

## Northmaven Community Council Area Statement

See Northmaven Proposals Map

### Background

1.1 Northmaven is a unique, wild place with large areas of unspoilt wilderness and small coastal communities. The population and economy are both in decline



Eshaness' dramatic coastline is one of Shetland's foremost tourist attractions.

1.2 Shetland's highest point, Ronas Hill, dominates a landscape of moorland, lochs and dramatic coastlines. Northmaven is connected to the rest of the Mainland by Mavis Grind, a narrow isthmus over which it is said that Vikings carried their longships from the North Sea to the Atlantic.

1.3 Northmaven's small population is scattered throughout the area with the majority of people located in Hillswick/Urafirth, Ollaberry and North Roe.

#### • Planning Context

1.4 The previous Local Plan that covered the Northmaven area was the 1989 North Mainland Local Plan (which also included North & South Delting). Local planning aims for the Northmaven area are:

- To seek opportunities to diversify, develop and sustain the local economy

- To conserve & enhance the natural and built environment
- To promote and improve access to the natural environment
- To develop the tourism potential of the area.

### Natural and Built Environment

2.1 The north coast of Northmaven together with the coast from Eshaness to Hillswick are designated as part of the Shetland National Scenic Area.

2.2 The special qualities of the area are recognised by the designation of 10 SSSIs for geology, moorland and montane habitats, bird/plant and peat/blanket bogs. There is also a Marine Consultation Area at the Houb. Ronas Hill/North Roe and Tingon are both designated as cSACs, together the sites are a SPA.

2.3 Hillswick, Ollaberry and North Roe are the three main settlements in the area. Hillswick and the neighbouring community of Urafirth are spread around the north and west shores of Urafirth, with approximately 100 dwellings. A new school and a community hall are shared between the communities. Hillswick also has the St. Magnus Hotel, a shop and post-office, a Doctor's surgery/health centre and a wildlife sanctuary and associated vegetarian café.

2.4 The settlement of Ollaberry is scattered around the Bay of Ollaberry with about 70 dwellings. The village also has an industrial site, a shop and post-office, a garage and a recently extended school.

2.5 The settlement of North Roe has developed around Burra Voe, with about 58 dwellings. The settled area is flat and fertile with many working crofts and small farms. There is a shop and post office, a village hall and primary school.

#### • Built Heritage

2.6 There are 18 Listed Buildings in the Northmaven area, 10 category 'B' and 8 category C(s). Currently, there are also 554 known archaeological sites in the area with 47 that are scheduled.

2.7 The historic core of **Hillswick**, including Hillswick House, the Böd and the St Magnus Hotel (all listed buildings), may be worthy of designation as a Conservation Area. Enhancement proposals could include the restoration of derelict buildings, where practicable, and improvements to the public spaces in the area, particularly at the waterfront.

#### Proposal 1

**The Council proposes that the possibility of a formal designation of Hillswick as a Conservation Area should be considered in consultation with the local community.**

- **Local protection Areas (LPAs)**

2.8 The NW coastal area of the Ness of Hillswick is designated as a LPA, to protect the landscape and public amenity from further development.

#### Coastal Management

3.1 Aquaculture is fast becoming a important industry in Northmaven with several large salmon farms in the sheltered voes. Whilst the further development of this industry is welcomed, its impact on the amenity of local residents and the natural environment has to be carefully considered.

3.2 To service these sites, shore bases are required. Existing shore bases in the area have been identified in the proposals map and these sites, together with the former Ronas Fisheries factory, will continue to be the preferred locations for additional investment and expansion.

#### Water and Drainage

4.1 Houses in the area mainly use individual septic tanks. Wastewater schemes serve Stackhoull, Sullom, Midgard, North Röe; Urafirth; and Runnadale, Ollaberry.

4.2 Scottish Water constructed a first time wastewater collection scheme in Hillswick during 2001/2002. The outfall from the existing septic tank serving **Valladale, Urafirth** will be extended before 2006.

#### Proposal 2

**NoSWA proposes to undertake the Hillswick wastewater collection scheme in 2001/2002.**

#### Waste Management

5.1 Rural skips are available on a rota basis at various locations throughout the area, giving residents convenient disposal points for household bulky refuse. There is a collection point for used batteries at the Ollaberry Community shop. There is also a glass recycling point at Ollaberry, beside the Community Shop.

#### Energy

6.1 The extreme exposure of Northmaven to the elements, and large areas of little or no population, make it an ideal location for wind or wave powered generators. Such proposals would have to be balanced with concerns over environmental impact in certain designated areas.

#### Minerals

7.1 Due to the geology of the Shetland Islands and the established criteria of the minerals industry, there are only a few sites which are likely to be acceptable, both in terms of an operator's requirements and the community's interest in protecting the environment. Any quarrying or mining proposals will be considered in line with current Government guidance and the policies contained in the Shetland Structure and Local Plans and be subject to a full environmental assessment and public consultation exercise.

#### Business and Industry

8.1 Fishing and crofting have underpinned the Northmaven economy for hundreds of years. Both industries are now under severe threat from a variety of sources. There is therefore an over riding need for industry in Northmaven to seek opportunities to diversify.

8.2 The Northmaven economy received a severe blow in December 2000 with the closure of the Ronas Fisheries factory with the loss of 19 jobs, almost 10% of the total jobs recorded in the area in 2000.

**8.3** To combat this significant job loss the Council's Development Department established an action group to assess what best could be done to attract additional jobs to the area. Following an extensive consultation exercise it was decided to establish the **Northmaven Business Support Scheme** to provide grant assistance to the development of existing or new business opportunities in Northmaven.

- **Fishing Industry**

**8.4** Despite the closure of the Ronas Factory the Northmaven fishing industry survives, with one of Shetland's largest fishing boats based at Collafirth pier (built in 1988). Smaller inshore boats also continue to work from Hamnavoe and Hillswick as well as Collafirth.

- **Aquaculture**

**8.5** One industry that has the potential to bring additional employment to the area is Aquaculture. As well as numerous salmon farms around the coast there is a large fish hatchery at Eshaness. The further development of this important industry has to be balanced against the need to protect the environment. See *Coastal Management section*.

- **Oil and Gas Industry**

**8.6** The recent capital investment at Sullom Voe Oil Terminal also offers the prospect of long term employment within a reasonable commuting distance of the Northmaven area.

- **Telecommunications**

**8.7** The continued and rapid advancement of IT and modern telecommunications can also provide additional employment. In particular, home working needs to be encouraged throughout the area where it does not conflict with residential amenity.

<b>Tourism</b>
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**9.1** The Tourist industry brings visitors, money and seasonal jobs to Northmaven and as such must be encouraged and supported.



**Dore Holm**

**9.2** The Cliffs and lighthouse at Eshaness are one of the principal tourist sites in the area, the coastline from Hillswick Ness to Uyea being unparalleled in Shetland for the caves, cliffs, stacks, geos, blowholes and arches which have been carved by the relentless power of the North Atlantic waves.

**9.3** Another area of interest is Stenness beach with its ruined fishing lodges that mark the site of one of the area's old fishing stations, a reminder of the times when sea fishing from small open boats dominated the Shetland economy.

**9.4** Whilst Northmaven does enjoy a spectacular natural setting, there are few wet weather visitor attractions or facilities. A notable exception to this is Tangwick Haa; a C(s) listed building that has been fully refurbished to accommodate a community-run museum covering all aspects of life and history in Northmaven. The centrepiece of this impressive building is the restored Laird's room.



**The recently renovated Tangwick Haa**

**9.5** Another notable tourist facility is Johnnie Notions' former house that is now used as a Camping Bød. This restored grade B listed building marks the life of a remarkable 18<sup>th</sup> century Shetlander. Uneducated, he devised his own

inoculation against smallpox, which saved the lives of thousands of local people.

- **Tourist Accommodation**

**9.6** Apart from a few B&Bs and the Böd, the main tourist accommodation in the area is the St. Magnus Hotel in Hillswick.



**St. Magnus Hotel, Hillswick.**

**9.7** To help Northmavine take fuller advantage of its untapped tourist potential new visitor attractions and facilities will be welcome where they do not detract from the quality of the environment.

### **Commercial Development**

**10.1** Shops and services in the area are located in Hillswick, Ollaberry and North Roe, each of which has a general store and a sub Post Office. The shop at Ollaberry is notable as it operates successfully as a community-run shop.

### **Transport**

**11.1** A bus service operates daily from Hillswick to Lerwick, with a daily feeder service from North Roe to Brae. Provided that demand can be demonstrated, an improved public transport service for this area would increase accessibility and counter exclusion. The local community has identified possible footpath routes to connect community facilities in Hillswick, Ollaberry and North Roe.

- **Road Improvements**

**11.2** The A970 has been upgraded as part of the **Northmaven IVb Road Scheme**, between the Hillswick/North Roe junction and Mangaster Voe. Works are currently underway for improvements on the Ollaberry to Leon Road.

### **Population and Housing**

**12.1** The population of Northmaven is in slow decline, from 857 in 1991 to 828 in 2001, and to a projection of 742 in 2011. This worrying trend can also be seen with the decline of the school rolls at North Roe and Ollaberry, although Urafirth has shown an increase. See *Community Services and Facilities section*.

**12.2** The area's declining population has resulted in an average of only 2 new house completions per annum since 1994. If this trend is to be reversed it will be necessary to attract additional employment opportunities to the area. The lack of affordable rented housing in some areas is also contributing to population decline.

**12.3** Of the 322 households in Northmavine (1996), 45 were Council rented and 32 were Hjaltland Housing Association (in North Roe, Sullom and Hillswick). Environmental improvement works are scheduled to be undertaken at **Bayview, North Røe** during 2006/7 as part of the Council's rolling programme.

- **Housing Zoning Areas**

**12.4** Hillswick/Urafirth, Ollaberry and North Roe are designated as Zone 1 where new housing development will be actively encouraged. There are also 15 small areas of existing settlement that are designated as Zone 2, where new housing development will be favourably considered where it reflects existing settlement patterns. All other areas are open countryside and designated as Zone 4, where new 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 are Community Halls/Centres in North Roe and Lochend, Ollaberry, Eshaness, Sullom and Hillswick.

**13.2** There are Primary Schools at North Roe (12 pupils in 2001, down from 20 in 1991), Ollaberry (19 pupils in 2001, down from 35 in 1991) and Urafirth (29 pupils in 2001, up from 23 in 1991). Ollaberry School has recently been extensively

refurbished. Urafirth has a new school that also includes a nursery which serves the whole of Northmaven.

**13.3** Hillswick has a small Health Centre, Auxiliary Fire and Coastguard services. Swimming Pool/sports facilities, Police and Fire Service are at Brae, in Delting.

#### **Development Opportunity**

**Hillswick** enjoys a cluster of listed buildings and a long history as the main tourist centre for Northmaven. In recent years the built environment of the settlement has noticeably declined and there is now considerable scope for environmental improvements. It is therefore proposed that an Action Plan be prepared for the settlement to highlight the work that needs to be done to significantly enhance the built environment.

#### **Proposal 4**

**It is proposed that the Council prepare an Action Plan for Hillswick in full consultation with the local community and other key agencies.**

#### **Proposal 5**

**Following on from Proposal 4 and its preceding Development Opportunity, the settlements of Ollaberry and North Roe could also benefit from similar Action Plans. The Council will fully support any programmes or initiatives brought forward by the respective local communities.**

**13.4** Northmaven's outstanding natural environment offers tremendous tourism potential. However, the short summer season, the area's remoteness and its general lack of visitor attractions and facilities limits the numbers of visitors to the area.



**Ronas Hill, Shetland's highest point.**

**13.5** One possibility to generate added visitor interest in Northmaven could be the establishment of a low impact **long distance coastal path** from Hillswick to Ollaberry. Such a path would attract additional visitors to the area and may help to support existing or help generate new tourist facilities. Given the importance of crofting to the area the proposed route of any potential footpath will have to be very carefully considered.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**It is recommended that the Council explore the possibility of establishing a Northmaven coastal public footpath in full consultation with the local community and other relevant agencies.**

