

Yell Community Council Area Statement

See Yell Proposals Map

Background

1.1 Yell is the largest of Shetland's North Isles at 83 square miles (133 km). It is 17 miles long (27 km) and 7 miles (11 km) wide. The northernmost settlement, Gloup, is 50 miles (80 km) from Lerwick. The centre of Yell has the largest deposits of peat in Shetland. Consequently, the settlements cling to the coast where the land is more fertile. The island has three deep-water inlets – Mid Yell Voe, Whale Firth and Basta Voe, the latter being extremely deep and well sheltered. The largest islands off the coast of Yell are Bigga, Hascosay and Linga, all of which are uninhabited.

Planning Context

2.1 The previous Local Plan that covered Yell was the North Isles Local Plan which also covered Unst, Fetlar, Whalsay and Out Skerries. The Council adopted this plan in 1986. Another significant document for the area is the 1997 Yell Conference report that highlighted many of the issues and opportunities facing the island. Local aims for Yell are:

- **Seek ways to further diversify the economy of Yell**
- **Maintain and enhance accessibility with the rest of Shetland**
- **Further develop tourist potential within the island**
- **Seek ways to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment**

Natural and Built Environment

3.1 Most of the land within Yell is grazed moorland with areas of improved grassland at the coast. The NW corner of Yell has a scenic, rocky coast, with cliffs, geos, arches, caves and stacks that are extremely exposed to North Atlantic gales. Adjacent coastal habitats include a dune and machair system at the Sands of

Breckon. Housing is concentrated between Gloup Voe and Bluemull Sound.

3.2 A road runs around the head and NE side of Basta Voe. There are also small settlements at Sellafirth on the NE of the Voe and at Basta on the SW. There is scattered housing elsewhere. There are also settlements and piers on both sides of Mid Yell Voe with the largest settlement being Mid Yell, the island's main service centre and place of employment.

3.3 The east coast of Yell is predominantly rural with the road running a short distance inland. Side roads provide links to small, dispersed settlements at bay heads such as Vatsetter and Gossabrough.

3.4 The other main settlements in Yell are Burravoe in the south, West Sandwick on the west coast and Cullivoe in the north, where the Council has recently constructed a new pier for use by the fishing and aquaculture industries.



Sands of Breckon

• Land Designations

3.5 Hascosay has been designated as a Site for Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for botanical and geological reasons. The same site has also been identified as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). An SSSI has also been designated on the south Yell coast to protect an internationally important habitat for otters. This site is also a cSAC to protect otters and common seals.

3.6 SSSIs have also been notified at Breckon and East Mires for botanical interests. East Mires is a cSAC for its peatland and also forms part of the East Mires and Lumbister RSPB nature reserve. There are 2 further SSSIs at

Otterswick and Graveland, notified for ornithological interests, which together make up Otterswick and Graveland Special Protection Areas (SPA). There are also SSSIs at Ness of Cullivoe, Gutcher and North Sandwick (all for geological interests) See Yell Proposals Map.

3.7 The RSPB has another reserve at Black Park. The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) owns land at Aywick and Queyon.

• **Built Heritage**

3.8 There are 30 listed buildings in Yell including 2 category A listed buildings, 10 category B and 18 category C(s). The 2 category A listed buildings are the West Sandwick North Haa and the Broch at Burra Voe.

3.9 The Old Haa in Burravoe was restored in 1987 by Shetland Amenity Trust. This impressive category B listed building contains a small community-run museum, a digital recording studio, gallery and café.

Development Opportunity

The **Mid-Yell Waterfront** Development group is seeking to develop a number of improvements to key facilities and the local environment. This includes improving the shelter for the existing pier, restoring the listed Linkshouse building for use as a crafts centre, providing a new boating club and marina, creating additional car parking and carrying out a number of environmental improvements.



Linkshouse at Mid Yell Waterfront

Development Opportunity

Outline planning permission has been granted for the refurbishment of the category B **Windhouse** building.

3.10 There are 245 known archaeological sites in Yell with 13 that are scheduled. Sites include the remains of a Broch at Burra Ness and an Iron Age fort at Burgi Geos.

Coastal Management

4.1 In Mid Yell there is a continuing problem with coastal erosion that needs to be addressed.

Water and Drainage

5.1 There are Water Treatment Works at Mid-Yell, South Yell and Cullivoe, which source water from the Laxa Burn, Muskra Loch, Loch of Brough, and the Loch of Kettlester. Scottish Water intends to carry out the necessary water quality improvements by 2006.

Proposal 1

Scottish Water proposes to carry out water quality improvements in Yell by 2006

5.2 Wastewater collection schemes are provided at **Aywick, West Sandwick, Hamnavoe, East** and **West Gossabrough** and **Mid-Yell (North-a-Voe, Seafield, Linkshouse and Ravensgeo)**. The remaining houses in Yell have private septic tanks. Scottish Water proposes to construct several new septic tanks and outfall extension throughout the Island between 2002 and 2006.

Proposal 2

Scottish Water proposes to install new communal septic tanks and outfall extensions at Burravoe and Cullivoe between 2002 and 2006. It also proposes to install new septic tanks at Ulsta, Raga and Gremister Mid Yell, Setter West Sandwick, Greenbank North Yell and at Aywick between 2002 - 2006. The existing outfalls at North-a-Voe and East Gossabrough will be extended.

Waste Management

6.1 Rural skips are provided in Yell at rotated locations for the collection of bulky household items. There are also glass recycling collection points, opposite the Isleshaven Care Centre and at the Ulsta Ferry Terminal. Used battery collection points are also available at shops in Cullivoe and Mid Yell.

Energy

7.1 Yell's large expanse of remote, open moorland makes it an ideal location for wind turbines. There is also considerable energy potential from wave and tidal sources, particularly in Yell Sound where a pilot seabed tidal energy generator has been installed and assessed.

Minerals

8.1 There are quarries at West Sandwick and Gutcher for metamorphic rock.

Business and Industry

9.1 There is a pig farm at Sellafirth with associated slaughter house at Setter. Crofting underpins much of the way of life in Yell and as such is extremely important in helping to retain the population of the island. Given the recent decline in crofting incomes, islanders have been diversifying into other activities such as the production of soft fruits and crafts. Further diversification into tourism also needs to be encouraged.

- **Peat Extraction**

9.2 A limited amount of commercial peat extraction is carried out in Yell for the Shetland market. Further expansion of

this industry is limited by environmental constraints and high transport costs.

- **Cullivoe Ice Plant**

9.3 Opened in 1999, the Cullivoe Ice Plant produces 30 tonnes of ice per day that is used by the local aquaculture and fishing industries.

- **Fish Processing**

9.4 The Shetland Norse Preserving Company Ltd at Mid-Yell with a current staff of 40 is the largest private employer in Yell and looks set to expand further in the future with the opening of a new canning production line. This new facility allows the company to diversify its product line from mainly crab and shellfish processing to the canning of various types of fish, including salmon. It is anticipated that when the production line is fully operational another 17 people could be employed at the factory. The company also hopes to establish a salmon processing/packing factory on the new Cullivoe Pier.

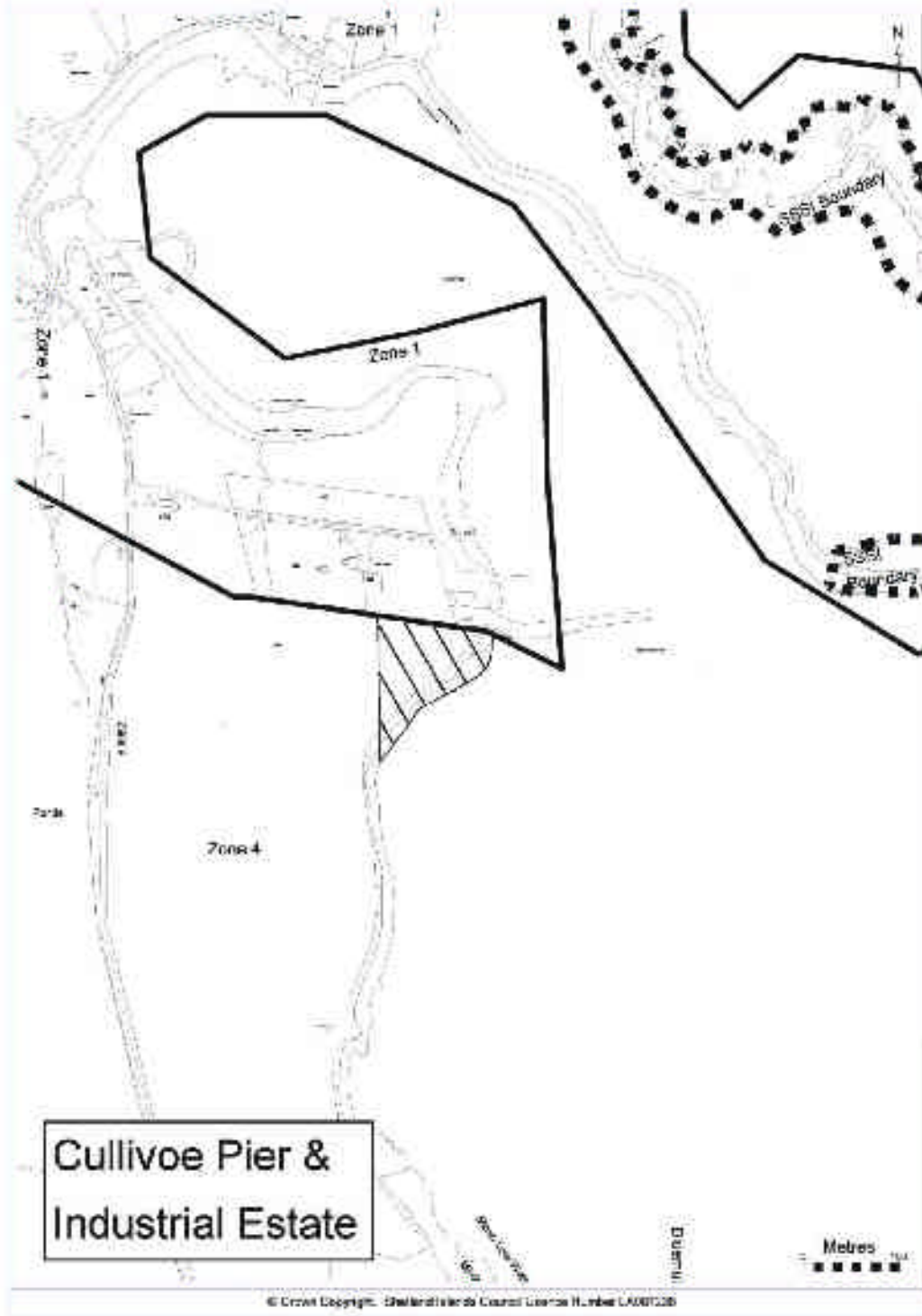
- **Aquaculture**

9.5 Aquaculture is becoming an increasingly important industry to the people of Yell. Given the difficulties faced in the fishing industry, there could be considerable potential in diversification into other species such as Scallops, Cod and Halibut. A number of Mussel farms have been established.

9.6 The further development of the aquaculture industry will help diversify Yell's narrow economic base by providing additional employment opportunities in the service, construction and haulage industries. A potential industrial site for the development of on-shore facilities is available at Basta Voe (see Proposals Map). However, care will need to be taken with regard to the amenity of local residents and the fragile nature of the marine environment.

- **Cullivoe Pier**

9.7 In May 2001 the latest extension to the pier at Cullivoe was declared open. It was instigated by the **North Yell Development Council** better to serve the needs of the local fishing fleet and



aquaculture industry. This £2.6 million development attracted Council and European funding and has already succeeded in bringing new industrial activity to the area. The proposed extension of the industrial estate, a salmon packing station and mussel depuration plant will further encourage this. See *Cullivoe inset map*.

Proposal 3

Outline planning permission has been granted for a 3-site industrial estate to be built adjacent to the new Cullivoe pier. Detailed planning permission has also been granted to construct a salmon packing station and mussel depuration plant.

- **Service Sector Jobs**

9.8 A considerable proportion of jobs in Yell remain in the service sector. These include jobs at the three schools, the ferry service, the care and sports centres. With the development of new technology and different ways of working, there remains considerable potential to expand this sector of employment within Yell. This could take the form of home working or the opening of satellite offices on behalf of the Council. Such initiatives will be welcome subject to other policies contained in the Development Plan.

9.9 The provision of modern technology is seen to be vitally important for the people of Yell. In 1999 mobile video conferencing facilities were introduced to Yell.

9.10 Although the Start centre at Cullivoe has closed, the premises were taken over by Unst's Isles Telecroft to offer computer training on an occasional basis. This project has potential to develop further and offer more training to the local population.

9.11 While ISDN is currently available in Yell (via a Lerwick number) the lack of a broadband network limits new technology opportunities.

- **Yell Crafts**

9.12 Yell's growing craft industry has the potential to develop further, but there is a need for a venue in Yell to help market the products that are available.

Development Opportunity

The creation of a one-stop **craft shop/exhibition** area is recognised as a good idea by the local community. Yell has a strong and growing craft base that is in need of a suitable venue. One possibility is the restoration of the derelict Linkshouse at the pier in Mid Yell.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that ways and means of bringing forward the craft project are investigated with the community, Shetland Amenity Trust and other funding bodies and interested parties.

- **Commuting**

9.13 A significant number of people in Yell take advantage of the frequent and affordable ferry service and commute daily to Sullom Voe, Brae and further afield for employment.

Tourism

10.1 The Yell Tourist Group is concerned that tourists do not spend long enough in the island and consequently little economic benefit is gained from the industry.

Development Opportunity

The **B9081** single-track road with passing places runs slightly inland with side roads connecting the small coastal settlements. This road has potential to be promoted as a tourist route to help encourage people to spend a longer time on the island.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that ways and means of encouraging tourist traffic to use the B9081 are investigated with the community, Shetland Amenity Trust and other funding bodies and interested parties.

- **Tourist Accommodation**

10.2 Tourist accommodation is limited on Yell but there is a Motel at Sellafirth, a guesthouse at Aywick and a number of other B&Bs and self-catering units. Shetland Amenity Trust has also developed Windhouse Lodge as a camping Bod.

- **Tourist Attractions**

10.3 Wet weather tourist attractions are limited on the island, however, there is the Mid Yell leisure centre and a small museum, café and gallery with crafts in the Old Haa at Burravoe. There is also a craft shop at Sellafirth and a café at Gutcher ferry terminal and a restaurant/bar at Mid Yell.

Commercial Development

11.1 There are shops in Cullivoe, Mid-Yell, Aywick and Ulsta. Sub Post Offices are also available at Aywick, Burravoe, Cullivoe, Camb, Gutcher, Mid Yell, and Ulsta.

11.2 Nevertheless, the recent closure of a number of shops underlines the increasing fragility of these important rural services.

Transport

12.1 With the completion of the new Cullivoe Pier, a number of improvements and remedial works were undertaken to the **Cullivoe to Gutcher** road in 2001.

12.2 Hillend and Linkshouse footways at Mid Yell have commenced and design work on **Hillend** is commencing. At **Burravoe**, improvements to footways and lighting are to be undertaken in 2002 and 2003. The local community is keen that this scheme is extended westwards to the Hall. It is also hoped that work from the school to the **Meadowbank** houses can be programmed sooner rather than later.

12.3 Following the collapse of the old bridge at the **Burn of Gossawater**, a replacement bridge will be constructed.

• Public Transport

12.4 There is a bus service three times a day between Toft and Lerwick except Sundays, when there is an evening service during the school term only. This service allows people to work all day in Lerwick from 9.00am. However, at present there is no local bus service to reach Ulsta to make this connection.

• Internal Ferry Links

12.5 The frequent and affordable ro-ro ferry service to the Mainland has enabled the expansion of Yell-based industry and the possibility of commuting to Brae and Sullom Voe. In the short and medium term at least, affordable and frequent ferries are of vital importance to the social and economic wellbeing of the Yell community. The Council proposes to replace the existing ferries by 2003 and upgrade the Ulsta ferry terminal to cope with larger vessels. Land has been safeguarded in the Local Plan Proposals

inset map for this purpose and construction work has begun.

Proposal 6

The Council proposes to construct a new ferry terminal at Ulsta to accommodate the introduction of larger ferries. This land is safeguarded in the Local Plan.

• Fixed Links

12.6 The joining of Unst and Yell by a fixed link across the Bluemull Sound could allow both islands to share a larger labour pool and industrial infrastructure. A detailed feasibility study may be prepared to examine the possibility of constructing a fixed link across the Sound. This study will be dependent on positive results arising from an extensive geological study of the area. At this early stage it is anticipated that a tunnel would be the most likely option.

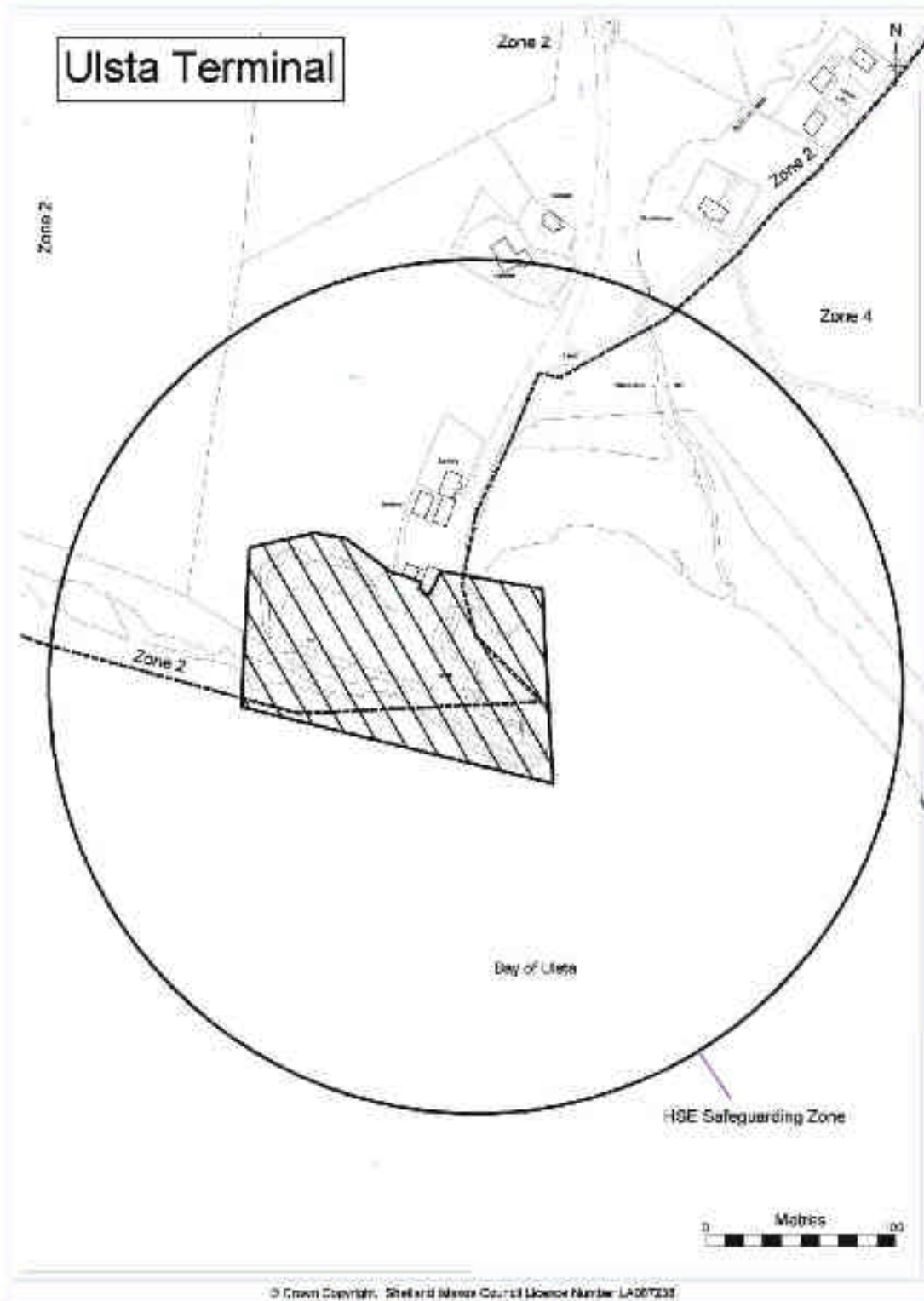
12.7 A socio-economic study of the impact of such a crossing is being carried out by a private company for Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

12.8 In the longer term there may well be the possibility of a fixed link being established across Yell Sound to Toft. This would however, be subject to feasibility studies being undertaken.

Population and Housing

13.1 The population of Yell is in gradual decline. In 1991 the population was recorded at 1,055 persons. By the 2001 census this had fallen to 957, representing a decline of 9.3%. If current trends continue, the Council estimates that the population could fall to 860 persons by 2011.

13.2 Concerns over this continued decline in the resident population of Yell helped prompt the second Yell conference in 1997. This conference acted as a catalyst to maximise economic and social opportunities for the people of Yell. Despite this declining population, new houses continue to be built with an average of 2.4 new house completions per annum between 1994 and 1998. In 1996 Yell had 54 general needs Local Authority houses for rent and 20.



sheltered/special needs houses dispersed between Aywick, West Sandwick, North A Voe, Cullivoe, Mid Yell and Burravoe

- **Housing Zones**

13.3 Burravoe, Cullivoe, Hamnavoe, Mid Yell and West Sandwick have been designated as Housing Zone 1, where new

housing development is actively encouraged. Zone 2 areas have also been created at Gloup, Gutcher, Sellafirth, Colvister, North Sandwick, Basta, Herra,

13.4 Mid Setter, Camb, North-a-Voe, Loch of Vatsetter, Aywick, East Yell, Gossabrough, West Yell Coppister and Ulsta. In Zone 2 new housing

development is favourably considered where it reflects existing settlement patterns.

13.4 The rest of the Island is designated as Zone 4, where new housing development is strictly controlled. Further details of the housing zone requirements are set out in policy **LP HOU4**.

Community Services and Facilities

14.1 Yell enjoys a comprehensive range of modern community facilities with the bulk of them located in Mid Yell.

- **Education Services**

14.2 There is a Junior High School with integrated primary school and nursery at Mid Yell. The 2001 School roll for all secondary and primary pupils is 105, a decline of only 3 since 1986. With 40% of the accommodation at Mid Yell Junior High School in temporary classrooms, there is a need for substantial improvement. These improvements are currently subject to the Education Service Best Value review being undertaken by the Council.

14.3 There is also a primary school at Burravoe with 18 pupils (29 in 1986) and one at Cullivoe with 12 pupils (24 in 1986).

- **Other Facilities**

14.4 The Yell leisure centre is located in Mid Yell and offers a wide range of sporting opportunities including an indoor swimming pool.

14.5 A modern care centre is located at Isleshavn in Mid Yell with care facilities provided for older people and adults over 16. Residential long and short-term care and day care are catered for.

14.6 A police station, doctor's surgery and health centre which will be extended and improved by NHS Shetland during 2003 are located at Mid Yell.

14.7 There are 7 churches in Yell. The West Yell burial ground will be extended during 2002. See West Yell Inset map.

Proposal 7

The Council proposes to build a new burial ground at West Yell.

14.8 There are plans to extend the burial ground at **Hamnavoe** in 2010/2011.

14.9 There are four public toilets located on Yell.

14.10 Yell has nine Community Halls spread throughout the isle at Cullivoe, Sellafirth, North-a-voe, Mid Yell, Herra, Sandwick, North Ness, Burravoe and East Yell.

Development Opportunity

The **Cullivoe Hall** committee is seeking funding to undertake improvements to the building including, an accommodation block offering hostel type facilities.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that ways and methods of bringing forward improvements to the Cullivoe Hall are investigated with the local community and all other interested parties.

- **The Burravoe Pier**

14.11 Burravoe Pier has been subject to major improvements, including a modern fuel dispensing system and the addition of a 24-berth marina. It is hoped that further improvements could be carried out as and when funds are available.

- **Burravoe Development Group**

14.12 Burravoe Development Group is also interested in establishing a community run shop in Burravoe. This would be modelled on the highly successful shop in Ollaberry. However, due to concerns that supporting this project might endanger the commercial viability of existing Yell shops, the Council was unable to provide financial support.

14.13 Mid Yell has a marina with 30 berths and **Cullivoe** marina has 14 berths. In 1999 a new marina with 24 berths opened in **Burravoe**.

