

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Screening Report

CORE PATH PLAN REVIEW

Responsible Authority:	Shetland Islands Council
Title of the plan:	Shetland Islands Council - Core Path Plan 2026
What prompted the plan: (e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)	The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires local authorities to draw up a plan for a network of core paths, sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. Shetland's original Core Path Plan was adopted in 2009. There is no statutory review period for Core Paths Plans, however it was felt it was an appropriate time to review the existing Plan to ensure that was still fit for purpose and up to date.
Plan subject: (e.g. transport)	Outdoor Access
Screening is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Based on Boxes 3 and 4, our view is that:	☐ An SEA is required, as the environmental effects are likely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within ☐ Section 5(3) ☐ Section 5(4) ☒ An SEA is <u>not</u> required, as the environmental effects are unlikely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within ☒ Section 5(3) ☐ Section 5(4)
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Date:	22/01/2026

Context of the Plan:	The Shetland Outdoor Access Strategy sets out the priorities for the provision and development of access to the countryside in Shetland. The existing Shetland Core Paths Plan was created under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and launched in 2009. A key proposal within the Shetland Outdoor Access Strategy is to review the current core path plan. After commencing a review of the plan in accordance with Section 20 of the Act, some changes to the current plan are being proposed, including amendments to some current routes and some new core paths. The priority for the Council is to protect, develop and promote core paths whilst looking for opportunities for further development of the network.
Description of the Plan:	Shetland Islands Council is responsible for managing the local network of core paths that provide safe, practical, and enjoyable access across the islands. The Core Paths Plan was first adopted to meet the requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It sets out a framework of routes that enable the public to exercise their statutory access rights and connect communities, services, and areas of natural and cultural interest. The network reflects Shetland's unique geography, linking coastal landscapes, inland hills, and settlements through a mix of off-road paths, sheep track style routes, quiet minor roads, and traditional tracks. These routes serve multiple purposes: supporting everyday journeys such as walking and cycling for work or school, encouraging active lifestyles, and enhancing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Many paths also contribute to tourism by providing access to heritage sites, wildlife viewing areas or scenic areas. There is no set standard a core path has to meet, they can be anything from a paved multi use path to a sheep track, therefore not all paths are available for all types of users. Many core paths are found around main settlements such as Lerwick, Scalloway, and Brae, but also extend into rural areas and outlying islands. The current plan is presented through detailed maps showing the designated core paths within each local area.
What are the key components of the plan?	The Plan consist of maps of all proposed Core Paths in each area or island with all changes to the original Plan highlighted; a list of all core paths and a supporting text.

Have any of the components of the plan been considered in previous SEA work?	The original core path plan was subject to a SEA. The SEA was required because it was identified that the original Core Paths Plan could have had environmental impacts. The Environmental Report outlined generic management and mitigation measures for paths with significant impacts, examples include promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and on site signage. The same proven measures are expected to apply to the Core Path Plan review. Any new core paths designated as part of the Core Path Plan review will be along existing established routes and would not involve the physical construction of any new route or pathway.
In terms of your response to Boxes 7 and 8 above, set out those components of the plan that are likely to require screening:	New core paths and amendments/ realignments. Any new core paths that are being considered for inclusion within the revised core path plan will already be established routes. Any amendments to existing routes will be minor and not affect the overall route in any substantial way. The proposed revisions to the Plan will not alter its character in any substantial way or its overall objectives. Therefore, no additional SEA assessment is required beyond what has already been completed.

Identifying interactions of the plan with the environment and Considering the likely significance of any interactions (Error! Reference source not found.)
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Summary of how environmental principles have been considered:	As there is no construction of paths/routes and only minimal changes to the current Plan this section is not considered applicable to the screening process.
Summary of interactions with the environment and statement of the findings of the Screening:	We believe that it is unlikely that there will be any significant environmental impacts resulting from the Shetland Core Path Plan review. Given the limited scope of the review and the existing robust SEA framework, which can be applied to any new or amended paths, a further SEA is considered unnecessary. The proposed changes to the current plan are minimal. Currently the changes to the current plan include some minor amendments to existing routes and a small number of new core paths; which are all established routes and are already being used by the public or are already constructed. It is anticipated no core paths will be removed from the plan. Any potential negative impacts can be mitigated by the generic measures set out in the SEA for the original core path plan.

When completed send to: SEA.gateway@gov.scot or to the SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2F (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

