



ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Introduction 3

Shetland's population balance 4

Climate change 6-14

Sustaining jobs & creating new ones 15-17

Skills & learning 18-20

Digital connectivity 21

Caring for our community 22-24

Fairer Shetland 25

Transport 27-29

Contact us 30



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

This is Shetland Islands Council's annual public performance report, which seeks to provide an overview of some of the things we have delivered over the past year.

It is the fifth report to provide an update on 'Our Ambition 2021-26', the council's corporate plan, and is structured to follow that plan's themes.

The council has a performance management framework in place requiring services to report to councillors on their performance four times a year. This is the content we have used for the annual update report. Where we have referred to more detailed reports, the relevant link is provided.

We are committed to reporting our performance throughout the year. If you would like more information on how we are doing as a Council it can be found in the following places:

- **updates on our website**

[Performance – Shetland Islands Council](#)

- **posts on our Facebook page**

- **performance reports on our committee information system**

[Shetland Islands Council Committee Information - Latest Meetings and Agendas](#)

- **live streams of committee meetings**

[Home - Shetland Islands Council Webcasting](#)



SHETLAND'S POPULATION BALANCE

We will work with our partners to develop a clearer understanding of issues relating to recruitment and retention in Shetland and deliver a strategy that focuses our work on overcoming barriers to recruiting and retaining working age people.

The council has commissioned research and the gathering of evidence to form a key worker policy to address the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff across a range of public and private sector organisations.

Initial findings were presented to the development committee in November 2025 and work is ongoing to produce a strategy by summer 2026. Efforts are being made to establish the scope and implications of proposed developments in the energy sector and how these align with key worker requirements.

The council is continuing to implement new approaches to recruitment, working in conjunction with Promote Shetland to attract more external candidates for hard-to-fill roles. A revamp of the ranges of apprenticeships and graduate opportunities is being undertaken, and we are seeking to improve the internal jobs market by challenging occupational segregation and supporting flexible working.

A new corporate on-boarding course has been launched to welcome new employees to the organisation.

Planning has begun for a new strategic workforce plan, with the existing plan having reached the end of its life with all but one of the actions in the plan having been achieved. The new plan will be finalised following the rollout of the new SIC corporate plan.

We will continue to deliver on the key themes of the Local Housing Strategy.

A Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) was approved by the development committee in November 2025, revised to reflect a reduction in funding for future years.

The new SHIP, covering the period from 2026/27 to 2030/31, reaffirms the council's commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing for rent and low-cost home ownership.

Subject to constraints and challenges being mitigated, the plan looks to deliver up to 209 affordable homes by 2031 – a combination of affordable rent through new builds, mid-market rent, major refurbishment and open market acquisition.



SHETLAND'S POPULATION BALANCE

The council is seeking support of £25 million from the Scottish Government to help meet this target.

SIC housing will work with other council services, Hjaltland Housing Association (HHA), HIE, SDS, the local construction industry and other external agencies to ensure investment is maximised and that key identified projects are delivered.

Housing and its partners will look at a range of solutions to address the continued need for housing in Shetland. A broader range of tenure options is essential to provide a balanced housing market, addressing identified gaps and market failure so that communities can be sustained.



A major step forward was the creation of an arm's length organisation, approved by the council in November 2025, to offer mid-market rental properties. Shetland Mid-Market Homes LLP purchased its first six units in January 2026 and the process of finding tenants is underway.

The SHIP programme put forward a programme of projects tailored to meet restraints in terms of available funding.

Infrastructure work on the Knab Redevelopment is progressing well with an estimated completion date of late summer 2026. Design consultancy appointments for the first phase of housing on the Knab site and conversion of the Janet Courtney Hostel are progressing.

Refurbishment on 12 housing units at Harlsdale, Whalsay is progressing well and on programme to be completed in spring 2027.

Recent research on empty homes in Shetland has identified the possibility of a part-time post to support returning unused properties to the housing supply.

In 2024/25 the proportion of council dwellings which met Scottish housing quality standards stood at 87 per cent, up from 72 per cent the previous year and above the national average of 83 per cent.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Prepare and implement a council Net-Zero Plan and lead the preparation of a Shetland Net-Zero Strategy involving Community Planning partners and a range of energy-focused businesses and organisations.

The Scottish Government has set a legally binding target of Net Zero by 2045. Local authorities must demonstrate they are working towards emissions reductions in line with these targets. The SIC Net Zero Route Map and the Shetland Net Zero Route Map assist this process, establishing the baseline and setting targets.

The SIC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan set out the strategic aims, objections and actions through which the SIC will work towards achieving targets. Further information can be found in the latest [Climate Change Progress Report \(2024/25\)](#).

A strong foundation has been set through the climate leadership, governance and management that has been put in place.

The council has been working on decarbonisation since establishing a Carbon Management Plan in 2006, with most “low hanging fruit” now achieved.

We are committing effort and investment, both from internal budgets and through seeking external funding, and work towards climate targets.

Climate action can deliver economic savings in the long term, but in the short to medium term greater investment is needed to make the changes required to meet the council’s goals.

The SIC approved the Shetland Climate Change Strategy and Implementation Plan in September. It is a Shetland Partnership document collaboratively developed through a steering group with membership from SIC, HIE, NHS Shetland, SAT, NatureScot and Visit Scotland.

CLIMATE CHANGE

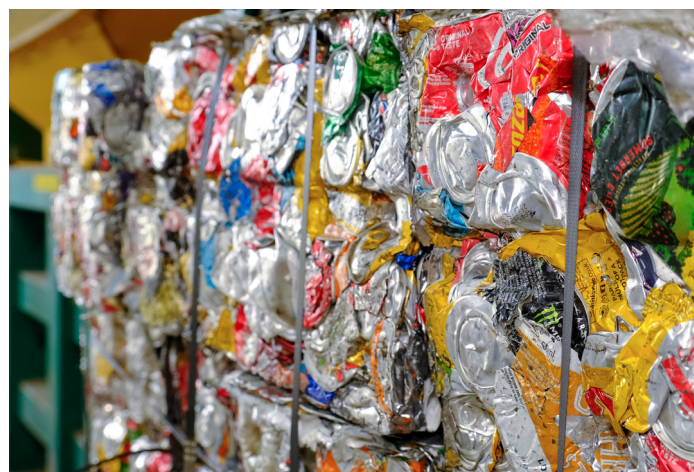
The vision of the strategy is “a community that prioritises the changing climate and the opportunities of a sustainable, low-carbon future. We will build a green economy that supports the resilient communities and businesses of Shetland, while protecting and restoring our natural environment.”

The strategy aims to accelerate climate action, increase collaboration and efficiencies across organisations, reduce duplication, stimulate increased investment and implement projects to improve social, economic and environmental benefits to the Shetland community.

Continue and, where possible, accelerate current energy efficiency, energy conversion, waste reduction and reuse initiatives, internally within the council and across the community.

Transport: There have been significant transport emissions reductions since our baseline year, largely due to service and behavioural changes in response to Covid-19. A sharp drop in emissions in 2020, however, was followed by emissions rising again as we returned to “the new normal”, resulting in missing our target reduction for 2024/25.

Use of grid electricity by fleet vehicles decreased 30 per cent between 2023/24 and 2024/25, while the percentage fuelled from clean sources also decreased from 15 per cent to 13 per cent. This partly relates to difficulty installing charging infrastructure in required locations for fleet vehicles due to a lack of capacity on the Shetland electricity grid – an area that urgently needs to be resolved to get the “greening the fleet” programme on track and meeting targets.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The amount of marine gas oil used in our ferry fleet has remained steady, with a slight increase shown in 2024/25. Ferries account for approximately 70 per cent of council transport emissions, and 20 per cent of overall transport emissions (dropping to nine per cent when land use is included).

It is essential to retain behavioural changes, such as reduced business travel and commuting, to ensure we remain in line with pathway emissions for transport. A fleet transition plan similar to the road-based “greening the fleet” plan, should be developed for our air and sea-based fleet.



Domestic buildings (SIC council housing): For domestic buildings data is taken from the Home Analytics Database (HAD), and is the only tool available to establish figures for domestic energy consumption across the stock. Heating figures show a steady level of emissions over the years from our baseline.

The council’s housing stock is almost entirely heated from zero carbon emission sources at 98.27 per cent zero carbon, putting the council in a very strong position to meet our target of 100 per cent of housing being net zero by 2030.

This year domestic buildings account for 29 per cent of overall council emissions (dropping to 14.6 per cent when land use is included). Once Shetland is connected to the UK electricity network, expected in late 2026, emissions from our housing stock will significantly decrease. Although housing will be almost entirely heated from zero carbon sources by then, work will continue to make houses more energy efficient, reducing use and benefiting tenants.

CLIMATE CHANGE

There is still a need to improve energy efficiency to create a comfortable environment and alleviate fuel poverty among tenants. A Housing Energy Efficiency Strategy and Plan should be developed and implemented as a priority, including funding and investment. Work has been unable to progress as planned as we are awaiting a Scottish Government update on the Social Housing Net Zero Standard.

Careful consideration is required regarding funding and investment of energy efficiency to ensure efforts to reduce fuel poverty do not result in an increase in rent poverty.

Non-domestic buildings (Operational Estate): Energy use in the operational estate has decreased across all fuel sources, including grid electricity, district heating, LPG, gas oil, burning oil and wood pellets. This is partly thanks to ongoing work to optimise the operation of building energy systems.

Sixty one per cent of energy used in the operational estate in 2024/25 was from clean energy sources, including electricity and district heating. Gas oil, at 31 per cent of energy use, is the second largest energy source after electricity.

Forty six per cent of emissions are attributed to children's services, followed by infrastructure (23 per cent) and community health and social care (20 per cent). Emissions include schools, children's social care residence and facilities and staff offices. Infrastructure emissions include depots, ferry terminals, garage facilities and staff offices. Community health and social care emissions include care homes, social care residences, and facilities and offices occupied by staff.



The estate is broad ranging in terms of efficiency, age and building type and is currently unsustainable. There are inconsistencies and gaps in data and the five metrics we use to measure energy use and efficiencies.

CLIMATE CHANGE

An estate decarbonisation plan, including appropriate funding and investment, is required as a priority. Work is ongoing to build a comprehensive and consistent base of data on which this plan will be based, and it will also be informed by various ongoing plans and strategies.

Infrastructure: Emissions cover all operational services that are not covered through buildings or transport, including the Energy Recovery Plant (ERP), landfill, recycling, Rova Head, Scord Quarry, Radar Station (Toft), street lighting and navigation lights.



Emissions in 2024/25 are 4.9 per cent lower than the 2019/20 baseline, however we are behind the six per cent target set within our Net Zero Route Map.

The ERP makes up two thirds of infrastructure emissions and approximately 21 per cent of overall council emissions for 2024/25 (falling to 11 per cent when land use is included). Waste heat from the ERP provides the main heat source for Lerwick's District Heating Network, providing over 1,200 properties with affordable energy.

Several pieces of work are ongoing that feed into these areas, including a Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP), development of a waste and resource use strategy, investigation into ERP emissions carbon capture, and strategies and plans for the district heating network.

Land: Included for the first time in this report year, land accounts for almost half of SIC emissions in the baseline year of 2019/20, from degraded peatland on the council's landholdings.

A significant emissions reduction of 10,569 tCO₂e has been made in the past five years, predominantly through selling landholdings with degraded peat. Using Corine land cover data, approximately 863ha of the 1,100ha of land sold since 2021 was classed as peat bog. It is important to note this has not removed emissions, just transferred them out of council responsibility.



CLIMATE CHANGE

In addition, 140ha of peatland restoration has taken place on the Busta Estate as part of the Viking Energy project undertaken by SSE.

In 2024/25 land makes up 49.6 per cent of emissions, down from 51.3 per cent in 2019/20.

A number of pieces of work are ongoing in this area, including the Shetland Tree and Woodland Strategy, the SIC Peatland Restoration pilot project, and works with the Shetland Peatland Partnership.

10,569

**Tonnes of carbon
dioxide emissions reduced**

Projects and works have been initiated to review current practices, develop plans and put in place action to accelerate emissions reductions. This is set out within the SIC Climate Change Programme, with progress updated weekly and published online at the following link. [SIC Climate Change Programme](#)

Support the creation of community energy networks across Shetland that link with a green and strengthened Shetland Electricity complement/enable local energy efficiency, recycling and carbon capture initiatives.

It is recognised the council has a significant influence over community decarbonisation, and there are strong links between climate action, reducing inequality and improving health and wellbeing. It is also recognised that significant additional challenges exist in rural communities, as a lot of climate policy is built around urban ideology.

We have succeeded in securing significant funding for a project to put community-focused demonstrations and trials in place, aiding decarbonisations while reducing inequalities and improving service provision. Learning from these will be essential in determining which measures to implement on a wider scale.

CLIMATE CHANGE

At the beginning of 2024 we secured £5 million of funding, split between Shetland and Orkney, to look at non-technical barriers to decarbonisation. The Shetland-specific project focused on implementing a pilot rural energy hub based at the Brae Youth Centre. It is a place-based approach to decarbonising mobility, heat and power, placing community benefit and improved service delivery at the heart of the project, running from 1 February 2024 to 31 March 2026.

It aims to tackle non-technical barriers to reducing carbon across power, heat and transport, specifically focusing on achieving this in remote and rural areas. Funded by Innovate UK, it involves collaboration between the SIC, Orkney Islands Council, Community Energy Scotland, Aquatera and the European Maritime Energy Centre.

Key activities include district heating feasibility works, developing a sustainable car club model, electric HGV and PSV trials, sustainable community transport planning, implementing energy monitoring technologies, and a pilot demonstrator hub in Brae, Shetland.



The Hub is a model for future rural hubs, showcasing integrated services such as renewable energy generation, EV charging, co-working spaces, a café and energy advice. It focuses on empowering communities to share knowledge and develop local low-carbon strategies. For more information visit the Brae hub's website: [Brae Rural Energy Hub](#) | [Supporting Shetland to transition to net zero](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Support partners to plan and deliver energy reduction/transition in key commercial sectors, focusing on renewable energy generation, fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, transport, aviation and oil and gas in particular.

Works undertaken to date have put the council in an excellent position to meet the challenge of addressing climate change. The council has made connections, built relationships and partnerships (both internally and externally) and put in place the solid leadership, governance and management structure required to make the changes needed.

The need for shared action across all levels of government, business, communities and individuals to address climate change challenges is recognised. The council is taking a proactive and collaborative approach, emphasising planned partnership action, providing leadership on behalf of the Shetland community. Public debate is an important component of that shared action and leadership.

The Shetland Climate Festival returned for a third year in September 2025, involving around 30 organisations, charities and businesses from Shetland, Orkney and elsewhere in Scotland.

This year saw a new feature showcasing the views of young people from primary and secondary schools across Shetland.

There was also a book launch, art piece and film launch on the day. Festival attendance increased by more than 10 per cent year-on-year, five years of sponsorship has been secured from ESB (the Stoura Wind Farm developer) and preparations are underway to recreate this success in 2026.

30

**Organisations involved in the
2025 Shetland Climate Festival**



CLIMATE CHANGE

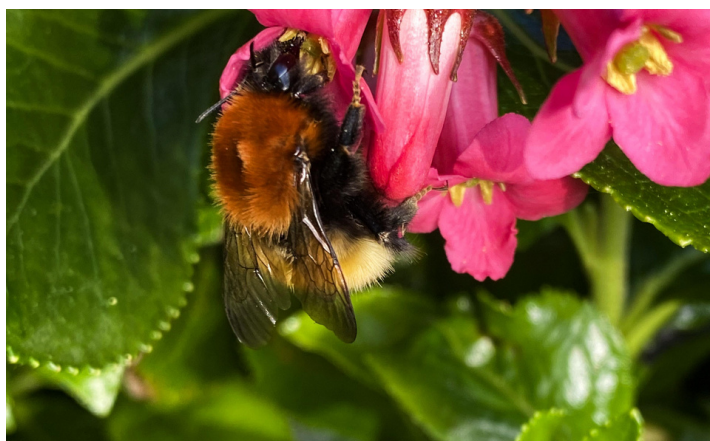
Campaign at all levels to ensure future developments recognise that energy affordability is already a key issue in Shetland and ensure that progress on that issue is designed into all significant proposals and solutions.

The council is tasked with identifying solutions to the high cost of electricity in Shetland and to engage with governments, energy agencies and suppliers. Following a roundtable meeting with key industry stakeholders in Edinburgh in November 2024, the Shetland Power System working group was formed. It met three times in 2025 to discuss developments currently being planned for Shetland to ensure stakeholders are aware of wider discussions beyond their own projects.

Other areas of action stemming from the 2024 event include a continued focus on REMA (Review of Electricity Market Arrangements) along with the need for an orchestrated campaign for affordable energy in conjunction with other organisations.

In July 2025 the UK Government decided following a review to pursue Reformed National Pricing, rejecting a plan for “zonal” pricing. While there was some disappointment at this it is essential we engage to ensure the policy and associated measures, such as work on strategic network planning being undertaken by the NESO, deliver a holistic system and affordable energy for Shetland.

Work with our partners to achieve a more sustainable, ecologically diverse and resilient natural environment as it is Shetland’s most valued and distinctive asset.



In 2025 climate change strategy officers brought a series of projects and actions forward to support this aim. LiDAR Remote Sensing data is being procured, funded mostly by the Scottish Government, which will assist SIC risk mapping work and be an excellent data source for our partners.

We have also designed and implemented projects involving Shetland Amenity Trust, RSPB Shetland and Species on the Edge focusing on increasing native wildflowers to support ecological diversity on

council-owned land. More broadly, we continue to engage with a range of organisations and stakeholders to support the provision of information, developing shared visions and objectives, and uptake of nature-based solutions and sustainability initiatives across Shetland.



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

SUSTAINING JOBS & CREATING NEW ONES

We will agree the Islands Deal with both UK and Scottish Governments, with Shetland's projects reaching full business case stage and significant investment flowing in from both Governments.

The council continues to manage the Islands Growth Deal programme, which includes two SIC-led projects.

The 10-year programme will see Shetland projects receiving over £33 million of investment between 2023 and 2033.

Redevelopment of the Knab site in Lerwick – one of the two SIC projects – is underway, with work on the £4.7 million infrastructure phase expected to be complete by spring 2027.

An outline business case for the Islands Centre for Net Zero (ICNZ) Shetland programme has been updated to incorporate initial feedback, and a full business case for £5 million of Islands Deal funding is nearing completion.



We will progress the Shetland Energy Hub concept through the ORION Clean Energy project.

The council is engaged with SSE on a transmission strategy for Shetland, which has involved engaging with project stakeholders for onshore and offshore wind, West of Shetland electrification and industrial-scale energy users to help ensure Shetland's future electricity system has a holistic design.



SUSTAINING JOBS & CREATING NEW ONES

We will provide support to businesses and entrepreneurs that will help sustain jobs in core sectors of Shetland's economy and create new ones.

The Coastal Communities Fund, designed to invest in infrastructure, developing communities and encouraging inclusive growth, committed £342,000 across seven separate awards.

Scalloway Community Development Company was awarded £40,000, while just over £300,000 was divided between Mid Yell Development Company, Scalloway Marina Users Association, Highlands and Islands Climate Hub, Lerwick Marina Users Association, Burra History Group and Brae Rural Energy Hub CIC.

Across the first three quarters of 2025/26, the council approved just over £205,000-worth of assistance under the Economic Development Grant Scheme.

This included backing for several businesses in the food and drink sector – Good Nude Food, Stakkadale Ltd, Shetland Farm Dairies Ltd and Shetland Food and Drink Ltd – along with support for various other firms supporting rural development.

The council also secured £398,000 on behalf of North Yell Development Company towards the Sellafirth Community Hub project in the shape of support from the Scottish Government's Carbon Neutral Islands fund.

Up to January start-up grants of around £4,000 apiece were provided to four new businesses.

Following on from a series of 15 business road shows in 2024/25, a further series of drop-ins were held in autumn 2025 in Uyeasound, Mid Yell, North Roe, Scalloway, Cunningsburgh, Walls and Voe, along with out-of-hours evening sessions in Lerwick.

This followed on from spring sessions in Skeld, Burra, Dunrossness, Vidlin, Ollaberry and Skerries.

£340,000

Coastal Communities funding spread across seven awards

SUSTAINING JOBS & CREATING NEW ONES

The Business Gateway launched the fifth cohort of its Realise programme, offering tailored support for female business owners and managers, in November 2025. It ran through until February 2026.

We ran a pilot of a new Master E-Commerce online programme, consisting of recorded sessions, live interactive group sessions and one-to-one advice for five local participants, providing advice about selling online.

We will build the principles of community wealth building into the way we support the local community.

Following approval from the council in February 2025, a Shetland Community Benefit policy has been adopted. Aquatera, working in partnership with VOAR and Community Energy Scotland, had been commissioned to consider various community benefit models.

The policy incorporates recommended values of community benefit from onshore and offshore wind and other energy developments. Further recommendations will be developed and reported on as necessary.

Efforts to develop a Shetland Inclusive Growth Strategy, incorporating principles of community wealth building, is ongoing. Along with the community benefit policy, the 'A Fair Share for Shetland' report was endorsed by the council in December and will feed into the growth strategy.



SKILLS & LEARNING

We will continue to provide opportunities for young people to access employment resulting in sustained high participation rates in modern apprenticeships, foundation apprenticeships and employability programmes.

Our developing the young workforce (DYW) team delivered the largest scale Careers and Opportunities Fair at Clickimin Leisure Complex in February 2026, attended by over 1,500 people including public and private businesses, further education institutions and hundreds of school pupils from across Shetland.

DYW has delivered a range of employer-led activities this year. One hundred and sixty-six employers have participated in work preparation and inspiration activities including mock interviews, career insights and site visits.

54

Supported placements for pupils with additional support needs

There have been 54 supported work placements for pupils with additional needs.

We are grateful for the continued support our employers offer in delivering opportunities to our young people.

We are in the process of reviewing our current frameworks for modern & graduate apprenticeships to encourage younger people into the organisation. This is an ongoing priority for the HR team.

A number of modern and graduate apprenticeships are already in place in the council, and recruitment is taking place regularly to roles as and when required. This will continue to be a key priority with some new graduate apprenticeship routes to be rolled out soon.



SKILLS & LEARNING

We will work to achieve an empowered school system, with participation at all levels including parents, pupils and teachers.

In 2024/25, 81 per cent of adults said they were “satisfied” with local schools – against a Scotland-wide average of 69 per cent.

The proportion of children meeting developmental milestones in 2023/24 rose to 87 per cent, almost four per cent above the Scottish average. A year earlier the Shetland figure was 80 per cent, which was slightly below the nationwide figure.

The enhanced provision model, as set out in the Learning Estate strategy, ensures that fit-for-purpose facilities for pupils with additional support needs will be provided in each high school, junior high and in some larger primary schools.

A “lessons learned” report for Aith is being systematically worked through by a wide range of specialist officers. Officers have visited the site and held in-depth conversations with the majority of school staff.

Management teams at all schools will undertake appraisals, at least annually, of how the space in their schools is used, making changes where necessary.

81%

**of adults are ‘satisfied’
with local schools**



SKILLS & LEARNING

Play area renewal

We are undertaking a five-year rolling programme of improvements to outdoor learning and play spaces across the estate.

Scottish Government funding of £336,000 until May 2026 was provided for the renewal of play areas in Shetland, and the council is developing eight inclusive play areas across the islands. The first, in 2022, was developed at the Happyhansel Primary School in Walls.

A review of all play areas and multicourts is also underway, with the timescale extended to allow more time for community consultation. This includes reviewing information gathered through various “living well” consultations carried out by the organisation A Place in Childhood.

Brae Campus

A first stage report on a new Brae Campus to serve communities in the North Mainland is being finalised by Hub North and the design team for approval by the council.

An options appraisal is underway to consider the provision of synthetic sports pitch(es).

Refurbishment options for the existing school are also being developed, with a full business case scheduled to go before elected members in early 2027.

Subject to approval, it is hoped the new school will open in late 2028, with all works programmed to conclude the following year.



DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Digital connectivity is an issue we cannot fix on our own, so we will work with others with the aim of achieving high-speed broadband and full mobile coverage in all settlements across Shetland.

The proportion of Shetland properties receiving superfast broadband rose from 78 per cent in 2023/24 to 86 per cent in 2024/25, but continues to lag behind the national average of 97 per cent.

Connectivity resilience

The recent outages in Shetland's digital connectivity, following damage to external cables, has caused considerable disruption to households, businesses and services across the isles. The council has engaged with government and telecoms providers to discuss future resilience and to stress the requirement for robust infrastructure and backup measures to maintain reliable connectivity.

86%

proportion of
properties receiving
superfast broadband

Public sector connectivity and enabling business

Through the council's Shetland Telecom function, we enable wholesale access to digital connectivity to third parties, which generates a commercial return to the council.

This includes sites of major strategic importance to Shetland, such as the Shetland Space Centre, Shetland Gas Plant and collaborations with SSEN. Opportunities for collaboration with partners continue to be developed and this forms part of the council's ICT and Digital Strategy for 2026-2031.

An evaluation report on the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) programme has been commissioned by the UK Government, and the North Isles Fibre project has been selected as a case study. Developed by the council, it was completed in 2021 and extended the council's fibre network from Graven in the North Mainland through to Yell and Unst, attracting £1.9 million of LFFN capital funding.

The case study will consider the positive impact felt in Yell and Unst from implementing the project, including benefits for schools, care and health services. The council has engaged with the UK Government on this and helped to coordinate local contacts and interviews in early 2026, with the final report due later in the year.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

We acknowledge the role of the IJB in setting the strategic agenda for the provision of health and care for our community and will support the delivery of the services commissioned from us.

The Shetland Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) continues to perform well in many areas compared to the national picture. It continues to work closely with our partners and the third sector to support people across communities, helping people to live well, improve services, and provide care where it is needed.

However, there have been some challenges over the year, often linked to staffing vacancies and demand pressures.

Notable achievements include drug and alcohol services, where over 92 per cent of clients accessed treatment within three weeks, supported by the Recovery Hub's holistic approach. On dental health, Shetland ranked third in Scotland for low decay rates in both P1 and P7 pupils. The meals on wheels service delivered on average 4,900 meals a month and provided vital social contact and nutritional support.

Community care services will continue to support people to be independent and able to live at home in the community.

Ninety five per cent of adults supported at home agreed that they are “supported to live as independently as possible” in Shetland in 2023/24, against a Scottish average of 72 per cent. This was a significant rise on the 90 per cent recorded in 2021/22.

The proportion of carers who feel supported to continue in their role was 46 per cent in 2023/24 (against a national figure of 31 per cent), a small rise on the 45 per cent in 2021/22 (when it was 31 per cent Scotland-wide).

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Readmission to hospital within 28 days of being discharged stood at 66.1 per 1,000 in 2024/25, a significant improvement on 78.7 per 1,000 in 2023/24. Readmission across Scotland stood at more than one in ten in both years.

Shifting the balance of care describes working towards a different way of supporting people. We know people will always require support in many different ways, and taking a person-centred approach means we will always have to be flexible and adaptable as services and commissioners.

The health and social care system has continued to experience significant pressures in 2024/25. There have been capacity issues in social care, mostly due to gaps in staffing, and this has meant helping people get safely home from hospital has been challenging. We see this in the number of days people spend in hospital when ready to be discharged.

There continues to be good performance with low numbers of emergency readmissions, and relatively low numbers of older people with multiple emergency admissions. This shows our teams in the community are supporting people, often with significant needs, to stay home and keeping them well enough to do so.



This level of care means services are stretched, and is a big part of the reason we need to redesign how we deliver services.

Locum and agency staffing has allowed us to continue delivering essential services throughout the year. Projects like the PHIO app, Hospital at Home, and a community link worker pilot have shown strong early results in improving access, reducing pressure on services, and supporting person-centred care.

NHS Scotland's "realistic medicine casebook" recently featured Shetland's Hospital at Home service, highlighting its innovative approach to delivering hospital-level care in people's homes. A multidisciplinary team including a consultant geriatrician, nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist and team leader has been put in place, enabling expanding referrals from primary care and emergency services. Hospital at Home delivered 293 bed days between January 2024 and February 2025, with an average stay of seven days.



CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

We will manage the change from service provision to self-directed support (SDS).

A new SDS policy was approved and implemented in 2025.

We will deliver services to children and young people with additional support needs and to adults with learning disability and autism that meet eligible need and reduces inequality.

A new “Getting Transitions Right” policy focused on post-school transitions for young people with ASN was approved in December 2025. A short-life working group is being established to support implementation, and to review existing procedures and practice to ensure the policy is consistently applied across services.

We will support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of those in our community to provide better outcomes for individuals and less reliance on services.

The Scottish Government has “base-lined” funding for mental health and wellbeing community supports and services from 2025/26 onwards, so funding is incorporated within the general revenue grant.

We will continue to review local need under the framework. Mind Your Head has received funding from the council to continue delivering its “well youth” programme for children and young people.

Our HR team has completed a first draft of a new workplace wellbeing framework, setting out the values, priorities and approach to workplace wellbeing for over 3,000 SIC staff. The draft was considered at committee in February 2026 and is due to be completed by late summer.



FAIRER SHETLAND

The factors that improve the health of a community are very similar to those that improve the health of an individual. As an employer and anchor organisation, we will promote the Five Ways to Wellbeing and work with the Shetland Partnership to make it easy for individuals across the community to find the opportunities to embed the Five Ways into their lifestyles.

New health and wellbeing activities have been trialled over a two-year period and some, such as dementia-friendly reminiscence groups and regular promotion of health resources, have been implemented as ongoing activities.

Health and wellbeing remains a key focus for the library service, which is promoted as a warm, free and accessible space particularly in the winter months.

An evaluation of Shetland's "fair food policy" was completed in 2025, and the findings will be used to inform Shetland's "good food nation plan".

We will continue to develop early learning and childcare to provide more opportunities for parents, particularly mothers, to access employment opportunities.

For information on the support available to people in Shetland please see the SIC's [Cost of Living website](#).



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

FAIRER SHETLAND

We will support children and young people to help them thrive and reach their full potential.

Our early learning and childcare provision is designed to ensure children in Shetland have the very best early years of childhood, making Shetland the best place to grow up.

We continue to deliver training on “each and every child”, an initiative aiming to embed the reframing of how organisations and individuals speak about the care system, and improve the lives of people with lived experience of care in Scotland.

“Each and every child” training has been delivered, linked to the compassionate communities project.

For information on child poverty in Shetland please see the [Annual Child Poverty Action Report \(2024/2025\)](#).



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

TRANSPORT

We will continue to work to secure support from Scottish Government to ensure financially and environmentally sustainable internal ferries services, so we can continue to provide links between the islands that are reliable and support economic and social wellbeing, and will continue to pursue fixed links, where they can be proven to be a viable alternative.

The Fair Isle ferry and infrastructure replacement project, which was awarded £26.8 million from the UK Government's "levelling up" fund, has continued to progress.

Work on upgrading the new terminal in Fair Isle, including excavation, a new slipway, a new winch and winch house and a new boat cradle, has commenced.

All piling, dredging and concrete works on the Grutness terminal on the Shetland mainland have been completed, with just some rock armouring to be placed, while the vessel should be ready in autumn 2026. It is hoped the entire project will be completed in early 2027.

We will continue to support air services to Foula and Fair Isle, including consideration of alternative fuels and technologies in the provision.

Following a delay in 2024 due to issues with the Scord Bitumen Plant, work was phased and resurfacing of the Tingwall Airstrip, which services flights to and from Foula and Fair Isle, was completed in June 2025.

The runway was resurfaced over a four-week period, with flights temporarily moved to Sumburgh Airport. The next phase of work, planned for 2026, will see upgrades to the runway lighting and resurfacing of the runway apron at a cost of around £1.3 million.

It is estimated that two long weekends will be sufficient to carry out the work, removing the need to relocate aircraft to Sumburgh and reduce the impact on island communities.



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

TRANSPORT

We will continue to support delivery of an affordable and sustainable system of public transport services to meet the needs of Shetland. We will support the development of Active Travel Strategy 2020-25 Implementation Plan alternative solutions such as active travel and mobility as a service that encourages positive travel choices.

These will evolve with the availability of alternative fuels and technologies and will complement other transport modes to form part of an integrated transport network. The network will support our community outcomes of achieving climate change targets, reducing inequality, improving public health and enabling access to essential goods and services, employment, education and health care, as well as other opportunities to ensure inclusive economic growth and healthy communities.

In the last year £700,000 has been received for active travel strategy projects, though funding continues to be unpredictable and bids totalling £1.7 million had been submitted.

There are challenges being experienced relating to infrastructure and behaviour change funding, so the council is awaiting further clarity from Transport Scotland. There is a question over whether the active travel strategy should be refreshed or stood down now the regional transport strategy has been finalised.

Fair Isle ferry and infrastructure replacement

Following council approval in December 2024, a new ferry and infrastructure are being delivered for Fair Isle, with a suitable weather window in February 2026 allowing the main contractor to resume infrastructure work in the island.

Structural and rock armour works on the Grutness pier on the Shetland mainland are now complete, with installation of navigation lighting and associated walkway ready to proceed, and it is hoped work can be complete and the pier ready for MV Good Shepherd to begin using it by early summer.

Construction of a new ferry continues to progress broadly in line with the building schedule.



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

TRANSPORT

We will invest in the maintenance of our roads network to ensure it continues to support our economy and communities. In addition, we will invest in road improvements and upgrades where they are necessary to support the sustainability of communities and businesses and/or support new economic opportunities in the islands.



Long-awaited improvements to the B9082 Cullivoe road are underway with the contractor on site preparing the founds and service connections for site huts and welfare facilities. Once this is complete they will be progressing to fencing land acquired for the project, the diversion of utilities and the clearing of an area for the storage of materials.

The roads service has continued to introduce further 20mph limits on Shetland's roads in line with the government's goal that "all appropriate roads in built up areas will have a safer speed limit of 20mph by 2025."

The roads asset management plan for 2025-2030 was approved in September 2025. It has been updated to consider how management of road assets can be done in ways that improve road safety and reduce its impact on the environment.

The carriageway conditions of Shetland's roads for the 2023-2025 period were reported to committee in November 2025.





Contact us



01595 693535



info@shetland.gov.uk



8 North Ness, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0LZ



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL