

Fetlar Community Council Area Statement

See Fetlar Proposals Map

Background

1.1 Fetlar is one of Shetland's Northern Isles, a fertile green place known as the 'Garden of Shetland'. The island is generally low-lying, the highest point being Vord Hill at 158m, and the coastline is largely cliffs. Tresta Bay, however, has one of the best beaches in Shetland. Fetlar covers an area of 15 square miles (24km). The island is approximately 6 miles (10km) across and varies from 1 to 3 miles wide. It is situated 2 miles (3.2km) to the east of Yell.



Lamb Hoga and Papil Water

Planning Context

2.1 The previous Local Plan that covered the Fetlar Community Council area was the North Isles Local Plan 1986 (which also covered Unst, Yell, Skerries & Whalsay). Also published in 1986 was the Fetlar Integrated Development Plan, which contained detailed proposals for linked projects across the whole island. Local planning aims for Fetlar are:

- To seek ways to diversify the local economy
- To counter de-population and encourage the growth of the community.
- To conserve and enhance the natural and built environment

- To develop further the tourism potential of the area.

Natural and Built Environment

3.1 There are 6 SSSIs on Fetlar. They are at Funzie, Tressa Ness and Virva, which are notified for their geology, and Lamb Hoga, North Fetlar & Trona, Mires which are notified for their botanical interest and birdlife. North Fetlar is also a candidate Special Area of Conservation. Lamb Hoga, North Fetlar and Trona Mires comprise the Fetlar SPA.

3.2 The lack of a deep Voe in Fetlar means that there is no natural sheltered harbour, which has greatly hindered the island's development. There is a small harbour at Houbie but this is limited mainly to summer use due to its lack of shelter.

3.3 The population of Fetlar is scattered over the south and east of the island, with most services in Houbie, the largest settlement.



Houbie

Built Heritage

3.4 There are 6 Listed Buildings on Fetlar, 3 category B and 3 category C(s). Brough Lodge is included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland. Currently there are 119 known archaeological sites with 18 of them scheduled.

Local Protection Areas (LPAs)

3.5 The local community has identified LPAs at Tresta beach and its foreshore, and at Aith Ness, where development will be restricted to protect important local

landscapes and public amenity. The beach at Banks of Funzie has also been identified as an LPA.

Coastal Management

4.1 At present there are no coastal management plans for Fetlar. However, given the potential for aquaculture to develop, there may be a need for an integrated coastal zone management plan for the island.

Water and Drainage

5.1 Scottish Water has a water quality improvement scheme scheduled for 2002/4. The existing water treatment works, fed by Skutes Water, currently works at 40% of capacity.

5.2 The Fetlar sewerage scheme at Stakkafletts currently has capacity for another 10-19 houses. All other properties have their own private septic tanks.

Waste Management

6.1 Waste skips are available at Baela industrial estate, giving residents a convenient disposal point for bulky household refuse. There is also a glass recycling point at Baela industrial site.

Energy

7.1 The exposed nature of Fetlar would recommend it for the use of renewable energy sources such as wind or wave power, but these must not conflict with the conservation issues (e.g. SSSIs) that arise in much of the island. There would also be problems in connecting to the Shetland grid. There is, however, considerable potential for domestic scale wind generators.

Business and Industry

8.1 The economy of Fetlar is heavily dependent on crofting agriculture. With crofting incomes in decline, there is a need to diversify the local economy to make it less dependent on farming. There may also be potential in providing high quality agricultural products that could be sold locally in Shetland and further afield. Taking advantage of the "Garden of Shetland" brand name in marketing

initiatives could help promote Fetlar produce and products.

8.2 Land issues are central to life on Fetlar, with many problems raised by absentee landlords and under-used crofts.

- **Aquaculture**

8.3 At present aquaculture is a relatively under-developed industry, with the only licensed sites off Hamars Ness and smolt rearing in Papil Water. The lack of sheltered voes is likely to be a limiting factor in the growth of aquaculture. Whilst the further development of this industry is welcomed, its impact on the amenity of the community and on the environment must be carefully considered.

8.4 The proposed combined ferry terminal and pier facilities will hopefully be the necessary catalyst required to stimulate the fishing and aquaculture industries.

- **Industrial Estate**

8.5 There is one designated industrial site at Baela, the buildings on which were used by the community council and may be taken over by the Fire Service/Coastguard. There is a possible need for smaller 'starter-units' to be built on the estate, to help generate small businesses.



Industrial/Commercial Building

- **Modern Technology**

8.6 Working at home can also be an important economic factor for remote and isolated communities. Advances in new technology such as the Internet and e-mail can replace the need for centralised office working, a prospect that could bring enormous benefits to communities such as Fetlar. Fetlar already has a small number of businesses that make use of modern technology and this needs to be

encouraged by utilising new advances in technology as and when they develop.

8.7 One example of this is the use of video conferencing to help provide economic opportunities and deliver services to the communities without the need for expensive transport. The video conferencing unit is located in the community hall. This unit is currently underused and could provide an invaluable link to the outside world without the need for extensive travelling.

Tourism

9.1 The island's natural environment and ornithology are the major draws for tourists to Fetlar. Of particular importance is the unique community of birds that breed there. The RSPB reserve on the island with its resident warden therefore plays a very important role in attracting tourists to Fetlar.



Tresta Beach

• Tourist Accommodation and Facilities

9.2 Fetlar has a B&B, a guesthouse, several self-catering units and campsite accommodation. There is certainly more scope for tourist accommodation, particularly in light of the number of vacant properties on the island.

9.3 The Fetlar Interpretive Centre won an award for the best Scottish Museum of the Year in 2000, in the Educational Initiative category. As such it has an important role to play as a tourist attraction and cultural archive for Fetlar.

9.4 A retreat complex run by an order of nuns at Tigh-Sith on Aith Ness also attracts visitors to the island.



Fetlar's award winning Interpretive Centre

9.5 A telescope will shortly be operating on Fetlar for planetary observation, run by Fetlar Astronomical Society, to take advantage of the clarity of the night skies on the island. No site has been chosen but one adjacent to the Hall could make use of other facilities.

9.6 Model croft: a working 'model croft' is an option that is being considered to utilise under-used croft land. It will provide a test bed for new management techniques and demonstrator of good agricultural practice as well as being another visitor attraction.

9.7 The annual midsummer Foy attracts large numbers of visitors to its music and activity weekend on Tresta foreshore.

9.8 Interpretation Sign-boards: There is a need for more sign-boards, pointing out places of interest and explaining them.



Commercial Development

10.1 There is a shop and Post Office at Gord but there is no petrol for sale on the island. There is also a seasonal café adjacent to the shop.

Transport

11.1 Affordable and frequent ferry services to and from the mainland are a

vital factor in maintaining the future economic and social viability of Fetlar. The ferry service is also an important local employer and any further cutbacks would have a significant impact on the local community.

11.2 A new ferry terminal and pier are currently being taken forward by the SIC Marine Operations Department. Land for this development will be safeguarded in the Fetlar Proposals Map.

- **Public Transport**

11.3 The Post Car operates a limited public transport service between the Post Office and ferry. There is an airstrip on Turra Field, which is used for charter flights or for medical emergencies.

Population and Housing

12.1 The population of Fetlar is in a slow decline, from 87 in 1991 to 86 in 2001, with a projection of 68 for 2011. Apart from a slight growth between 1971 and 1982, when the Shetland economy was particularly healthy, the population of Fetlar has declined from a peak in 1901 where it was recorded at 347.

12.2 New house building on Fetlar has been very limited over the past decade by continued de-population, but this has been balanced slightly by the falling size of households (more one/two person occupancies). There has been an average of one house completion per annum since 1994.

12.3 Of the total housing stock of 53, 40 (75%) are occupied with 38 houses privately owned or rented (72%), 15 are Council rented properties (7 special needs sheltered). There are no Housing Association units on the island.

- **Housing Zones**

12.4 Houbie is designated as Zone 1, where new housing development is actively encouraged. Aith, Herra and Funzie are designated as Zone 2 where new housing development will be favourably considered where it reflects the existing settlement pattern. The areas around Houll and Everland have been redesignated from Zone 4 to 2. All other areas are designated as Zone 4, which is

open countryside where housing development will be strictly controlled. Further details of the housing zone requirements are set out in policy **LP HOU4**.

Community Services and Facilities

13.1 There is one Community Hall and a primary school with nursery school facilities in Houbie. The school has recently been refurbished and there are plans to expand the community hall, as described in the next section. The Hall has a computer and videoconference suite for public use.

13.2 The primary school roll is 4 in 2001, with 2 nursery places, down from 12 in 1991. Play areas are located at Stakkafletts and the primary school.

13.3 The road up to the school is unsafe for children's pedestrian access, so the installation of a verge-path on one side and possibly a crash-barrier on the drop side would be beneficial.

13.4 There is a church and burial ground at Tresta.

13.5 There are public toilets at Oddsta, Gord, Houbie and the campsite at Tresta, all but Oddsta having limited access.

Development Opportunities

14.1 Following an extensive community consultation and household survey the **Fetlar Development Project** was established in January 2000 as a partnership of Fetlar Community Council and Fetlar Museum Trust. On March 25th 2000, the Fetlar Conference brought together the island's residents with Council and other agency representatives, politicians and community groups from within and outwith Shetland to identify and discuss the key issues concerning the island.

14.2 New Pier and Ferry Terminal This is potentially the key to the island's sustainable development. In addition to an improvement in ferry facilities and infrastructure, this will also provide Fetlar with its first small boat pier, essential for development of aquaculture and fishing industries. There is also potential for the old ferry terminal to be utilised by aquaculture developments. This

development is also an opportunity to provide a much needed petrol station, tourist facilities and possibly a craft centre. Ideally a ferry would be based in Fetlar, as crew jobs are essential to the island's economy.

Proposal 1

A new pier and ferry terminal will be developed at Hamars Ness by the Council to replace the existing terminal and improve shore facilities and infrastructure. This is also an opportunity to create a new 'gateway to Fetlar'. See New Terminal Inset Map.

14.3 Brough Lodge and the Brough Lodge Trust. The Lodge dates from 1820 and was the home of the Nicholson family; the last Lady Nicholson died in the late 1980s. Her descendants gave the historical contents of the house to Fetlar Museum Trust, and in 1997 permission was granted to set up the Brough Lodge Trust. The aims of the Trust are to acquire and restore the Lodge and to develop it for use by the community and tourists on Fetlar. The Shetland Amenity Trust, Shetland Community Enterprise Network and the Fetlar Development Fund support the project.



Brough Lodge



Brough Lodge Observatory

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the Council finds ways and means of bringing forward the restoration and reuse of Brough Lodge in full consultation with the local community and all other relevant funding partners

14.4 The Fetlar Interpretive Centre has an important role to play as a tourist attraction and as an educational centre. Any expansion and/or development would enhance this role and should be encouraged. The next phased development for the Centre is the 'Digitisation Project' to store electronically all the museum's records. A Lottery bid is currently being prepared.

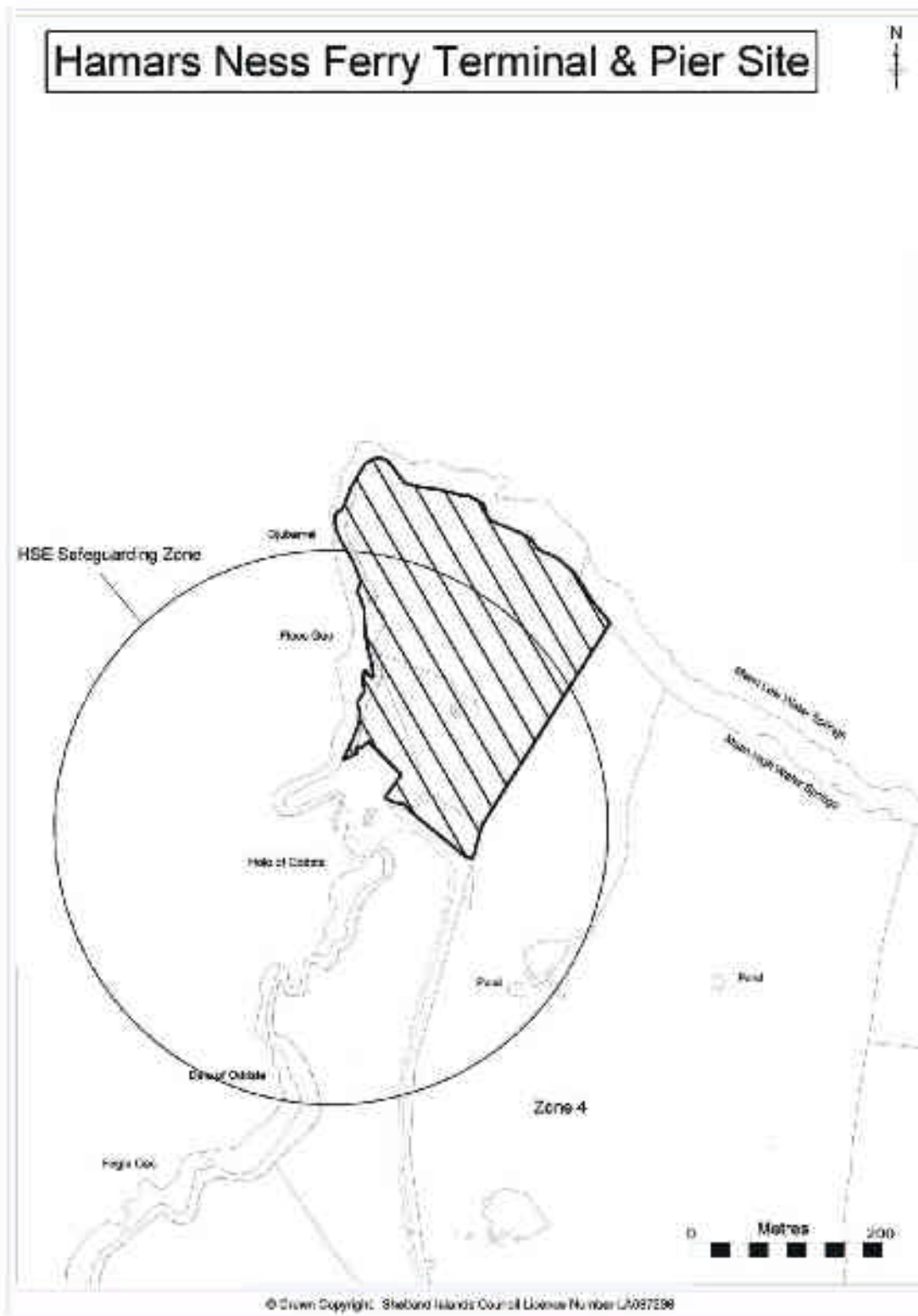
14.5 Tourism: facilities for tourists should be improved to encourage more visitors. The limited amount of accommodation could be expanded. Sensitively designed signposts and interpretation boards are also required to guide and inform tourists. A tourist trail leaflet would also be useful.

14.6 Fetlar Hall: has been granted a £27,000 award under the Local Capital Grants Scheme to extend the hall on the south side to provide a multi-purpose community social room as well as a room dedicated to I.T. equipment for training and learning purposes.



Fetlar Community Hall

14.7 Aithbank is to be converted into a Camping Böd by Shetland Amenity Trust, and as such will be part of the Shetland Camping Böd Trail, offering budget self-catering accommodation in heritage properties throughout Shetland.





Aithbank

Proposal 3

Shetland Amenity Trust proposes to refurbish and convert the derelict Aithbank building into a Böd, and create a community garden within its grounds.

14.8 The local community has identified a need for a car park and toilets for the **Loch of Funzie**, one of the most important bird watching sites on Fetlar.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the Council investigate ways and means of bringing forward recreational improvements at the Loch of Funzie in full consultation with the local community and all other relevant funding agencies.

14.9 Sports facilities are lacking on Fetlar and a multi-court, possibly located near the school, would provide an all-weather venue for a variety of activities.

14.10 Community Office: The local community has identified a need for a community office in Fetlar, particularly in light of the proposed decentralisation of S.I.C. services. The office should have 3 work spaces and possibly a dedicated craft space and tea/coffee facilities for tourists. There is a site opposite the Interpretive Centre which might be a suitable location for this building.

14.11 The **pier/slipway at Houbie**, which is well used by small craft and fishers, is falling into disrepair and in need of refurbishment.

14.12 The installation of a pedestrian path up the school road would be beneficial by introducing a safe route to school.

14.13 The community and RSPB warden have noted interest in tree-planting on Fetlar, for habitat and landscape enhancement.

• Useful Websites

14.10 "www.fetlar.com" is the website for Fetlar Interpretive Centre with interesting pages on their facilities and what they do, exhibitions, projects, publications and archives.

14.11 "www.fetlar.com/brough" is the website for Brough Lodge Trust, with a history of the house and the aims of the trust.

14.12 "island-trail.com" is a marketing and development project linking Fetlar to Rathlin Island in Northern Ireland and Tory Island in the Irish Republic.

