



NAFC Marine Centre  
University of the  
Highlands and Islands

**Sullom Voe Master Plan  
Environmental Report:  
Non-Technical Summary**

May 2021



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Sullom Voe Master Plan –Environmental Report: Non-Technical Summary 2021. NAFC Marine Centre UHI, developed behalf of the Shetland Islands Council.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This Non-Technical Summary provides an overview of the findings presented in the Environment Report undertaken as part of a combined Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the draft Sullom Voe Harbour Master Plan. The SEA aims to integrate environmental considerations into the decision making process for the Plan. SA differs from SEA in that it gives greater consideration to socio-economic services provided by the ecosystem. The combined report will assess the effects of the Master Plan against the SEA/SA objectives and identify opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects.

The Sullom Voe Harbour Area is defined within the Zetland County Council (ZCC) 1974 Act (as amended), with the boundaries defined in Schedule 1 (as amended by the 1980 HRO), this includes northern Yell Sound and Sullom Voe and confirms Shetland Islands Council (SIC) as the Statutory Harbour Authority (Figure 1.1)

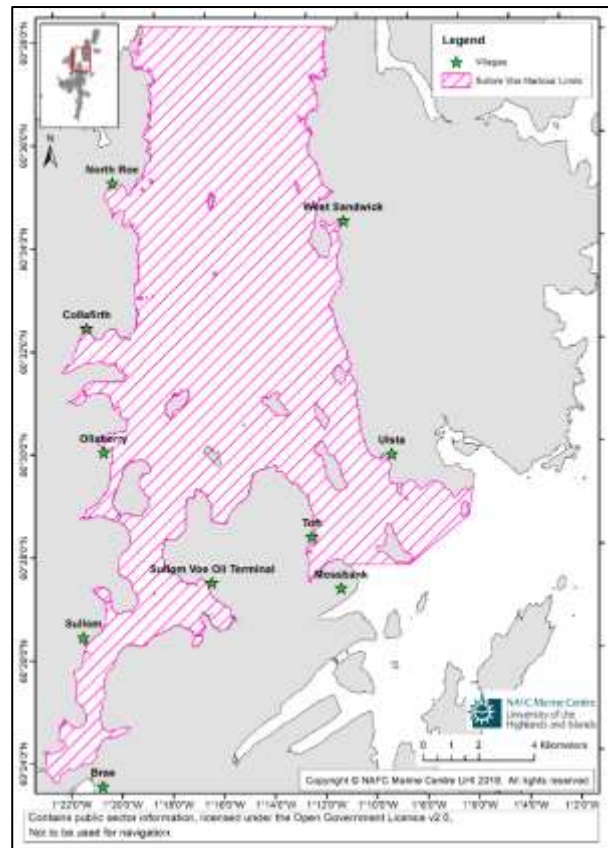


Figure 1.1: Sullom Voe Harbour Area

## 2 WHAT IS THE SULLOM VOE HARBOUR MASTER PLAN?

### 2.1 WHY CREATE A MASTER PLAN FOR SULLOM VOE HARBOUR?

As tanker movements to Sullom Voe Terminal have reduced, the SIC considered it an appropriate time to review current and future use of the Sullom Voe Harbour Area. The aim is to create a Master Plan which will be used to direct new development type within the harbour area. In doing so, gather information about development constraints and opportunities from the local community and stakeholders. In November 2018, NAFC Marine Centre UHI were appointed by SIC to undertake a master planning process for the Sullom Voe Harbour Area (herein referred to as the draft Master Plan).

The only development type currently restricted within the harbour is finfish and shellfish aquaculture, with finfish and shellfish farming not, as a matter of policy, permitted anywhere within the harbour limits. This policy is within the Shetland Islands Council Aquaculture Policy, which is Supplementary Guidance to the Shetland Islands Council Local Development Plan (SIC LDP)<sup>1</sup>. Within the Sullom Voe Harbour Area, a review of the Shetland Aquaculture Policy is not currently being undertaken but may form a separate process in the future. A review of the Aquaculture Policy would be informed by this draft Sullom Voe Harbour Area Master Plan process and its outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> [Shetland Islands Council \(2014\) Local Development Plan](#)

## 2.2 HOW WAS THE MASTER PLAN CREATED?

The Master Plan process led to the identification of specific areas (zones) which may accommodate new development types, and areas where development, or certain types of development, would not be considered. These areas were identified through a mapping process, taking into account existing users and uses.

During the zoning and consultation stages of the Master Plan existing features and uses were assessed and mapped. These features and uses were either “Not compatible with development” or “Potentially incompatible with development” (see Table 2.1 for more details). These can be defined as follows:

**Not compatible with development** - features and/ or uses incompatible with development. No potential development zones were sited in areas where these features and/ or uses exist. These areas were termed ‘Excluded from search’ in public engagement events).

**Potentially incompatible with development** - features and/ or uses potentially incompatible with development. Features and/ or uses of this nature have been listed within each potential development zone. Some of the potential development zones indicate the suitability of particular developments only such as Zones A and B which have areas suitable for subsurface development types only. Within each zone the impact of development on these features and/ or uses will be assessed at the individual project application level. These areas were termed ‘Potentially Excluded from Search’ within public engagement events.

Table 2.1: Data sets categorised into “Not compatible with development” and “Potentially incompatible with development”.

Not compatible with development	Potentially incompatible with development
<u>Navigation</u> – Navigation operations – Yell ferry operations	<u>Navigation</u> – Yell ferry route
<u>Fishing</u> – Scallop dredging – Squid trawling – Whitefish trawling	<u>Fishing</u> – Static gear – Sea angling and trout
<u>Infrastructure</u> – Pipes and cables	
<u>Protected Area</u> – Yell Sound Coast SAC – SSMO Closed Areas	<u>Protected Area</u> – Sullom Voe SAC
<u>Protected Features</u> – Horse mussels – Dune area – Important mud habitat – Saltmarsh area – Seal haul-out site	<u>Protected Features</u> – Kelp area – Rock area – Seal haul out site 500 m buffer
	<u>Archaeology</u> – Scheduled monuments
	<u>Recreation</u> – Kayaking – Rowing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– SCUBA diving</li> <li>– Surfing</li> </ul>
	<p><u>Views</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Archaeological views</li> <li>– National Scenic areas</li> <li>– Scenic areas</li> </ul>

### 2.3 HOW WILL THE MASTER PLAN BE USED?

The draft Master Plan will encourage the sustainable economic development of the Sullom Voe Harbour Area by providing a spatial framework to guide the placement of activity, from marine renewable energy to aquaculture.

The Master Plan will be adopted by Shetland Islands Council as non-statutory planning guidance to the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (2021). It will be a material consideration in marine planning decisions for marine planning and works licence applications. It will also be used to inform leasing and licensing decisions, thereby contributing to the future regulation and management of the Sullom Voe Harbour Area. Additionally, any mapped outputs could be used, where appropriate, as evidence to support decision making by the Shetland Islands Council when assessing developments against policy criteria within the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP) and Local Development Plan.

### 3 WHAT IS A SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL?

This report summarises the findings from a Sustainability Report (SA) of the draft Master Plan. An SA is required under the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) to assess the likelihood of any environmental or socio-economic effects occurring due to implementation of the draft Master Plan. The assessment indicates the benefits and potential impacts of implementing the Master Plan, including the cumulative effects of the Master Plan alongside other plans such as the SIRMP and SIC LDP.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is important for achieving sustainable development, establishing important methods for protecting the environment and creating opportunities for public participation in decision making. SEA achieves this by:

- Systematically assessing and monitoring the significant environmental effects of public sector strategies, plans and programmes;
- Ensuring that expertise and views are sought at various points in the process from SNH, SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland (statutory consultees) and the public; and
- Requiring a public statement as to how opinions have been taken into account.

### 4 WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

Baseline information on the current status of Shetland’s marine environment and key environmental issues has been collated within the ‘Shetland Islands Marine Region State of the Environment Assessment’ (SoEA)<sup>2</sup> and also within the Draft Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP). This

<sup>2</sup> Shucksmith RJ 2017. Shetland Islands Marine Region State of the Environment Assessment. NAFC Marine Centre UHI. Report for the Shetland Islands Marine Planning Partnership. pp 172

information was presented to stakeholders and the wider community to comment on its relevance and to identify any errors or data gaps between 2018-2019.

The SoEA is divided into sections to correspond with the UK High Level Marine Objective to deliver 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas'. The 'condition of the region' has been assessed under the headings 'clean and safe' and 'healthy and biologically diverse' and looks at how well ecosystem services are functioning and identifies commercial, recreational or community activities that may be dependent on those services. The 'productive' section of the SoEA analyses key economic and spatial data concerning human activities.

Two rounds of public engagement were undertaken in 2019 to inform the Environmental Baseline and gauge public support and perception relating to a draft Master Plan. Public events took place in January 2019 and June 2019, the results of these workshops were published [online](#).

## 5 HOW WAS THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL UNDERTAKEN?

A series of guiding questions ('sustainability appraisal objectives') were used to structure the assessment. Information about the existing marine environment has been used to inform the appraisal and define these appraisal objectives. The appraisal identifies the environmental and socio-economic, individual, and cumulative effects of the draft Master Plan on the marine and coastal environment against the guiding questions for each SA Topic:

- Soils, Geology and Coastal Processes
- Cultural Heritage
- Landscape and Seascape
- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna
- Air
- Waste
- Water
- Climatic Factors
- Population and Human Health
- Economy
- Material Assets

The type and duration of the effects will be investigated as part of the SA as follows:

- Positive and negative effects;
- Short, medium and long term effects;
- Permanent and temporary effects; and
- Secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

The findings have been summarised in a table and the Guiding Questions answered in detail in Chapter 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

## 6 WHICH REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN ASSESSED?

There is a requirement to consider appropriate alternatives to the draft Master Plan as part of the SEA/SA process.

In terms of alternatives to the Sullom Voe Harbour Area Master Plan two scenarios are considered:

- a) 'Do-nothing' scenario, i.e., continue under the current approach to management including using existing Aquaculture Policy and the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan;
- b) Create spatial guidance for future and existing use within the Sullom Voe Harbour Area to identify prospective areas of use and clearly identify existing constraint (environmental, existing users/uses)

**7 WHAT ARE THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE MASTER PLAN?**

Impact significance range is described in terms of major/ moderate or minor/ negligible and combinations (e.g. minor-moderate), adverse and positive. The scale of impacts used in the assessment is provided in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Significance of impacts and proposed symbols to be used in the framework for the assessment

Symbol	Description of Impact
✓✓✓	Major positive impact
✓✓	Moderate positive impact
✓	Minor positive impact
=	Neutral or no impact
x	Minor negative impact
xx	Moderate negative impacts
xxx	Major negative impact
?	Uncertain impact
N/A	Not applicable – no relationship with SA Objective

The assessment of the draft Master Plan is presented in full in Chapter 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report. A summary of the impacts can be seen below in Table 7.2.

The implementation of the Master Plan will ensure that sustainability is a key consideration in decision making for potential marine development within the Sullom Voe Harbour Area, taking into consideration the environment and socio-economic elements.

Table 7.2: Appraisal findings for each impact against the SA Topic.

SEA Topic	Impact	Nature of the Impact (scale, duration etc)	Comments
Soils, Geology and Coastal Processes	=/✓	Long term, local, individual, and cumulative	Potential impacts include physical damage to the seabed, sediment disturbance, and coastal erosion.
Cultural Heritage	X/=	Long term, indirect and direct	A range of cultural heritage has been considered including, fisheries, scheduled monuments (coastal) and views from Monastic sites.
Landscape and Seascape	X/✓	Long term, direct, localised,	The most sensitive locations have been considered and



SEA Topic	Impact	Nature of the Impact (scale, duration etc)	Comments
		reversible, individual, and cumulative	mapped, including designated sites and community identified areas. New development has the potential to cause localised impact which will be considered at a project level, including the potential for cumulative impact.
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	X/✓✓	Long term, direct, localised, individual, and cumulative	<p>The most sensitive species and habitats have been considered and mapped, including designated sites and priority marine features. New development has the potential to cause localised impact which will be considered at a project level, including the potential for cumulative impact.</p> <p>All developments will need to adhere to policies within the LDP and SIRMP which contain a range of policies which protect biodiversity.</p>
Air	=/✓	Reversible, cumulative, long term	The impacts on shipping were considered during the zoning process, and navigation routes were protected. Potential sites for low carbon energy production were identified.
Waste	=	Localised	The impact on the Sullom Voe Harbour Area from waste will be assessed and mitigated though the requirement of potential developments to comply with the policy relating to waste and decommissioning of assets within the SIRMP.
Water	✓✓	Positive, permanent	
Climatic Factors	=/✓	Cumulative, long term	Potential sites for low carbon energy production were identified.

SEA Topic	Impact	Nature of the Impact (scale, duration etc)	Comments
Population and Human Health	✓	Direct and indirect, individual and cumulative, localised negative impact.	Creation of new economic activities could protect existing jobs, create new employment opportunities, and support rural communities.
Economy	✓✓	Direct and indirect	New development has the potential to increase economic opportunity in the area, however, impacts on existing industries and the environment have the potential to negatively impact existing economic activity.
Material Assets	✓✓	Direct and indirect	

## 8 WHAT ARE THE LIKELY CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF THE MASTER PLAN WITH OTHER PLANS?

Cumulative effects can be defined as effects that occur where several individual activities which each may not have a significant effect, combine to have a significant effect. Professional judgement has been used to derive the potential cumulative effects of the policies within the SIRMP, in-combination with other plans or projects.

Within the SA there was a focus on the cumulative effects of the draft Master Plan, SIRMP, the National Marine Plan (NMP), the Shetland Islands Council Local Development Plan (SIC LDP) and wider legislative framework. The draft Master Plan sits beneath the SIRMP and SIC LDP which in turn sit beneath the NMP and alongside other planning, legislative and regulatory regimes.

A review of the draft Master Plan, SIRMP and SIC LDP against the SA objectives demonstrates how the plans will work together. The cumulative effect of this framework is that economic growth is supported, focusing on the right type of development in the right place.

The policy frameworks work together to avoid the potential adverse effects of development in both coastal and marine environments within the Harbour Area. This Master Plan uses these legislative and policy frameworks to provide more detailed spatial guidance on where development may occur. In this way the cumulative effect of the policy framework is to reduce potential impacts on the environment and other users and uses. Cumulative effects of specific proposals will be assessed at the individual licence application level.

## 9 HOW CAN THESE EFFECTS BE AVOIDED OR REDUCED?

Schedule 3 (8) of the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) requires that mitigation measures be integrated into the plan making process. Environmental protection and best

environmental practice were fully considered during the zoning process and creation of the draft Master Plan.

Each potential new development will need to comply with all policies within the SIRMP and SIC LDP, developers will need to adhere to all relevant mitigation measures within each of the policies. It also directs developers to the key consultees who can provide guidance and best practice guidelines and it is strongly advised that developers consult with these agencies early in the application process.

This SA assessment did not identify any significant effects arising from the draft Master Plan, therefore the focus of further monitoring will be on unanticipated effects. It is anticipated that the SIC will continue to work closely with key stakeholders, including the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership, government agencies, community and industry representatives.

## 10 HOW WILL THE EFFECTS OF THE MASTER PLAN BE MONITORED?

The Shetland Islands Council, as the responsible authority will undertake a formal review within 5 years of the Master Plan being adopted. The review will determine how the Plan is being implemented and will monitor and appraise the environmental and socio-economic effects of its implementation and how it can be improved to address any shortfalls.

The use of 'indicators' to measure how the environmental baseline has altered will be an effective tool in determining change. Indicators can comprise both quantitative (facts and figures) and qualitative (descriptive) information. The indicators selected will monitor change that results from implementing the Plan, but will also take account of changes as a result of other external factors. They will therefore provide a mechanism to highlight unforeseen as well as expected changes. More information on the specific indicators can be found in section 4.4 of the SA report.

## 11 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The areas identified as potentially suitable for development will be subject to public consultation, alongside this Environmental Report. If adopted, applications for development will then be permitted. All development proposals will need to adhere to all relevant policies and legislation, and will be assessed by the Shetland Islands Council, Marine Scotland and other relevant agencies e.g., Nature Scot

## 12 HOW TO RESPOND TO CONSULTATION?

The publication of the draft Master Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report will be followed by a 6 week consultation period. Views on the SA report and the draft Master Plan to which it relates to are now invited.

Copies of the draft Master Plan and the accompanying documents, including the SA report will be available to view at: [www.shetland.gov.uk/coastal-marine-planning](http://www.shetland.gov.uk/coastal-marine-planning). The SA report will also be uploaded onto the SEA Gateway.

Please send any comments by email to the Shetland Islands Council Coastal and Marine Planning Team at the following address: [marine.planning@shetland.gov.uk](mailto:marine.planning@shetland.gov.uk)

Or by post to:

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