

SHETLAND'S LOCAL PLACE PLANS

Leaflet 9 - A Biodiversity and Natural Environment Perspective

Why should we think about biodiversity and the natural environment?

Healthy ecosystems support wildlife, improve wellbeing, and help communities adapt to climate change. Planning decisions about land and buildings can protect habitats, enhance biodiversity, and connect people with nature.

How does biodiversity and the natural environment affect land use and buildings?

- Natural spaces provide habitats for wildlife and pollinators
 - Green and blue infrastructure supports flood resilience and carbon storage
 - Access to nature improves mental and physical health
 - Development can fragment habitats or damage sensitive ecosystems
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Key concepts:

Biodiversity: The variety of plant and animal life in an area

Green Infrastructure: Networks of natural spaces like woodlands, wetlands, and meadows

Blue Infrastructure: Water-based environments such as voes, burns, and coastlines

Nature-Based Solutions: Using natural systems to address climate and wellbeing challenges – such as enhancing natural drainage or planting windbreaks

What does this look like in Shetland?

- **Globally important peatlands** store carbon and support rare species
 - **Coastal habitats** are vulnerable to erosion and development pressure
 - **Machair and heathland** support biodiversity but need careful management
 - **Wildlife movement corridors** can be disrupted by roads or buildings
 - **Community woodlands and gardens** offer local biodiversity benefits
 - **Marine environments** are affected by pollution, transport and infrastructure incursion
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Things to think about when planning land and buildings:

- Are there opportunities to protect or restore habitats?
 - Can development avoid sensitive natural areas?
 - Is there access to nature for recreation and wellbeing?
 - Can green and blue infrastructure be included in designs?
 - Are nature-based solutions being considered for flood or climate resilience?
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Examples:

- Restore peatland and plant native trees to support biodiversity and carbon storage
 - Include ponds, wildflower areas, and hedgerows in community spaces
 - Avoid building on or near sensitive habitats like wetlands or nesting sites
 - Use green roofs or walls to support urban biodiversity
 - Create wildlife corridors between natural areas
 - Support community-led conservation and nature projects
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For information and support:

- [Natural Heritage – Shetland Islands Council](#)
- [Shetland Amenity Trust - Celebrating and championing Shetland's cultural and natural heritage](#)
- [Shetland Community Wildlife Group – Our Islands, Our Seas](#)
- [NatureScot](#)
- [Home | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#)
- [Voluntary Action Shetland](#)