

NORTH ROE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Socio-Economic Study

A Report

for

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

by

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in partnership with

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report was commissioned by Shetland Islands Council (SIC) to inform the Council's consideration of the future of the primary school at North Roe in the Northmavine area of mainland Shetland. SIC is currently considering a proposal to close North Roe Primary School, transferring pupils to Ollaberry Primary School.
- 1.2 This proposal is part of a wider Schools Reconfiguration Project. The Reconfiguration Project is intended to reshape the delivery of primary and secondary education across Shetland into a financially sustainable model which is intended, nonetheless, to enhance and maintain the standards of local education. The proposal is part of Phase 2 of the refreshed Blueprint for Education process and the Plan for Delivering Education 2012-2017 agreed by the SIC in 2012. It is also informed by the report of the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education.
- 1.3 To become financially sustainable Shetland Islands Council needs to make substantial cost savings. The Schools Reconfiguration Project will contribute to the target saving of £3.268 million in Children's Services over the 3 years 2014/15 to 2016/17. The SIC Medium Term Financial Plan identifies a need for further savings in Children's Services in subsequent years. These savings are in addition to more than £5 million which has been saved from the Service budget in previous years.
- 1.4 Savings in Children's Services contribute to a challenging overall target for SIC. Children's Services have been identified as a priority area with some degree of protection, and because of larger percentage budget cuts in other services, the Children's Service budget is expected to grow from 37.18% of SIC expenditure in 2012/13 to 38.46% in 2017/18.
- 1.5 North Roe Primary School is one of three primary schools in Northmavine, the others being Urafirth and Ollaberry. As part of the Schools Reconfiguration Project SIC is considering closure of North Roe Primary School and Urafirth Primary School and Nursery Class, concentrating primary and nursery provision in Ollaberry. The proposal for Urafirth is the subject of a separate socio economic study.
- 1.6 North Roe Primary School has been listed by the Scottish Government¹ as a very remote rural school and it is therefore subject to special provisions under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, amended by Part 15 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 from 1 August 2014. Among the factors local authorities are required to consider is the likely effect on the local community if a closure proposal is implemented, taking into account the sustainability of the community and the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community.
- 1.7 In compiling this report we have drawn upon previous research we carried out as part of an earlier consultation exercise in 2011. We have also used

¹ Scottish Government. Rural Schools List 2014

national and local information sources and have received helpful input from a wide range of consultees. In particular, we are grateful to Shetland Islands Council and to the Northmavine Community Development Company for their help. We visited North Roe and the school, have spoken to a number of local people, and have drawn from the notes of public meetings to discuss these proposals and written responses to the formal consultation process.

- 1.8 For our study in 2011, much of the published data relating to the North Roe area was based on 2001 Census information and was therefore out of date. We, therefore, compiled our own database to identify the local population, their gender and age structure, employment status, etc. This was developed from a variety of sources, including the Council Tax register, the electoral roll and information provided to us by the community through a series of discussions with local contacts and others with knowledge of the area's population and businesses.
- 1.9 For the current study we have been able to draw on the published results from the 2011 Census, and have compiled a best fit match of postcodes to school catchment areas for socio-economic analysis – complementing this by updating our database to give the most up to date information possible.

The Council's Anticipated Cost Savings

- 1.10 According to the Council's Proposal Paper (April 2014), the annual budget for North Roe Primary School is £132,584 and for Urafirth Primary School and Nursery Class £164,341 – a combined total of £296,925. If the pupils from these schools transferred to Ollaberry Primary School, additional costs would be incurred for increased staffing, operational and transport costs. These additional costs total £106,331. This would give a net saving of £190,594 from closing the schools in North Roe and Urafirth.
- 1.11 In the short term, the Council might also incur additional costs associated with reducing the school's staffing – depending on the redeployment of staff, the time that this takes, whether any take early retirement, etc. There would also be costs associated with the school buildings until they are disposed of, which are estimated at £15,560 each year.

2. BACKGROUND

Location

- 2.1 North Roe is a small crofting community in Northmavine in the far north of Shetland, connected to the rest of the mainland by a narrow isthmus called Mavis Grind. The North Roe Primary School catchment area, shown in Appendix 1, takes in the northern and most remote part of Northmavine, from the bridge at Collafirth to the tip of the Shetland mainland. As well as North Roe, the catchment area includes settlements such as Lochend, Housetter and Isbister. North Roe is 42 miles from Lerwick, including 9 miles of single track road.

Northmavine

- 2.2 Northmavine is the most peripheral area on the Shetland mainland. It stretches from Mavis Grind in the south, to North Roe in the north and Eshaness in the west. Hillswick (and the neighbouring community of Urafirth), Ollaberry and North Roe are the three main settlements in the area. The catchment areas for the 3 Primary Schools at North Roe, Urafirth and Ollaberry, cover most of Northmavine, but the settlements closer to Mavis Grind are in the catchment area for the Primary Department of Brae High School.
- 2.3 According to the First *Statistical Account of Scotland*², compiled between 1791 and 1799, Northmavine had a population of 1,009 in 1755, rising to 1,786 in 1792 (with 290 inhabited houses). There was one school, established in 1772, with 14 pupils. The Second *Statistical Account*, written in 1841, shows the population had risen to 2,386 in 1831 (with 400 houses). By then, there were 5 schools, although 3 of these were open for only a few months over the winter, and a need for an additional 3 permanent schools was identified. The economy was almost entirely reliant on agriculture and, especially, fishing.
- 2.4 *Shetland in Statistics*³ shows more recent Census population figures for Northmavine as follows:

Northmavine population

1931	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1,343	816	696	898	878	841	741

- 2.5 As can be seen, the population of Northmavine almost halved between 1831 and 1931 and had almost halved again by 1971. Since then there has been some recovery, although the population has consistently fallen since 1981. Between 2001 and 2011 there was a drop of almost 12%, in a period when the population of Shetland as a whole grew by over 5%.

² Available at <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/sas/sas.asp?action=public>

³ Shetland Islands Council. Shetland in Statistics 2013.

- 2.6 For many statistical purposes the Scottish Government divides the Shetland Islands into 30 areas called datazones. One datazone covers much of Northmavine, including the catchment areas of all 3 Primary Schools. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies areas of deprivation across Scotland by ranking datazones across a number of indicators related to income, employment, health, housing, education and training, access to services and crime. There are questions about how well the SIMD deals with rural areas, where eg pockets of deprivation can be much more concentrated than in urban areas, but it does provide a useful comparative tool within the local authority area. The Northmavine datazone ranks as the 6th most deprived area in Shetland in the 2012 SIMD. Of the 6,505 datazones in Scotland, it ranks as the 82nd most deprived in terms of access to services. In our study in 2011 we appended an extract from SIC's 2006 study into deprivation and social exclusion⁴ and, as this still seems relevant, we have included it again as Appendix 2.
- 2.7 The fragility of Northmavine was recognised through being included in the Initiative at the Edge programme in 2004. Following on from that the Northmavine Community Development Company (NCDC) was formed in 2008 with support from SIC and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). NCDC has been successful in developing a number of enterprises and is working towards self sufficiency. HIE support is anticipated through to 2017, after which the Company is expected to be financially sustainable.

North Roe

- 2.8 The 2011 Census gives a population of 144 for North Roe, living in 57 households. These are divided between 3 postcodes as follows:

Postcode	Area	Population	Households
ZE2 9RY	North Roe	94	35
ZE2 9RZ	Lochend	38	15
ZE2 9XG	Bayview	12	7
		144	57

- 2.9 The average age of North Roe residents was 43.3 years, compared to 40.1 in Shetland and 40.3 in Scotland. The age breakdown of residents (see overleaf) shows a lower proportion of young people aged up to 15 in North Roe than in Shetland generally or in Scotland, and a higher percentage of older people aged 60 and over. Although there is a higher percentage of young adults (16 to 29) than in Shetland generally, there is a lower percentage in the 30 to 44 age band.

⁴ Perring E. Deprivation and Social Exclusion in Shetland. Spring 2006.

	North Roe %	Shetland %	Scotland %
0 to 4 years old	4.2	6.0	5.5
5 to 15 years old	11.1	13.3	11.8
16 to 29 years old	17.4	15.9	18.5
30 to 44 years old	16.7	19.9	20
45 to 59 years old	25.0	21.9	21.1
60 to 74 years old	17.4	16.0	15.5
75 years old and over	8.3	7.1	7.7

- 2.10 Our own database suggests that the population of the North Roe catchment area in 2014 is 136 people, a fall of 8 (5%) since the 2011 Census and 4 since our previous study. This suggests that North Roe continues to reflect previous population decline in Northmavine. Comparing the figures we collected in 2014 with those for the study that we produced in 2011 gives the following picture, although it should be noted that these figures were obtained through discussion rather than a formal Census.

	North Roe 2011	North Roe 2014
Total residents	140	136
% female	47.1	50.7
% male	52.9	49.3
% retired/not working	29.3	35.0
% children (at school or pre-school)	17.1	13.1
Households with primary or pre-school children	10	8
Households with a single resident	15	16
Households with 4 people or more	14	10
Total residential properties	76	79
Total vacant and holiday properties	18	22
Total resident households	58	57

- 2.11 The number of people living in the catchment area for the North Roe Primary School has fallen, and a higher percentage are retired or not working for some other reason (although some people who are officially retired may well continue working as crofters). The percentage of children of school or pre-school age has fallen and fewer families contain primary school and pre-school children.

Housing

- 2.12 Our study has identified 79 residential properties in the North Roe catchment area, a slight increase since 2011. 22 of these (28%) are currently vacant – an increase of 4 since 2011. This means there are 57 properties with residents, one fewer than in 2011, despite the increase in housing stock. Most of the unoccupied houses are holiday homes, often having remained in a family when the previous occupant died. One house is under renovation, and a number of the unoccupied properties would be in need of some

upgrading. Anecdotal evidence suggests that properties which become vacant are rarely offered on the open market and, when they are, are often beyond the means of local people and can be bought as holiday homes by people not intending to relocate to the area.

- 2.13 We have identified 16 properties occupied by one person, a small increase on 2011. 10 are now occupied by 4 people or more, fewer than in 2011. In some cases where adult children were living with their parents they have either moved away or, where possible, relocated to another house in North Roe.
- 2.14 In the 2012 SIMD the Northmavine datazone is ranked as the 5th most deprived in Shetland in terms of housing, using indicators related to overcrowding and availability of central heating. At the time of the 2011 Census, there were 14 households of 4 people or more (24.5%) in North Roe. This compares with 19.5% in Shetland and 16.3% in Scotland. 8.8% of homes were recorded in the 2011 Census as having no central heating, more than double the proportion in Shetland of 4.1% and almost four times the Scottish average of 2.3%.
- 2.15 10 property sales in the North Roe postcodes are recorded on the Zoopla website⁵ in the last 5 years (including one property changing hands twice). 3 of these are currently unoccupied/holiday homes. A search of Shetland solicitors and estate agents suggests that currently no properties are for sale. Zoopla currently estimates the average property value in North Roe at £92,482. This compares with its estimate for Shetland of £134,978. The Scottish Government reports⁶ that, in June 2014, the average house price in the Shetland Islands is around £131,035 and 14.3% higher than a year ago. The Scottish average house price is given at £168,164.
- 2.16 New build houses in North Roe are relatively few. Since 2011, two houses have been built with support from NCDC through the Scottish Government's Rural Homes for Rent (RHFR) Pilot scheme which promotes new build housing for affordable rent, and these are now occupied. Two further planning applications have been approved recently, with one being completed and occupied by local people and the other still to be built.
- 2.17 There are 11 houses in the social rented sector (8 SIC and 3 Hjalmland Housing Association), plus the 2 recent RHFR additions managed by NCDC. Together these represent 22.8% of occupied residential property, just below the Shetland (23.7%) and Scottish (24.3%) averages. Social housing stock includes 6 houses designated as sheltered housing (but largely used as general needs housing). There are no plans for additional social rented properties in North Roe.
- 2.18 The waiting list for social housing in North Roe is relatively low, at 8. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people are less likely to give North Roe or Northmavine as a first choice because they know there are few houses in the sector and turnover is low. There is seen to be a much higher chance of

⁵ www.zoopla.co.uk

⁶ Scottish Government. Local Authority Housing Bulletin. July 2014.

being offered a house in areas with more social housing. Interest when a house becomes available is said to be strong, and this was evidenced by the 2 RHFR properties which attracted a substantial number of enquiries and were able to retain young families in North Roe who might otherwise have had to leave.

- 2.19 There is a strong feeling in North Roe that the experience with the RHFR properties demonstrates that there is not enough affordable housing available for young people wanting to remain in or return to the area, or for potential new families wanting to relocate there. This is seen as restricting the opportunities for North Roe to grow and thrive as a community, retaining and attracting younger people to set up home and have families in the area.
- 2.20 The emerging Shetland Local Development Plan (which is expected to be adopted soon) has taken a developer led strategy. Through a *Call for Sites* process, it invited developers and landowners to submit potential development sites for consideration and to be assessed for inclusion in the plan as *sites with development potential*. No sites are identified in North Roe.
- 2.21 Shetland's current Local Housing Strategy covers the years 2011-2016. It is based on an assessment of housing need and demand⁷ which identifies a net housing need in Shetland of 721 houses. As an indication of how these additional houses might be distributed across Shetland, assuming that the trends at the time the assessment was compiled continue into the future, 101 of these houses were identified as needed in the North Mainland.
- 2.22 The consultation on the housing strategy⁸ brought a number of responses which reflect issues that have come up in our own discussions with local people. These include:

Housing in Northmavine is not specifically mentioned in the Local Housing Strategy. This should be mentioned, and we should be providing housing in the more remote areas of Shetland;

People don't apply for remote areas but they do apply in Lerwick because this is where people have a chance

Strategies need to be positive and look at keeping people here and not just dealing with who will be left here

Housing is part of the solution to keeping remote areas alive, but the Council needs to work in true partnership with others to make this a reality. There needs to be jobs and reasons for people to stay in an area

Important that the economy, schools and wider infrastructure is in place to mean people want to live in a place.

⁷ Shetland Islands Assessment of Housing Need and Demand, August 2010

⁸ Consultation Findings: Shetland's Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016.

- 2.23 The availability of housing in North Roe, unlike many areas in Shetland, is not affected by the corporate renting of houses by companies housing workers at Sullom Voe.

Transport

- 2.24 Although not on an island, North Roe has many similar characteristics. 17 miles from Brae, including 9 on a narrow single track road, and a further 25 miles to Lerwick, it is the same distance from Lerwick as Mid Yell.
- 2.25 Public transport provision in North Roe is limited. A feeder bus leaves North Roe at 7.15 and 09.30 (Monday to Saturday), arriving in Brae to connect with services to Lerwick which arrive at 08.50 and 11.20 respectively. A return bus leaves Lerwick at 17.15 connecting with the feeder bus in Brae which arrives in North Roe at 18.50. Every second Tuesday there is an additional return journey, leaving Lerwick at 15.30 and arriving in North Roe at 17.05. The bus fare from North Roe to Lerwick is £3.60, although regular commuters can buy a card giving a 20% discount.
- 2.26 There is also a dial a ride scheme which provides a weekly service from North Roe to the shop at Ollaberry and the doctor's surgery in Hillswick.
- 2.27 Given the public transport situation, not surprisingly almost all households in North Roe have access to transport. According to the 2011 Census only 5.3% of households (3) have no vehicle compared to 19.1% in Shetland generally and 30.5% across Scotland. More than half (52.6%) have 2 or more vehicles compared to Shetland's 38.6% and Scotland's 27.2%. There are various aspects to this availability of transport:
- The households without their own transport are very isolated;
 - If there is only one car this may well be used as transport to work, leaving anyone else in the household without access to transport through the day, eg for shopping, visits to the doctor, or taking children to Nursery School or to after school activities;
 - Households in North Roe have little choice but to run their own and possibly multiple vehicles, with the associated costs.

North Roe Primary School

- 2.28 North Roe Primary School has a current roll of 6 pupils in one composite class. Pre-school children can attend Urafirth Primary School nursery department, which involves parents driving 40 miles each day. As mentioned above it is not possible to use public transport. 2 children from North Roe currently attend the nursery. After primary education in North Roe, the children transfer to Brae High School for Secondary 1 to Secondary 6.
- 2.29 The school roll is projected by the Council to remain at 6 pupils in 2015/16, rising to 7 in 2016/17 and 8 in 2017/18. We have identified 5 pre-school age children in North Roe, and there is also one expectant mother.

The School and the Community

- 2.30 North Roe Primary School sits at the heart of the community and is regarded as a bridge between the different age groups in the village. The whole village turns out for school events and the children host an event for senior citizens at Christmas. Computer classes are held at the school for the community, with personalised tuition to suit the needs of attendees. These have been popular, with around 8 to 10 people attending each session.
- 2.31 Adjacent to the school, and on school grounds, is the North Roe playpark which was developed by the North Roe Playpark Association for use by the school and by children in the community. The playpark is in very good condition and is well used outside school hours.

Voluntary Activity

- 2.32 People in North Roe are involved in a wide range of voluntary activities and are office bearers for a number of groups. As well as the playpark association and the Parent Council for the Primary School, community groups and facilities include:
- North Roe and Lochend Hall
 - North Roe Youth Club
 - Collafirth Marina Users Association
 - North Roe & Lochend Badminton Club
 - North Roe & Lochend Boating Club
 - North Rowing Club
 - North Roe Community Garden
 - Northmavine Community Development Company.
- 2.33 Also, North Roe is the venue for one of Shetland's most popular annual events, the Big Bannock. Attracting more than 650 people each year the Big Bannock has raised more than £100,000 for national and local charities since it was first organised in 1999.

3. THE ECONOMY

- 3.1 The 2011 Census gives the following picture of economic activity in North Roe compared with Shetland generally and Scotland as a whole.

	North Roe No	North Roe %	Shetland %	Scotland %
All persons 16 to 74	110			
Economically active	85	77.3	78.1	69.0
Employees - part-time	17	15.5	17.4	13.3
Employees - full-time	46	41.8	47.6	39.6
Self-employed	17	15.5	9.0	7.5
Unemployed	3	2.7	2.0	4.8
Full-time student - employed	2	1.8	1.9	2.9
Full-time student - unemployed	0	0.0	0.1	0.8
Economically inactive	25	22.7	21.9	31.0
Retired	13	11.8	12.8	14.9
Student	2	1.8	2.5	5.5
Looking after home or family	6	5.5	2.3	3.6
Long-term sick or disabled	3	2.7	3.0	5.1
Other	1	0.9	1.3	1.9

- 3.2 As can be seen, despite its remoteness and peripherality, levels of economic activity in North Roe, as for Shetland as a whole, are well above the Scottish average. Of the 110 people in the community aged between 16 and 74, 77.3% are defined as economically active. This translates into 85 people. Self employment is a strong feature of the economy, higher than in Shetland generally and more than double the Scottish average.
- 3.3 Looking more closely at the work pattern of the 82 people in employment (including self employment), the Census provides a breakdown of the average working week.

	North Roe No	North Roe %	Shetland %	Scotland %
Aged 16 to 74 in employment	82			
Part-time 1 to 15 hours	5	6.1	8.1	7.0
Part-time 16 to 30 hours	17	20.7	19.6	21.0
Full-time 31 to 37 hours	11	13.4	20.9	21.2
Full-time 38 to 48 hours	32	39.0	36.1	39.1
Full-time 49 or more	17	20.7	15.2	11.7

- 3.4 As can be seen, few people living in North Roe work for less than 16 hours per week. Those in full time employment tend to work longer hours than elsewhere. This is likely to be related to the high proportion of self employed people in the area. For those who travel outside North Roe to work, travel time would be added to the working week.

- 3.5 Alongside this, the Census asked about travel to work arrangements. The results (which exclude full time students in employment) were:

	North Roe No	North Roe %	Shetland %	Scotland %
	80			
Car	57	71.3	72.1	62.4
Train	0	0.0	0.0	3.7
Bus	4	5.0	3.4	10.0
On foot	1	1.3	9.2	9.9
Other	3	3.8	3.2	3.1
Works mainly at or from home	15	18.8	12.2	10.8

- 3.6 There is a relatively high level of working from a home base, and this again is likely to be related to self employment. Only one person walks to work and most people travel by car.
- 3.7 The Census provides a sectoral breakdown of the work undertaken by people in employment living in North Roe.

	North Roe No	North Roe %	Shetland %	Scotland %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	16	19.5	6.4	2.0
Mining and quarrying	3	3.7	1.6	1.4
Manufacturing	4	4.9	5.9	7.7
Electricity, gas supply	1	1.2	0.8	0.8
Water supply	0	0.0	0.8	0.8
Construction	13	15.9	11.0	8.0
Wholesale and retail trade	7	8.5	12.1	15.0
Transport and storage	8	9.8	10.1	5.0
Accommodation and food	5	6.1	5.5	6.3
ICT	0	0.0	1.1	2.7
Financial and insurance	0	0.0	0.7	4.5
Real estate activities	0	0.0	0.6	1.2
Professional, scientific, technical	2	2.4	3.5	5.2
Administrative and support	1	1.2	3.2	4.3
Public administration	1	1.2	6.6	7.0
Education	6	7.3	9.6	8.4
Human health and social work	14	17.1	15.9	15.0
Other	1	1.2	4.6	4.9

- 3.8 The traditional agricultural and fisheries sector is still the predominant employment sector for people living in North Roe, accounting for 1 in 5 of the workforce. Construction and Social Care are also important sectors. Sectors such as Retail and Public Administration feature less than the average elsewhere.

3.9 As shown below, we have updated the information on employment and economic activity we collected in 2011 on North Roe to give a more accurate picture of the situation in 2014.

	North Roe 2011	North Roe 2014
<i>Population</i>		
Male	74	67
Female	66	70
Total	140	137
<i>Economic Activity</i>		
Retired/otherwise not working	41	48
In Education or pre-school	26	20
Total jobs ⁹	79	70
Full time work - local	0	0
Part time work - local ¹⁰	12	11
Full time work - Northmavine	7	3
Part time work - Northmavine	1	0
Full time work - elsewhere	49	43
Part time work - elsewhere	10	13
Crofters ¹¹	12	12

3.10 Crofting is excluded from our jobs figures, but we have included a figure for the number of active crofters. The Census analyses information about the main job of people aged between 16 and 74, and that does not necessarily fully reflect the situation in a crofting community. For example, some people in North Roe have more than one job; some people combine employment with keeping a croft; others may see crofting as their main occupation; others may be retired but still work a croft.

3.11 The number of jobs (other than crofting) has fallen between 2011 and 2014, and this primarily affects full time jobs. The total number who are retired or for some other reason are not working has risen.

3.12 Of the 70 jobs currently identified, 56 (80%) are located outside Northmavine, including 43 of the 46 full time jobs. Local people are travelling to work in Brae, Voe, Sullom Voe, and further afield in Lerwick and Scalloway. Work within Northmavine includes employment or self employment in areas such as:

- landscaping and fencing;
- construction and contracting;
- transport;
- mussel farming;
- photography;
- consultancy; and
- crafts.

⁹ Crofting, whether full or part time, is excluded from our employment figures.

¹⁰ Note that some people have more than one part time job

¹¹ Only one crofter is counted in a household, although crofting often involves a family

- 3.13 Even though there may be a local base, much of this employment involves travelling to and working in other areas of Shetland. Nevertheless, such operations based in North Roe do contribute to the local and the Shetland economy. Other than the post office (which is run from the operator's home) and a limited amount of social care, the school is the only employer offering work which does not involve travelling out of North Roe.
- 3.14 We have identified a degree of home working, but this is restricted by the quality and speed of the broadband connections in North Roe. NCDC is working to improve broadband in Northmavine but there have been delays in progressing this for reasons outside local control.
- 3.15 There is no shop in North Roe and little opportunity to spend money there. The closest shops are the community shops in Ollaberry and Hillswick. However as most residents who work travel some distance, many people tend to shop and obtain services in larger centres such as Brae or Lerwick. Money earned by people in North Roe is thus largely spent outside the community, and little is circulated to create extra value (and support employment locally).

Tourism

- 3.16 An updated Shetland Visitor Survey¹² was carried out over 2012/13. It estimated that 64,665 people visited Shetland in the year excluding cruise ship passengers and yachting visitors. Of those 26,702 came on holiday, 11,412 to visit friends and family and 26,541 on business. The total spending by visitors on Shetland was £16.2 million.
- 3.17 The Visitor Survey suggests that 17% of all visitors spent an average of 2.2 nights in the North Mainland, which translates into around 24,000 bednights. With an average spend per night (excluding travel to Shetland) of around £31 this suggests that overnight visitor spend might generate over £700,000 annually for the North Mainland (although this is likely to be an underestimate of impact because of the inclusion of business visitors who may not pay for their own accommodation in the visitor survey figures). This total would increase with an allowance for the expenditure of day trippers to the area – all parts of the North Mainland are well within travelling distance for visitors touring Shetland and staying elsewhere.
- 3.18 Northmavine is part of the North Mainland and has many of the features that visitors to Shetland identify as the reason for their visit, including birds and wildlife, scenery and landscape, peace and quiet, and remoteness. North Roe itself is in a National Scenic Area, designated because:

“the northern extremities of the North Roe peninsula again exhibit a similar range of skerries, stacks, islets, geos, caves, headlands and natural arches, to which the complex geology lends further variety of colour and form between Fugla Ness, Uyea Isle, Fethaland and the Ramna Stacks, and the Ness of Burravoe, Hermaness and Burrafirth including Muckle Flugga and

¹² Scotinform. Shetland Visitor Survey 2012/13. February 2014.

Out Stack, at the northern extremity of the British Isles, are of the same outstanding character¹³.”

- 3.19 WalkShetland¹⁴, the official walking website for Shetland, includes two circular walking routes from North Roe, to Fethaland and Uyea. Both these walks are designed for fairly serious walkers at 10.5 and 15 kilometres respectively and, although opportunities for guided walks are becoming more common, neither features in the standard itineraries of any operator. An informal count by a local resident (and almost certainly an under-estimate) showed more than 1,500 people setting off on the Fethaland walk in 2010. A local resident established Fethaland Tours to promote walking tours around Fethaland and tell the history of crofting, Haaf Fishing and the archaeological sites in the area, but this business is currently dormant due to other work commitments.
- 3.20 Tourist accommodation in Northmavine is largely in the Hillswick/Eshaness area and there is none in North Roe although there are facilities for touring caravans at North Roe and Lochend Hall. In addition, although there is no bookable tourist accommodation, the majority of the unoccupied houses in North Roe are second or holiday homes, and the owners will visit the area on a regular basis.
- 3.21 There is a marina and pier at Collafirth, to the south of North Roe. The marina has 9 berths, but these are largely taken by local recreational boats. Visiting yachts can tie up at the pier but there are few facilities and only a small number berth. There have been plans to extend the facilities at the pier and make it more attractive for visiting yachts and for tour boats offering day trips to visitors, but these are currently on hold.
- 3.22 Although North Roe has attractions for visitors and contributes to Shetland's overall tourism product, just as almost all expenditure by local people will be outside the community, with no shops and no specific tourism related businesses there is little in North Roe for holiday home owners or day visitors to spend their money on. This limits the local economic benefit, and the contribution of tourism to the local economy is consequently likely to be minimal – although there will be associated expenditure eg in the shop at Ollaberry.

¹³ Scotland's Scenic Heritage. Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1978. available on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B464646.pdf>

¹⁴ www.walkshetland.com

The School

- 3.23 North Roe Primary School supports the following employment in full-time equivalent jobs (Ftes):

	Ftes
Headteacher	1.00
Teacher non contact cover	0.38
Classroom Assistant	0.20
Clerical Assistant	0.26
Supervisory Assistant	0.15
Cleaner	0.42
Kitchen Assistant	0.30
Total	2.71 Ftes

- 3.24 In addition, the school has allocated time from visiting teaching staff. Currently 25 minutes of music instruction is provided per week.
- 3.25 In the 2011 Census, 6 local residents said they worked in the Education sector. We believe all these jobs would have been at the Primary School.

Social Care

- 3.26 The Census identifies 14 people working in the Human Health and Social Work sector. We have identified local people working in the Care at Home Service, but the majority of these jobs are located at the Health Centre and Care Centre in Brae.

Crofting

- 3.27 Crofting is an important part of life in North Roe, and 12 of the 58 households have active crofters, sometimes working more than one croft. Crofting is usually a family activity, which means that the number of people involved will be higher than 12. Crofting in North Roe is largely based on livestock, but there is some growing in polytunnels. Although it can be difficult to put a value on crofting activity it will bring a significant benefit to North Roe, through the output of the crofts, the sale of surplus stock and produce, and land subsidies. *Shetland in Statistics* estimates that in 2013 the value of sheep production in Shetland was £5.73 million and that Scottish Government and EU Assistance totalled £9.04 million. A proportion of that value would accrue to North Roe. In addition, crofting in North Roe will contribute to the wider Shetland economy through associated expenditure on, for example, transport, materials and equipment.

Household Income

- 3.28 The company CACI provides estimates of gross income for small areas across the UK and this is used at government level and by many local authorities for planning purposes. CACI models gross income before tax from a variety of sources, including income support and welfare. For postcodes in

North Roe, the 2012 median incomes¹⁵ were estimated at between £20,300 and £26,200. CACI suggests a total household income of just under £1.85 million, which gives an arithmetical average household income of £30,275 (based on the 61 households CACI used in its calculations). The average household income in Shetland in 2012 was estimated at £35,201.

- 3.29 A recent presentation¹⁶ on inequalities in Shetland sets out the following examples of the minimum weekly household budget requirement, excluding rent and childcare, for different households in different parts of the country:

	UK urban	Lerwick	Most remote Shetland
Single person	£198	£264	£345
Couple, 2 children	£463	£597	£769
Pensioner couple	£238	£300	£334

- 3.30 This suggests that the minimum household income needed by a couple with 2 children in North Roe – excluding rent and childcare – would be approaching £40,000.

Workforce Requirements

- 3.31 As was the case in 2011, local workforce requirements are limited. There are few employers in North Roe, although there is little unemployment. This largely depends on the willingness and ability of residents to commute, probably beyond Northmavine to other parts of Shetland for work. This makes North Roe a particularly fragile area, dependent on commuting for the majority of its income. The willingness of residents to live in the area and commute depends on a number of factors, including:

- family connections;
- social networks/community involvement;
- the attractiveness of the area;
- the availability of local facilities and services;
- availability of affordable housing (to rent or buy);
- ease of transport;
- the cost of commuting;
- availability of public transport.

Summary of Employment and Output

- 3.32 The local economy in North Roe depends on the school, crofting, and other forms of self employment and home working. Other residents own businesses that carry on much of their work outside the area, including construction, fencing and aquaculture, although they may employ local people on a regular or casual basis.

¹⁵ The median income is the point at which half of households have a lower income and half a higher

¹⁶ Inequalities in Shetland. 2014. Available at:

<http://www.shetland.gov.uk/communityplanning/deprivationandsocialexclusion.asp>

- 3.33 With some broad assumptions on the level of earnings, the 46 full time jobs and 24 part time jobs held by people living in North Roe might equate to total earnings of around £1.1 million per annum. Adding to this the incomes and any benefits received by the 48 retired people and those residents not in work might give a total income of around £1.5 million for the 57 current households. This excludes crofting income, eg from the sale of livestock, and income from grants and subsidies and business profits accruing to residents. Overall, then, the CACI-derived figure for total household income of £1.85 million quoted above would seem a reasonable estimate for the economic output of North Roe.

4. THE IMPACTS OF CLOSING NORTH ROE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Direct Impacts

- 4.1 The direct impact of closing North Roe Primary School would relate to the jobs at the school, with a net reduction of 2.71 FTE posts. The savings at North Roe would comprise one full time post and a number of part time posts (see 3.24 above). The combined employee costs for Urafirth and North Roe are £216,041.
- 4.2 This would be offset as a saving by additional staff needs at Ollaberry School, with total additional employee costs at Ollaberry of £72,155. Overall, the reduction in the Northmavine/Shetland economy directly related to staff would be £143,886 – around £115,000 in salaries and wages after allowing for the Council's NI and pension contributions as employer. This cost saving would be partially offset in the wider Northmavine/Shetland economy by the employment associated with the contract to transport the children to the alternative school (see 1.10-1.11 above).
- 4.3 The jobs lost for North Roe residents would comprise 5 part time posts, about half of the part time jobs available in the community. These part time post reductions would be a real loss to the individuals involved; with redeployment affected by the costs of travelling to another location in relation to the wages they would earn and the availability of transport. Also, especially in a crofting community, part time work can fit well with other roles and responsibilities which might not be compatible with travel to another work location.
- 4.4 Little of the school's non-staff related costs are spent in the North Roe area.
- 4.5 Although she is not a local resident, the loss of a head teacher would also be a direct loss to the community, since this is currently one of the few professional posts based in North Roe. In a small community it can be difficult to replace the loss of professional skills, and community development can suffer as a result.

Other Impacts

- 4.6 In 2011 we were asked to comment on the potential impacts of families leaving North Roe and on how the composition of the community might change through the closure of the Primary School. We suggested then that rather than existing families leaving North Roe it seemed more likely that the closure would remove a large part of the motivation for young people (including those already living in North Roe) to stay in North Roe and for families to relocate there in the future. As a result there would tend to be an increase in the average age of the population, jeopardising any drive towards regeneration, and potentially having serious consequences for the long term sustainability of the community.
- 4.7 In 2011 we had identified younger people who had returned to North Roe, usually because of the family connections of one of the partners. The availability of affordable housing had been raised as an issue by local people, which was restricting the ability of younger people to set up home in the area.

A number of younger people, sometimes with partners, lived with their parents in North Roe, and although this is still the case, in one or two instances it has been possible for them to set up separate households. The three new build houses since 2011 (including 2 for rent) has helped in this, as well as a move to bring vacant/holiday homes back into use. Nevertheless, the number of vacant properties has risen, which might reflect a tendency to keep newly vacant properties in family ownership even if no-one in the family wants to move in and the need and costs for upgrading and modernisation of empty properties. In addition, despite house prices being below the Shetland average, young people locally can find it difficult to compete in the housing market.

- 4.8 Since 2011, the average number of people occupying a dwelling in the area has decreased from 2.5 to 2.4. The number of households with 4 people or more has decreased from 14 to 10, with only one additional single resident household. As mentioned in para 2.14 above, the datazone which includes North Roe ranked as one of the most deprived in Shetland in the 2012 SIMD on housing indicators and it seems likely this will continue to be the case.
- 4.9 As well as issues with the availability of suitable housing, younger people deciding to set up home in North Roe must accept the need to travel to access services and the need to commute to work, often involving considerable time and distance. Day to day expenses – for shopping and transport – are likely to be relatively high. Positive aspects are the quality of life in North Roe, the community and safety, and the possibility of offsetting some of the additional costs through a measure of self sufficiency. For people without a family connection bringing them to North Roe these positive aspects may be present in a number of Shetland's rural settlements, and the availability of a school may be an important factor in deciding where to live.
- 4.10 These concerns are expressed in the written responses from local people to the current proposals. These include:

Were the school to be closed...the appeal of North Roe and Lochend as a place to live for a young couple or family, would be greatly damaged. Our kids will have to leave the house about an hour earlier, and will return an hour later. The pick-up points are at side-road junctions so there will be accompaniment and waiting involved. This is not appealing to anybody comparing North Roe with, say, even Ollaberry or more likely Brae or further south.

North Roe and Lochend is having a bit of a baby boom just now, and it's a great pity to see the potential of a healthy cohort of local children wasting two hours of their day travelling for no educational gain. The likely outlook would be a fairly swift ageing of the population as retired folk moved into vacated houses and less young folk view the village as a place to return to for raising families.

If there is a decline in the availability of young adults and willing teenagers, it would directly affect the availability of employees or casual workers for my own small business. It would also make traditional crofting more difficult as

presently there is a reasonable pool of people to assist in sheep gathering and other general assistance.

The lack of a school is a serious disincentive for parents and especially for those who need to be attracted to an area to help sustain it for the future. (a need to) invest in housing and infrastructure to help sustain and enhance the long term future and viability rather than...decision making that will have a devastating effect

North Roe is a vulnerable community and the Council proposal will mean that the very heart of it is ripped out

The effect on the wider community will be catastrophic, our population will begin to age and decline as no young folk will move to an area without a school

North Roe is a remote and fragile community with little employment or services; therefore the school has increasingly become a central part of the community, and is extremely important in terms of community cohesion. Should the school close it will become increasingly difficult to attract young people and families to settle in the area. Even though I am from North Roe, we would not have built a house and settled in North Roe if there was no school.

For young families the school is one of the strongest reasons to move here. While it is a very beautiful and peaceful place to live and a great place to bring up children this has to be weighed against remoteness and travel distance to work and services. In this situation the presence of a quality primary school could easily be the deciding factor.

One of the reasons I moved here was because of the proximity to the school, it's wonderful to watch your children walk/cycle all the way to school. There is very little future for this area if the school closes, without school there will be little reason for people to move here.

With the increasing development of housing in Lerwick the effect is to centralise the population. The SIC has policies in place to support more rural areas and one of the drivers would be to retain schools in the whole of Northmavine as they are presently located within the principal population areas.

A recent Hjaltland house attracted 5 applicants of which a number had children. The closure of the school would have a direct impact on future vacancies

Closure of the school, flies in the face of work to regenerate the area and will make regeneration of Northmavine a tougher job.

- 4.11 As was the case in 2011, other than crofting, the village is largely a dormitory for people keen to live a rural lifestyle but earning their living elsewhere. This has implications for sustainability, as well as for rural isolation for those without transport or whose partner takes the means of transport away to work

with them each day. Smaller communities to the north of North Roe are now largely uninhabited, with any properties used only during lambing. There is a danger, without a school, that the same fate could eventually befall North Roe as the population gravitates towards communities with services of some kind.

5. POTENTIAL MITIGATING ACTIONS

5.1 We were asked to consider action that might be taken to mitigate closure of the school, i.e. to generate additional public and private sector employment to compensate for the loss of employment, and to increase the scope for attracting new residents to North Roe.

5.2 As highlighted above, North Roe has little local employment and most work available for residents is outside Northmavine – in Brae, Sullom Voe or Lerwick. Generating local employment and thus ensuring that North Roe is an attractive place to live is an important ambition and will depend on the energy and motivation of local people and the support they receive from the relevant agencies. It is also a prime focus for the Northmavine Community Development Company (NCDC).

5.3 In 2011 NCDC was facing some uncertainty, with future funding support to be agreed. Fortunately these issues were resolved and NCDC has committed support from HIE for the current year and the following two year period to complement its growing earned income. The NCDC business plan for 2012-2014 identifies a number of strategic objectives:

- First and foremost, remain a community-led company;
- Further develop strong relations with current and potential local businesses in Northmavine as well as agencies and networks;
- Actively identify and evaluate opportunities and pursue those that will benefit the community of Northmavine socially, economically or environmentally;
- Develop a community asset base. The community would own and share any asset;
- Seek to attract public and private sector funding to further the development of the Northmavine community;
- Strive to employ development and 'project dedicated' staff to continue the development of the Northmavine community.

5.4 The potential action identified is based on three priority themes:

- Renewables;
- Social enterprise/Business development;
- Housing.

5.5 These themes offer a way forward for local regeneration, but substantial help still appears necessary to address the fragility of Northmavine, and of North Roe in particular. The new EU LEADER programme will come on stream in 2015 and may provide a source of funding for NCDC and other community groups to implement specific initiatives. The wider Scottish Rural Development Programme may also provide funding possibilities. For sources such as LEADER, however, match funding is usually required and this can be

challenging for a community development company with limited staff resources. Support to develop projects to the stage where they can be taken forward would be advantageous.

- 5.6 The NCDC business plan has been compiled following considerable consultation with the community, and work has been ongoing to explore the feasibility of the actions included within it. Some of the proposals seem particularly pertinent to North Roe.
- 5.7 Renovation of empty properties to provide accommodation for permanent residents is one of the potential actions identified by NCDC, which has been researching potential properties and funding sources. Renovations could be carried out through NCDC or by encouraging and supporting property owners to develop the buildings privately, perhaps with grant support. NCDC could then act as letting agent, as it has for the new social housing in the area. This would help address one of the major issues identified by the community as well as providing local work and potential for skills training in property renovation.
- 5.8 In some cases, crofters have reservations about potential problems from new residents unused to the crofting lifestyle – for example the effect of dogs on their livestock. It may be that having some control in the selection of tenants would help meet these reservations. Alternatively, it may be more attractive to select properties which could be adapted as holiday rentals and self catering units. The vacant school house, which is owned by SIC, could potentially be adapted for this purpose.
- 5.9 Such development would help to develop the tourism product in North Roe. The potential to provide guided tours in the area has already been recognised, and while this may be difficult to develop as a private business it may be more suitable as a social enterprise. For example, NCDC could train a bank of guides and act as a booking agent, sourcing a guide who is available when needed.
- 5.10 The Council's proposal documents suggest that the school building in North Roe, if the school closed, could be re-used to support the sustainability of the community. It is suggested that it could be used as a base for remote working if it were to be retained by the Council, which would make it more feasible for some Council employees to live in Northmavine, and that the building could also be let to businesses for office space. Being able to work close to home – at least some days a week – would make it more viable for local residents to work in administrative jobs for the Council where they would otherwise have to travel a long distance, e.g. to Lerwick. However, it would seem unlikely that it would be economic for the Council to provide an office base in a community as small as North Roe rather than support people to work from home, e.g. through providing them with a laptop, or at a sub-regional base in a larger community that would also serve people living in other outlying areas.
- 5.11 The NCDC business plan includes an action to develop office/hot desk/workshop space and incubation units for new businesses. Up to now it has concentrated on the possibility of such developments in buildings which

may be available in Hillswick. While there has been some interest, the demand expressed is relatively low and this would be unlikely to take up the school building. It may be that, if advertised as an opportunity, a business would wish to rent or buy space in the school building. However, given the remote location and the lack of a ready workforce, this seems unlikely.

- 5.12 Should the school close, the Council could help support local development initiatives through donating the building (and the adjacent School House) to the community. The community, or NCDC, would need a clear plan for the sustainable use of the property so that it would be clearly an asset rather than a liability. Alternatively, SIC could sell the building and invest the proceeds in community projects. This would help compensate for the loss of the school and its economic impact. Undoubtedly, however, the community would need support in making full use of any opportunities presented and in converting the building for alternative use. The costs of this support might well outweigh the savings from closing the school.
- 5.13 If the school were to close it would be important for North Roe that what is now a valuable community building does not become empty and unused, and be another vacant property which gradually falls into disrepair.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The main points and conclusions from this report are that:

- There are 57 active households in North Roe, including 16 single person households;
- Although there are 79 residential properties, 22 of these (28%) are currently vacant;
- North Roe had 144 residents at the time of the 2011 Census. We believe this has now reduced to 136;
- Residents include 20 young people. 6 are primary school age and there are 5 of pre-school age. There is also one expectant mother;
- The school's current roll is 6 pupils, and this is projected by the Council to rise to 8 in 2017/18;
- Northmavine has been recognised as one of the most fragile areas in Shetland. It was identified in the 2012 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as the 6th most deprived of the 30 Shetland data zone areas;
- 85 people in North Roe are economically active, most usually in full time employment or self employed;
- The percentage who are self employed is well above the average in Shetland or Scotland;
- The traditional agricultural and fisheries sector is still the predominant employment sector for people living in North Roe, accounting for 1 in 5 of the workforce. Construction and Social Care are also important sectors;
- Other than crofting, North Roe is largely a dormitory for people keen to live a rural lifestyle but willing to earn their living elsewhere;
- Of the 70 local resident jobs identified (excluding crofting), 56 (80%) are located outside Northmavine
- The only full time job based in North Roe is the school's headteacher, and there are only 12 part time jobs in the area – half of which are at the school;
- The median income figure for postcodes in the North Roe area ranged between £20,300 and £26,200 in 2012. Average household income was £30,275 compared to £35,201. Total household income is estimated at £1.85 million, and this is regarded as a reasonable estimate of economic output;
- The direct impact of closing North Roe and Urafirth Primary Schools would be the loss of around £115,000 in employee income to the

Northmavine economy – which would be partially offset in the wider local area by the employment associated with any contract to transport the children to Ollaberry Primary School;

- People living in North Roe usually have family connections to the area (either direct or through their partner);
- Younger couples are very concerned at the possibility of the school closing and, with North Roe mainly a base for commuting, could leave the area, with other young couples deciding not to settle there. Commuting is becoming more expensive, and closure of the school would affect the perceived balance between the costs and benefits of living in the area;
- Closure of the Primary school would take away the main motivation for young people and families to seek to live in the local area. This in turn would tend to increase further the proportion of elderly people in the community, reduce the stimulus for regeneration, and lead to homes which become available being taken by older people and those looking for a holiday home. These impacts would have potentially serious effects on the long term sustainability of the community.

North Roe Primary School: catchment area



Deprivation and Social Exclusion in Shetland

Extract

Of the 17 professionals aware of circumstances in Northmavine, all felt access was an issue contributing to social exclusion and deprivation in the area. Three quarters felt lack of employment was an issue and just under a half that housing was an issue. This reflected evidence from participants living in the area.

There was acknowledgement that the remote and scattered population made it difficult to justify services being provided within the area. However the lack of facilities and employment opportunities in the area and lack of transport to access these, more readily available in other areas, was acute.

Employment opportunities within the area were scarce and typically of low quality and pay, with lack of security. Most employment was accessed outwith the area, making transport out of Northmavine a priority for many and a continual drain on financial resources, particularly with recent increases in fuel prices.

The lack of facilities and access to facilities was particularly felt by young people, older people and those who were disabled or carers.

The need to have private transport to commute to work opportunities left other household members isolated on a daily basis. This was particularly apparent for women in the area with family responsibilities: compounded by lack of childcare, access to childcare or support for caring. Many were wholly reliant upon the goodwill of others, augmenting feelings of dependence on others. Over half wished to access flexible employment and/or learning opportunities but were unable to do so.

Not having flexible transport meant people in the area spending considerable time and money accessing shops, doctors and other services using the public transport system. This could involve spending huge amounts of spare time driving others around to access opportunities. It also meant poor quality of access, for example to good quality fresh fruit and vegetables and other groceries: even for those with a car, it could involve a 16/18 mile trip to get milk and bread.

Teenagers in the area were bored: there was nothing for them to do in the area and it was very difficult for them to get to Brae or Lerwick, where they could socialise. In a number of cases this frustration was vented through drink and drugs and antisocial behaviour. There was a general feeling of isolation and detachment from the area with the aspiration of many being to leave once they were able to. Lack of transport was the main issue.

However, primary school children all felt part of the community and enjoyed the opportunities that Northmavine had to offer. Nevertheless a division was apparent between those who were able to take advantage of opportunities available outwith the area because their parents could afford to and those who could not. Older people and disabled were also unable to access social opportunities because they were not available close by nor was the transport and support available to enable them to access them outwith the area.

Many were living in poor housing conditions without central heating and/or with a lack of adequate heating. Although these were homeowners they did not have the finances to sort out. Evidence suggests these households were in fuel poverty.

As well as substandard housing there was a lack of housing in the area, particularly for young people, accelerating outmigration. One of the reasons for this was attributed to the amalgamation of crofts preventing access to croft land. Conversely there was evidence from people outwith the area being housed in Northmavine, which was not their preference.

Nevertheless, a number of participants appreciated the peace, quiet and open space and felt it was important to them, despite other problems they may be facing. A number of participants mentioned that it was possible to live relatively cheaply and well, particularly with access to land. Weekly roast dinners might traditionally be seen to be an indicator of wealth. However, in an area such as Northmavine a roast dinner 2-4 days a week was not uncommon because it was cheap, with lamb and vegetables readily available.

No participants in the area felt the community was unfriendly. But there was a feeling that there were cliques amongst locals and a lack of privacy.

There was concern amongst professionals of a general cycle of decline as the area continues to experience depopulation and an aging population, with the danger of exacerbating the already sparsely serviced area. All felt access was an issue contributing to social exclusion and deprivation in the area, as well as lack of employment and housing in the area.