



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL



Shetland Islands Council
Burial Grounds Management Plan

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Introduction

This Burial Grounds Management Plan sets out how Shetland Islands Council manages and maintains the burial grounds in our care and applies to all burial grounds managed by the Council.

It has been prepared in line with the **Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016**, and the **Burial (Management) (Scotland) Regulations 2025** which require every burial authority to have a management plan that is available to the public.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Set out the burial grounds managed by Shetland Islands Council and provide clear information on their use.
- Outline the current operational status of each burial ground, including availability for new burials.
- Demonstrate the Council's commitment to transparency, safety, and the respectful management of burial grounds.

Burial Authority Details

Name of Authority: Shetland Islands Council

Head Office Address: Gremista, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0PX

Telephone: 01595 744853

Email: burials@shetland.gov.uk

Website: [Burial Services – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Responsible Officer/Department/Section:

Yvonne Scott - Officer, Burial Services

Steven Goodlad - Team Leader, Building and Burial Services

Carl Symons - Executive Manager, Environment & Estate Operations

John Smith - Director, Infrastructure Services

Burial Grounds Information

Shetland Islands Council manages 70 burial grounds across Shetland. The table below summarises key information for each burial ground. Burial Ground plans are available on our website: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths/burial-services/8>

No.	Burial Ground Area	Burial Ground Name and Postcode	Burial Availability	Listed/Scheduled Monuments
1	Bressay	Cullingsbrough (ZE2 9ES)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	Scheduled-St Mary's Church, churchyard & broch lairs
2	Bressay	Gunnista (ZE2 9EP)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Burial enclosure & boundary wall
3	Bressay	Mail (ZE2 9EL)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Bressay Kirk & kirkyard wall
4	Central Mainland	Papil (ZE2 9LD)	New coffin and ashes burials available	Scheduled-Old Ground below ground, walls except South & East
5	Central Mainland	South Whiteness New (ZE2 9LL)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
6	Central Mainland	South Whiteness Old (ZE2 9LL)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
7	Central Mainland	Tingwall (ZE2 9SB)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	B Listed-St Magnus Kirk, kirkyard walls, war memorial, enclosures, gates & gatepiers; Scheduled-Turf covered burial isle & stones
8	Lerwick	Knab (New) (ZE1 0AX)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None
9	Lerwick	Knab Old (Breiwick Rd) (ZE1 0AR)	No coffin burials*	C Listed-Including boundary wall & entrance gate
10	Lerwick	Sound (ZE1 0RQ)	No coffin burials*	None
11	North Mainland	Brae (ZE2 9QJ)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None
12	North Mainland	Eshaness (ZE2 9RS)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	Scheduled-Cross Kirk ruined chapel & rune stone on Johnnie Notions grave
13	North Mainland	Garth (ZE2 9PP)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
14	North Mainland	Hillswick New (ZE2 9RW)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None
15	North Mainland	Hillswick Old (ZE2 9RW)	No coffin burials*	None
16	North Mainland	Isbister (ZE2 9RY)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	None
17	North Mainland	Kirkabister (ZE2 9PR)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
18	North Mainland	Laxfirth (ZE2 9PR)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
19	North Mainland	Laxobiggin (ZE2 9QR)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
20	North Mainland	Lunna New (ZE2 9QF)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
21	North Mainland	Lunna Old (ZE2 9QF)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-St Margaret's Kirk & kirkyard wall
22	North Mainland	Muckle Roe New (ZE2 9QW)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
23	North Mainland	Muckle Roe Old (ZE2 9QW)	No coffin burials*	None
24	North Mainland	Ollaberry (ZE2 9RX)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B-Listed Ollaberry kirkyard monument
25	North Mainland	Sandvoe (ZE2 9RY)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
26	North Mainland	Scatsta (ZE2 9QP)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	None
27	North Mainland	Sullom (ZE2 9RD)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
28	North Mainland	Vidlin (ZE2 9QB)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
29	North Mainland	Voe New (ZE2 9PT)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
30	North Mainland	Voe Old (ZE2 9PT)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Old Olnafirth Kirk, kirkyard wall, gatepiers & enclosures
31	Outer Isles	Fair isle (ZE2 9JU)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None

32	Outer Isles	Fetlar (ZE2 9DJ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Fetlar Kirk, kirkyard wall & monument
33	Outer Isles	Foula (ZE2 9FN)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
34	Outer Isles	Out Skerries (ZE2 9AS)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
35	Outer Isles	Papa Stour (ZE2 9PW)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Kirk & kirkyard wall
36	South Mainland	Bigton (ZE2 9JA)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None
37	South Mainland	Cunningsburgh (ZE2 9HF)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
38	South Mainland	Dunrossness (ZE2 9JB)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Kirk kirkyard wall & gatepiers
39	South Mainland	Gulberwick New (ZE2 9JX)	New coffin and ashes burials available	
40	South Mainland	Gulberwick Old (ZE2 9TX)	No coffin burials*	C Listed-Church, kirkyard wall, gate & gatepiers
41	South Mainland	Levenwick (ZE2 9HX)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
42	South Mainland	Quarff (ZE2 9EY)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-Quarff Kirk, kirkyard wall & gatepiers
43	South Mainland	Sandwick (ZE2 9HW)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
44	Unst	Balliasta New (ZE2 9DZ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
45	Unst	Balliasta Old (ZE2 9DZ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	C Listed-Kirk, wall, gatepiers & memorial enclosures
46	Unst	Easting (ZE2 9DL)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	Scheduled-Chapel & gravestones
47	Unst	Lund (ZE2 9DW)	New coffin and ashes burials available	Scheduled-St Olaf's Church, enclosures & tombstones
48	Unst	Norwick (ZE2 9EF)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
49	West Mainland	Aith New (ZE2 9NB)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
50	West Mainland	Aith Old (ZE2 9NB)	No new burials	None
51	West Mainland	Gruting (ZE2 9NR)	No coffin burials*	None
52	West Mainland	Reawick (ZE2 9NJ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
53	West Mainland	Sand (ZE2 9NQ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	C Listed-St Mary's Chapel Chancel, graveyard wall
54	West Mainland	Sandness New (ZE2 9PL)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
55	West Mainland	Sandness Old (ZE2 9PL)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-St Mary's Kirk, graveyard wall & gatepiers
56	West Mainland	Strom (ZE2 9LJ)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	C Listed-St Ola's Kirk & graveyard wall
57	West Mainland	Twatt New (Bixter) (ZE2 9LX)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	None
58	West Mainland	Twatt Old (ZE2 9LX)	No coffin burials*	None
59	West Mainland	Walls (ZE2 9PF)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
60	West Mainland	Weisdale-Cott (ZE2 9LN)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	Scheduled-Oversound, outside burial ground walls
61	West Mainland	Weisdale-Huxter (ZE2 9LQ)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
62	West Mainland	Wester Skeld (ZE2 9NL)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	None
63	Whalsay	Whalsay (ZE2 9AL)	New coffin also ashes burial lairs available	B Listed-Whalsay Kirk, boundary walls & gatepiers
64	Yell	Cullivoe (ZE2 9DD)	New coffin and ashes burials available	C Listed-St Olaf's Church including boundary wall and gatepiers
65	Yell	Hamnavoe (ZE2 9BA)	New coffin and ashes burials available	B Listed-St Magnus Kirk including graveyard walls & post box
66	Yell	Mid Yell New (ZE2 9BN)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
67	Yell	Mid Yell Old (ZE2 9BN)	New coffin and ashes burials available	C Listed-St John's Kirk, churchyard wall
68	Yell	West Sandwick New (ZE2 9BH)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None
69	Yell	West Sandwick Old (ZE2 9BH)	Coffin burials only for reserved EROB's*	None
70	Yell	West Yell (ZE2 9BG)	New coffin and ashes burials available	None

*(ashes burials may be possible)

Burial Grounds Maintenance and Inspection

The following table summarises the standard maintenance and inspection activities undertaken across all burial grounds.

Maintenance Plan Activity	Occurrence
Access Roads & Paths	Minor maintenance and routine inspections of access roads and paths are carried out by the Burials Section during regular site visits, with any defects recorded as required. Major works, including surface dressing and resurfacing, are planned, prioritised, and delivered through contracted works based on condition, risk, and available resources.
Boundary Walls & Fences	Minor maintenance of walls and fences is assessed during each visit by the Burials Section, with all identified work recorded and monitored by the team. Major works to burial ground boundary walls are planned and managed by the Buildings Section.
Burial Grounds Surveys	Minor maintenance surveys, including Health and Safety, access, drainage, structures, and environmental conditions, are carried out during each visit by the Burials Section, with all identified issues recorded and monitored by the supervisor. Full structural surveys of burial grounds are undertaken by the Buildings Section on a regular rolling programme.
Equipment Operation & Servicing	All mechanical and manual equipment used in burial ground operations, including excavators and memorial handling equipment, is operated only by trained and authorised staff or contractors. Equipment is inspected, maintained and serviced in accordance with manufacturer guidance and Council maintenance schedules. Records of all inspections, servicing and repairs are retained by the Burials Section to ensure accountability and compliance. Contractors operating equipment on Council burial grounds must follow statutory Health & Safety requirements and manufacturer guidance.
Floral Tribute Removal	Following the winter period, floral tributes that are not placed in suitable receptacles are removed from 1st February, ahead of the grass-cutting season. Where no memorial is present, a single artificial wreath may be retained, where practicable until it naturally deteriorates.
Funeral Flower Removal	Funeral flowers are removed three weeks following the funeral day. Where no memorial exists, a single artificial wreath may be retained, where practicable until it naturally deteriorates.
Grass Cutting	Grassed areas are mown every 10-14 days between April and October. Grass height is maintained between a maximum of 15cm and a minimum mower setting of 7.5cm. Since 2012, grass clippings have not been collected. Grass cutting is undertaken by the Burials Section and, where applicable, by appointed contractors in accordance with these standards. Grass edge strimming is undertaken as part of routine grass cutting, with the extent and frequency varying according to the size and layout of individual burial grounds.
Lair & Grounds Maintenance	Routine maintenance of lairs and surrounding areas, including managing vegetation, and removing or repositioning flowers, plants or memorial items, is undertaken during site visits and monitored by the supervisor to ensure safety, accessibility, and proper presentation.
Lift & Level Subsided Lairs	Natural subsidence within lairs is restored regularly to align with surrounding ground levels, either when identified by operatives or reported by visitors.
Litter Bins	Litter bins within burial grounds are emptied during each site visit or weekly. Bins located immediately outside burial grounds are emptied by the Cleansing Section every 21 days.
Litter Collection	Litter is removed from burial grounds during each site visit.
Memorial Surveys (including railings)	Memorials are surveyed on a five-year rolling programme in line with Scottish Government guidance. Lair holders are responsible for the safety and upkeep of memorials and make application to the Council for repairs. Temporary make-safe measures are applied where necessary, and permanent repairs may be undertaken by the Council if no application is received. All actions and costs are recorded against the relevant burial records.
Memorials - Unauthorised (including kerbs)	Memorials erected without prior written authorisation from Shetland Islands Council are considered unauthorised. The Council may request removal. And if not complied with, may remove the memorial, recovering costs in line with the Burial (Management) (Scotland) Regulations 2025.
Path Weed Control	Hard surfaces within burial grounds are treated with herbicide at least twice annually, typically in spring and autumn, to control weed growth.
Pest Control	Pest activity is monitored during routine inspections and managed, where necessary, in accordance with environmental and Health and Safety requirements.
Shrub & Tree Maintenance	Minor maintenance surveys of shrubs and trees are conducted during site visits, including managing vegetation around lairs, with all identified work recorded and monitored by the supervisor.
Structures	Minor maintenance of burial ground structures, including mausoleums, kirk ruins, and boundary walls, is assessed during visits, with all identified work recorded and monitored by the supervisor. Major works to structures are planned and managed by the Buildings Section.

Designated Areas for Faith/Belief Groups

Shetland Islands Council burial grounds are generally open to all. Interments are considered on an individual basis, with reasonable regard given to religious or belief-related requirements, subject to site conditions, statutory guidance, and operational constraints. Requests from other faith or belief groups will be considered where practicable and where site availability allows.

Staff Training

Staff involved in the management and operation of Shetland Islands Council burial grounds receive training appropriate to their roles, ensuring that all burial grounds are managed safely, respectfully, and in accordance with statutory requirements. Training covers areas including burial ground management, administrative procedures, mechanical excavation, preparation and restoration of interment plots, memorial testing, memorial-fixing and all relevant health and safety courses. The Council maintains written records of all staff training including dates, course content, and attendees, in accordance with statutory requirements.

Emergency Procedures

In line with statutory guidance, Shetland Islands Council Burial Services have established procedures to manage emergencies and ensure the safety of staff, visitors, and contractors. These procedures cover a range of potential incidents, including unstable memorials, accidents and injuries, severe weather, and fire or other emergencies. Unsafe memorials are clearly signed, with remedial action undertaken in line with statutory guidance. Accidents and injuries are managed through first aid and appropriately recorded. Access to burial grounds may be restricted during severe weather or hazardous conditions.

In the event of a sudden rise in burials, such as during a pandemic or other mass fatality event, contingency measures ensure burials are carried out respectfully and lawfully. These may include prioritising lairs, extending operating hours, redeploying trained staff, and coordinating with the Scottish Government, NHS Shetland, and resilience partners to secure additional capacity if required. Contingency plans support continuity of service during public health emergencies.

All staff receive training on emergency procedures relevant to their roles, including risk assessment and incident reporting. Records of all incidents and follow-up actions are maintained, and procedures are reviewed to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

Burial Procedures

Shetland Islands Council Burial Services ensure all burials are conducted safely, respectfully, and in full compliance with statutory requirements. Procedures cover booking, lair preparation, and interment, ensuring dignity and safety. Burial, lair, and memorial records are maintained digitally, with historic records also retained in paper format, ensuring statutory compliance and efficient response to enquiries. For further details please refer to Shetland Islands Council Burial Ground Management Rules available on our website: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths/burial-services/7>

Exclusive Right of Burial (EROB)

In accordance with the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, all **new** EROB grants across Scotland will, from 1 March 2026, be for a fixed term of 25 years. Lair holders have the statutory right to apply for extensions in 10-year increments. Further details on the 25-year fixed term and other EROB-related information are available on our website: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths/burial-services/2> and within our Burial Ground Management Rules: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths/burial-services/7>

Public Access and Transparency

The Burial Grounds Management Plan is publicly accessible to ensure openness and accountability. It is available online via the Council website or on request from Burial Services in printed or digital format. The plan is also available for inspection by the Inspector of Burials and other statutory inspectors.

Review and Updates

The Burial Grounds Management Plan is reviewed annually by the Burial Services Officer to ensure it remains accurate and compliant with statutory requirements. Updates reflecting changes in burial ground status, maintenance schedules, staff roles, training, or emergency procedures are documented and communicated to the public via the Council website.

