2 There are 6 community halls in the Dunrossness area. The Doctor's surgery, which has been newly re-built and serves the whole South Mainland,

is located in Levenwick next to the Overtonlea Care Centre.

14.3 A new children's play park at Bigton was opened in February 2003. There are also children's play parks at Boddam, Virkie and Fair Isle and a sports field at Boddam.

14.4 The Ness Boating Club and marina is located at Virkie.

14.5 There are 6 churches in the Community Council area.

14.6 Boddam has a one-officer police station. There are specialist fire services provided at Sumburgh Airport in addition to the auxiliary fire units at Virkie and Fair Isle.

14.7 Shetland's Coastguard helicopter is based at Sumburgh airport.

Development Opportunity

Fair Isle has a small community-run Museum that interprets the island's history for visitors. The local community have identified a need to extend this museum to provide additional space for offices and storage and a toilet.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that islanders are encouraged and assisted to identify ways and means to bring forward the project for extending the museum on Fair Isle.

