

Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale Community Council Area Statement

See Area Proposals Map

Background

1.1 The Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale Community Council area straddles the centre of Shetland, having both North Sea and Atlantic coastlines.

1.2 This area encompasses many of the best features of the Shetland landscape, together with a number of thriving communities. From high hills and moorland down to green valleys and deep voes, the landscape is constantly changing.



Weisdale Voe

1.3 The area is well populated, mostly in scattered groups of houses, with the largest concentrations of development at Gott, Girlsta, Kalliness/Hellister, Wormadale, South Whiteness, and Veensgarth, all of which have been subject to significant housing development during the past 25 years.

Planning Context

2.1 The previous Local Plan that covered this Community Council area was the West, South and Central Interim Local Plan October 1992. Local aims for the Community Council area are:

- To seek ways to diversify the local economy.
- To conserve and enhance the natural and built environment.

Natural and Built Environment

3.1 There is a great diversity of scenery and landscape types in this area, from the heights of Weisdale Hill and Burra Dale down to the deep voes of Whiteness and Weisdale, with rugged moorland and the small lochs of Wormadale Hill down to the broad, lush Tingwall valley. The Weisdale valley is notable for having the largest areas of mature woodland in Shetland. Most of the west coast is included in the Shetland National Scenic Area.

3.2 There are no large settlements in this area; Gott, Veensgarth, Wormadale/Whiteness and the Hellister/Kalliness areas are the largest 'villages' with a general scattering of dwellings around the coasts and along the valleys. There are some concerns regarding speculative development in certain areas.



Whiteness Voe

• Conservation Designations

3.3 Whiteness Voe is a Marine Consultation Area. There are five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the area, notified for woodland, limestone flora; aquatic plants (two sites) and fish.

• Built Heritage

3.4 There are 17 Listed Buildings in the area, 7 in category B and 10 in the C(s) category. Currently, there are 139 known archaeological sites in the area with 18 that are scheduled.

• Local Protection Areas (LPAs)

3.5 LPAs have been identified by local residents at the head of Laxfirth Voe at Strand and the Point of Nesbister. These

sites have been designated to protect important local views and landscapes. An area at Hellister has also been identified to protect the agricultural unit and restrict the spread of housing. See the Proposals Map and Policy **LP NE11** for further details.

Coastal Management

4.1 Coastal defence works have been carried out at Laxfirth House, Laxfirth Voe; Taing of Haggersta, Weisdale Voe; the Old Kirk, Loch of Strom; Mousaness, Whiteness Voe and at Strand Loch. In general, most of the inhabited stretches of coastline are hard and sheltered, however, the public has identified problems with coastal erosion potentially endangering the houses at the head of Laxfirth Voe and flooding on the road between Huxter and Weisdale graveyard.

4.2 The developed nature of the area means that aquaculture shore bases will require to be particularly carefully controlled, taking into account the needs of the local residents, fish and shellfish farmers and the coastal environment.

Water and Drainage

5.1 Water in the area is supplied from the Sandy Loch reservoir outside Lerwick and Eela Water in the north mainland. In the long-term Scottish Water is considering sourcing water from Tingwall and Asta lochs. See policy **LP WD5**.

5.2 The major Tingwall Valley wastewater scheme was completed in the mid-1990s. Other areas provided with wastewater schemes are at Kalliness and Clach-na-Strom. The wastewater scheme for Wormadale and Nesbister was completed in 2000. The extension of the scheme to the Whiteness peninsula is still awaited and it is most unlikely that this scheme will be considered before 2010.

5.3 Scottish Water intends to replace and extend the existing septic tank at Kalliness by 2002 and provide a communal septic tank for the "Swedish" houses at the head of Weisdale Voe before the end of 2006.

5.4 In other areas properties have their own private septic tanks. A request to extend the existing sewage system along

the Laxfirth Road to Green Acres has been received.

Local Drainage Policies

Policy Tingwall 1

Applications for planning consent for development that drains into Tingwall and Asta Lochs will not be permitted.

5.5 The Council has maintained a policy of restricting development around these lochs for many years. Tingwall Loch has a recognised problem of nutrient enrichment that has already caused damage to the botanical interest of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). To permit new development, which requires a septic tank, within the catchment area of these lochs would further exacerbate the problem and be against the Council's aims and values, which support sustainable development. (See also policy **LP WD5**)

Policy Whiteness 1

No new private septic tanks (except those replacing existing tanks) will be permitted within the upper Whiteness Voe catchment area.

5.6 The whole of Whiteness Voe is a Marine Consultation Area, the head of the Voe is of very high scientific interest as the best developed bed of eel grass (*Zostera marina*) in Shetland and because of the rich sediments which include both widely occurring and rare communities and species. There has been concern about pollution in the upper part of the Voe since 1990 with the Council adopting a policy to limit development in early 1997. Although the new wastewater scheme serving Nesbister and Wormadale has improved the situation, the scheme does not as yet serve the peninsula. The development of septic tanks which drain into the Voe north of the Point of Nesbister and the Taing of Hamar would repeat the past pollution problem and therefore will not be permitted.

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 items. There

are collection points for used batteries at the Weisdale and Whiteness shops. There is also a glass recycling collection point at Kalliness. A site at Tagdale was considered as a potential landfill site in early 2002, after consideration the site at Gremista, Lerwick was identified.

Energy

7.1 The potential in Shetland to harness energy from renewable resources is clearly shown by the five aerogenerators on the hill at Burra Dale, which are connected into the local grid.



Aerogenerators at Burra Dale

Minerals

8.1 Vatster Quarry, Tingwall, is the only quarry in the area, although mothballed at present, the quarry supplied ready mix concrete, sand, concrete blocks and aggregates. The private company Total Waste Management Alliance plc. have installed an incinerator at the quarry, which is used for special waste disposal.

Business and Industry

9.1 Being so close to Lerwick, Shetland's principal employment centre, a large number of residents in the area are commuters. Figures from 1997 show 136 full-time and 80 part-time jobs in the area. There is a need, as in all rural areas, for further diversification of the economy.

9.2 Small-scale businesses in rural locations offer good employment opportunities with minimum impact on the environment. This helps to keep people living and working in their local communities, supporting local services and cutting down on the need to travel.

9.3 Agriculture and crofting underpin much of the rural economy because of the rich coastal strips and broad lush valleys. The Tingwall Valley is one of the most fertile areas in Shetland.

9.4 There is a small industrial area next to Tingwall Airport, which is occupied by a construction firm. There is a slaughterhouse at Laxfirth and Total Waste Management operate a special waste disposal site at Vatster Quarry. The Planticrub garden centre is located close to Tingwall airport.



Jewellery workshop at Hellister

9.5 Shetland Jewellery's workshop with showroom at Soundside, manufactures silver jewellery for export and for the home market. Hjaltasteyn a smaller company, also manufactures silver and gold jewellery in Weisdale for sale in Lerwick and by mail order.

9.6 The North Eden Project, a new venture which is being proposed to re-use the former Plantiecrub glasshouse is seen as a valuable addition for local employment opportunities (see *Community Facilities section*). An alternative proposal to re-use the greenhouses for horticulture is also being put forward.

Aquaculture

10.1 Aquaculture is a fast developing industry in the area, with shore-bases at Weisdale and Wadbister Voes servicing fish cages in the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea respectively. There are fish hatcheries at the old mills at Girlsta and Weisdale. Care must be taken to ensure that the development of aquaculture is balanced against the needs of the community and environmental concerns.

Tourism

11.1 Dramatic scenery, numerous places of interest and the airport, combined with the close proximity to Lerwick, makes this area an attractive destination for tourists.

11.2 Numerous freshwater fishing lochs, the golf courses at Dale and Asta and good walking terrain also offer plenty of outdoor pursuits.

11.3 The Herrislea Hotel in Tingwall and the Inn on the Hill at Westings Wormadale have both been refurbished recently, boosting the accommodation available and providing valuable facilities for the community as well as for visitors. There is also a good choice of chalet/self-catering and B&B accommodation in the area.



Weisdale Mill

11.4 Weisdale Mill houses the Shetland Textile Working Museum together with the Bonhoga Art Gallery and café. The building is an excellent example of how a Listed Building can be restored and reused. There is a print studio in the adjacent fish hatchery premises.

11.5. The proposed North Eden project will make a valuable contribution to tourist development in the area (*see Community Facilities section for more details*) The Tingwall Agricultural Museum at Veensgarth containing displays of crofting, fishing and agricultural implements is closed at present.

11.6 The lay-bys on Wormadale and Weisdale Hills take advantage of the stunning views and offer excellent photo opportunities.

Commercial Development

12.1 Weisdale has a general store with fuel pumps and a post office. At Whiteness there is also a general store and post office. The Whiteness shop also sells LPG fuel for use by vehicles.

Transport

13.1 The road system in this area is of a generally high standard, with road links to Lerwick and Sullom Voe.

- **Road Improvements**

13.2 The A971 at Haggersta is scheduled for realignment starting in autumn 2002. The A970/B9074 Gott/Veensgarth staggered junction was improved in early 2002. Further improvements are proposed on the B9075 Weisdale to Sandwater link and the C0309 Haggersta to Girlsta link, but no start date for the work has been confirmed.

13.3 Reconstruction of the bridge at Strand, street lighting at Veensgarth and traffic calming measures at Kalliness are all included in the Council's rolling programme of highways improvements, but again no start date for the work has been confirmed.

- **Cycle Routes**

13.4 The North Sea Cycle route passes through the area en route from Sumburgh to Toft.

- **Public Transport**

13.5 There is a bus service from the Westside to Lerwick, which passes through the area 3 or 4 times a day on the A971. The Tingwall and Girlsta areas are also served by bus services from the North Mainland to Lerwick passing down the A970.

- **Air Services**

13.6 Tingwall Airport, which provides a valuable transport link to most of Shetland's main islands, is the base for the air ambulance and the hub for inter-island flights. The terminal is the collection and distribution point for goods and passengers travelling to Fair Isle,

Foula, Whalsay, Out Skerries and Papa Stour. The present lack of a service to Unst, due to the run-down of the RAF base, is to be regretted.

Population and Housing

14.1 The population of this area is steadily increasing, from 1,075 in 1981 to 1,148 in 1991, with a projection of around 1,370 people in the year 2011.

14.2 New housing development has been rapid over the past decade, with an average of 16 new house completions per annum since 1994. The Council and Hjaltland Housing Association own around 80 houses in the area, which are available for rent. The majority of these are at Kalliness, with some additional shared ownership properties at Strand next to the Tingwall Hall. Environmental improvement works are scheduled for the Council owned houses at Kalliness during 2004/6, as part of the Council environmental improvements rolling programme.



Modern houses at Strand

14.3 The area is popular for commuters due to its close proximity and easy access to Lerwick and Sullom Voe. There are local concerns over the erosion of the rural qualities of the area, because of the continued pressure for new housing development.

- **Housing Zones**

14.4 Kalliness and two areas at Strand are identified as Zone 1, where new houses are actively encouraged. Stromfirth, Cott, Califf and Breiwick, Houser and Laxfirth are identified as Zone 2 and new houses in this area will be favourably considered. In an effort to control the continued spread of further sporadic new housing, most of the existing populated areas in Tingwall, Whiteness

and Weisdale have been designated as housing Zone 3. This means new houses should strengthen and reinforce existing building groups. Surprisingly, most of the land area in Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale is sparsely populated open countryside and is classed as Zone 4; in this zone, new houses are strictly controlled. Further details of the housing zone requirements are set out in policy **LP HOU4** and shown on the Proposals Map.

Community Services and Facilities

- **Schools**

15.1 The primary schools located at Whiteness and Gott have both recently been extended and refurbished. Whiteness and Weisdale school has 100 pupils in 2001, an increase of 15 pupils in the last ten years. The Tingwall school roll has increased by 16 over the same period, giving a total of 61 pupils for the year 2001. There is a nursery unit in Whiteness School with playgroups operating at Girlsta and in the Tingwall and Whiteness halls. An under 5s group also runs in the Tingwall hall.

- **Other Facilities**

15.2 There are community halls adjacent to the schools at Tingwall and Whiteness. On three days a week the doctors from Bixter and Scalloway hold surgeries at Kalliness. There is a multi-court at the Whiteness school and across the road are the Whitedale snooker club and the Strom Park sports field with pavilion. The sports field is where the entertainment for the annual Whiteness Regatta takes place.

15.3 There are four churches and five burial grounds in the area three of which are in use.

Proposal 1

An extension to Tingwall burial ground is proposed. The site for the extension is identified on the inset Proposals Map.

15.4 The latest community development proposal in the area is the innovative community development project to convert the glasshouses in Tingwall, previously used by the Plantiecrub for commercial

fruit and vegetable production, into a tropical oasis in order to provide:

- a visitor/tourist attraction
- a gateway to a tropical garden
- a centre for education and participation
- a haven of light, colour and warmth
- a sustainable and innovative use of an existing resource

Facilities would include a small café, with opportunities for meetings, conferences, exhibitions and stands.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the Project Groups are encouraged and assisted to identify ways and means to re-use the Tingwall greenhouse complex.

