

Shetland Cultural Strategy

A vision for cultural
life in Shetland

2004 - 2008

I am very pleased to see the production of this first Cultural Strategy for Shetland.

Culture is at the heart of our lives in Shetland. We are very proud of our cultural heritage but we are also a forward looking community, learning from our past, keeping our traditions alive and having a continual thirst for new cultural experiences and influences.

This strategy demonstrates the partnerships involved in taking forward cultural activity. There is a contribution to be made by public agencies and private enterprises and most importantly by communities themselves. This strategy is for everyone in Shetland. Through engagement with cultural activity, individuals can develop and communities can be strengthened.

As the Chairman of the Community Planning Board, I am confident that this Strategy, and the Action Plan flowing from it, will set the way for these partnerships to deliver on the priorities in our Community Plan - a prosperous economy, a society which is vibrant, healthy, safe, and one in which everyone can take part, an environment which is conserved and enhanced, and a cultural identity which is celebrated and promoted.

I wish those involved in leading on cultural activity well and look forward to seeing continued developments in all aspects of this important area of work throughout Shetland.

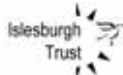
Sandy Cluness

Chair, Community Planning Board

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Key partners:



Glìms o origin

Christine de Luca

I savoured dy aerly wìrds is dey cam,
whinivver dey surprised dy mooth;
helpit shape dem wi dee, hent dem.

Foo mony generations o bairns
is quarried dat sam wìrds, fun
aa needfu soonds aroond dem?

An sea-farers at laanded here
höved in, fae uncan erts, wìrds
kjerried on ocean's shiftin tides;

wave-worn, wind-riven wìrds,
der aedges shaaved aff, makkin
a meld; a tongue fit fur saga

an fur psalm. Rumse ithin hit,
hock awa, an du'll fin veins
i da steyn, bricht glìms o origin!

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Dave Wheeler

Foreword

This is the first Shetland Cultural Strategy. We recognise that the term 'culture' can mean different things to different people, but for the purposes of this strategy is seen to include all aspects of the arts, including visual arts, music, song, theatre, dance, film, language and heritage, libraries, sport & recreation, education and the environment.

Shetland is blessed with a rich and diverse culture which has grown and evolved out of the geographical remoteness, and the industries and communities of fishing and agriculture. Shetlanders have embraced and responded to many new influences which when integrated with existing traditions results in a strong and dynamic culture. This cultural legacy is one which many other areas of Scotland envy.

We have long recognised that cultural activities have a crucial role to play in improving the quality of life of Shetlanders. To that end, the investment in culture over the last 25 years has brought wide social benefits. There is an infrastructure of facilities unequalled in the rest of Scotland with leisure centres and swimming pools located alongside each of the secondary schools, the Bonhoga Gallery, a network of over 50 community halls, a new library in Lerwick and a new museum and archive opening in 2006. The new museum and archive will be a hub for the well developed range of cultural heritage initiatives and centres, many of which are managed by voluntary community organisations. In addition, we have plans for a cinema together with a purpose-built venue for music and other art forms to consolidate and drive forward our tremendous musical heritage, which is showcased through a number of annual festivals. Shetland will also host the 2005 NatWest Island Games with 24 islands from around the world competing in 15 sports with over 2500 competitors. This will be the largest multi-sport event to be held in Scotland that year.



Foreword continued

Glasgow University concluded in November 2004, in a report on the impact of cultural development in Shetland that this investment has brought about:

Cultural development - the rich tapestry of cultural activities available on the islands, the opportunities for exposure to a range of indigenous and other cultural forms, and the expectation of artistic excellence and aesthetic innovation.

Community development - the extent to which culture is visibly embedded in community life through infrastructural development as well as through networks of artists, arts tutors, participants, supporters and audiences, and;

Personal development - the contact, commitment and the networks which develop as a result of an individual's engagement in cultural activities.

So undoubtedly, we have a strong foundation from which to move forward. But we must aspire to more. Culture is seen at the heart of any new Shetland, especially our own indigenous culture and dialect. It is vital for the future health and prosperity of the islands. We believe that cultural development is a key aspect of community planning and can contribute so much to economic prosperity, the further development of tourism, lifelong learning and social inclusion.

This strategy brings together a partnership of agencies and communities with the aim of ensuring that the cultural sector continues to thrive and develop and that it provides opportunities for everyone in Shetland to participate at whatever level they wish, but to feel that they have been challenged, excited, inspired and educated and have fulfilled their potential.



Eddie Knight

Spokesperson - Culture & Recreation Forum



George Smith

Head of Community Development Services



Summary

The Shetland Cultural Strategy 2004-2008 brings together a wide range of ideas and opinions about the cultural spirit of Shetland and the way its citizens would like life in the islands to be. It establishes a shared vision and diverse range of objectives for developing cultural facilities, services and activities for the benefit of the Shetland community in general.

The Strategy links into many other Council and organisation strategies and plans, such as the Community Plan, Shetland Islands Council's Corporate Plan, and individual Trust Plans, but does not attempt to duplicate objectives set out in those documents. Instead it provides encouragement to create and nurture links across different areas, to find areas where a broad and inclusive attitude to culture can lead to individual and community benefits and economic regeneration.

The Strategy recognises the extraordinary rich Shetland heritage, traditions and creativity, its cultural traditions and its unspoilt natural environment. The Strategy celebrates success and the many aspects of Shetland life that we are justifiably proud of, but importantly it addresses challenges and points to improvements and cultural changes which are sought by the community.

The key partners who have been involved in developing the Cultural Strategy are detailed on page 01.



A vision for cultural life in Shetland 2004 - 2008



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Principal features

Some of the principal features of the Strategy are:

- Ensuring that cultural facilities and activities are accessible to all communities in Shetland
- Recognition of the value of volunteers to the cultural life of the islands
- Addressing barriers to participation in cultural life, including transport
- The use of information and computer technologies to aid access to cultural pursuits by individuals and groups in outlying communities
- Development of facilities and activities such as the Museum & Archive, the Cinema & Music Venue, and the 2005 NatWest Island Games
- Increasing the range of cultural activities to meet the needs of new user groups and visitors.
- Promotion of the unique Shetland natural environment, archaeology and cultural traditions
- Ensuring that cultural activities are available throughout school years and beyond
- Opportunities for new partnerships to develop fresh approaches to creative industries, tourism and regeneration
- Recognition of the importance of diverse cultural provision in retaining young people in Shetland and attracting new people to settle in the Islands
- Recognition that the Strategy should be delivered within available resources and that it should maximise opportunities for support and sponsorship.



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Principal features

Background

The Shetland Cultural Strategy has been developed under the leadership of the Community Development Services Department of Shetland Islands Council. It's a strategy for all Shetland and for everyone of all ages who lives here.

The Strategy has been developed with the assistance of many individuals and organisations who contributed their knowledge, opinions and recommendations during 2002. It provides a local strategy to complement the Scottish National Cultural Strategy which was launched in 2000.

The Cultural Strategy builds on existing cultural strengths and identifies key opportunities for cultural development. It is intended to influence policies, activities and investment across all aspects of Shetland life. It complements and supports the strategies of individual Council departments and local charitable trusts.

It's important because it covers so many areas of people's lives - all the things we do and enjoy, the things we believe and value - things we want to achieve and are proud of - things that attract people to Shetland. It's about Shetland dialect, music, youth culture, drama, visual arts, crafts, literature, films, festivals, personal and community history, sport, skateboarding, sailing, Shetland's natural and built environment, the seabirds and the wildflowers, locally produced food, and much more.



Developing the strategy

The Scottish National Cultural Strategy has the fundamental aim of promoting cultural development. It defines culture in the following way:

Scotland's culture is dynamic and diverse. It has developed and been shaped over many years by the experiences of Scotland's inhabitants and their contacts with others.

In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

This strategy therefore takes a broad view of Scotland's culture. It includes ideas, customs and traditions, beliefs, habits of thinking, religions, languages, identities, mythologies and histories, and the expression of these in myriad forms such as poetry and prose, visual arts, music, song, theatre, comedy, dance, architecture, design, costume, film, photography and a range of crafts. It is represented in the natural and historical landscape; archaeology; buildings; museum, gallery and library collections; archives and records; and shared memories and experiences. It includes aspects of lifestyle, such as sport and leisure. We can participate in Scotland's culture almost anywhere: in museums, theatres, schools, colleges, streets, galleries, libraries, churches, cinemas, sports grounds, workplaces, local halls, pubs, and in our homes. Not only have new technologies dramatically widened global access to Scotland's culture, but they have also widened our understanding of what that culture is.



National Principles & Strategic Objectives

The National Cultural Strategy is based on the following principles:

- Culture permeates and links many dimensions of people's lives
- Culture is dynamic, it reflects and shapes our society
- Participation in cultural activities is beneficial
- Culture is at the heart of education
- Creativity is a national resource
- Disability should be no barrier to cultural access
- Scotland's heritage should be conserved, valued and promoted
- Interest in the cultures of other countries should be encouraged
- Cultural organisations need to work in partnership with their audiences
- Decisions about public funding must be based on valid and reliable evidence

Four thematic strategic objectives link a wide range of complementary actions aimed at taking forward Scotland's cultural development:

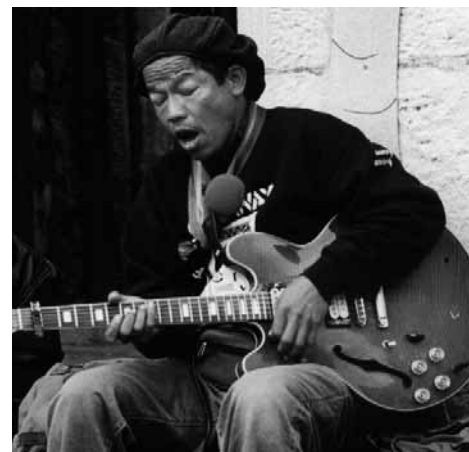
- 1 **Promoting** creativity, the arts and other cultural activities
- 2 **Celebrating** Scotland's cultural heritage in its full diversity
- 3 Realising culture's potential **contribution** to education, promoting inclusion and enhancing people's quality of life
- 4 Assuring an effective national **support** framework for culture

Key considerations for Shetland

The Cultural Strategy is based on a number of fundamental considerations which connect with other overarching frameworks such as equality of opportunity and social justice, but also reflect the unique qualities and attributes of Shetland.

Four specific considerations have been identified:

- A partnership approach involving the community and service providers
- Supporting the development of individuals and communities
- Taking account of the scattered and outlying communities of Shetland
- Preservation of Shetland's past and development into the future



Thematic approach

The guidance developed by the Scottish Executive and the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) recommends that local cultural strategies adopt a thematic approach which crosses traditional and departmental boundaries. Thematic aims and objectives include issues such as safety in the community, care and development of the natural environmental, social justice, and a wide range of community developments.





The role of the Cultural Strategy

The Cultural Strategy is the basis for promoting and engaging with cultural activities and cultural values. The fundamental aim is to identify key cultural development opportunities and point towards actions which can lead to successful developments. The Strategy is a toolkit and reference for individuals, organisations and the Council.

The Cultural Strategy links with almost all the Council's individual plans and strategies, from the Community and Corporate Plans, to the Youth Strategy, Joint Health Improvement Plan, individual Charitable Trusts Plans, Modernising Government, and many others. The Strategy enables a kaleidoscope of priorities to be discussed, competing demands evaluated, and new resources obtained. It is a framework for enriching life in Shetland. The Strategy is expected to have a five-year life, but it will be reviewed at least twice during that period.

Involving the community

The development of Shetland Cultural Strategy has been guided by a Steering Group, convened by Shetland Islands Council, and progress has been reported to the Culture and Recreation Forum throughout the year.

An essential feature of a Cultural Strategy is that it should be relevant to everyone and be based on the wishes and aspirations of the community. Public and organisation consultation meetings were therefore arranged in order to solicit opinions, advice, and guidance.

Public consultation meetings were held in Gutcher, Brae, Scalloway, Lerwick, Bixter and Sandwick.

Additionally, five group consultation meetings were held in Lerwick Town Hall. Many different stakeholder organisations and departments were invited to these meetings which were themed in order to encourage in-depth discussions.



A pioneering consultation meeting with young people from schools and youth clubs/forums throughout Shetland - the newly established forum 'Youth Voice' - was organised in Lerwick Town Hall. Young people from all parts of Shetland attended and the outcome was an encouraging and innovative range of comments and suggestions for the Cultural Strategy.

- Group 1 Arts, Heritage, Libraries, Museums, Crafts
- Group 2 Well Being - Sport, Recreation, Health, Quality of Life
- Group 3 Community Development, Education and Regeneration
- Group 4 Media, Economy and Tourism
- Group 5 Youth Voice

While the consultation was in progress a special web site was established [www.shetland.gov.uk/cultural_strategy/]. The site contains background information, details of meetings, and feedback from earlier meetings.

Throughout the consultation period, individuals, representatives and organisations were encouraged to write, fax or email their comments.



Vision, Themes and Objectives

A vision for cultural life in Shetland

To create a strong sense of community identity and pride as a means of achieving a greater degree of confidence and prosperity for the benefit of present and future generations, through strategic cultural planning and action.

Themes

1 Access, participation and potential

Encourage active and participative lifestyles, equality of opportunity, personal and community development through increasing access to and participation in the broadest range of cultural activities throughout Shetland, particularly for people who may be excluded or marginalised at present.

2 Creativity and heritage

Celebrate, promote and invest in the islands' distinctive creativity, diverse culture, heritage and environment, and develop and promote them within Shetland and to the wider world.

3 Learning, economy and regeneration

Contribute to the regeneration of Shetland's quality of life, image and economy through the strategic development of human, physical, geographic and financial resources.

Aims

Within each of the themes three or four main aims are established which are specifically linked to aspects of Shetland life and culture. Each aim is supported by a number of key areas or issues to be taken up by the community in general or, more usually, by one or more organisation, Trust, Council Department or cultural sector.

These key areas will in turn be translated into action plans and ultimately real actions. The aims and key areas provide the links between the themes and personal, group and community actions.



Theme 1

Access, participation and potential

Encourage active and participative lifestyles, equality of opportunity, personal and community development through increased access to and participation in the broadest range of cultural activities throughout Shetland, particularly for people who may be excluded or marginalised at present.

Aim 1.1

Support the contribution of cultural life to the vitality and sustainability of communities throughout Shetland

(Links to Shetland Community Plan; Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy; Area Regeneration Partnership; Library Service Aims & Objectives; Shetland Enterprise's Business Plan; Shetland Arts Trust's 4 Year Plan; UHI and Community Learning Centres; Modernising Government)

Key areas

- 1.1.1 Assist the sustainability of fragile communities by promoting cultural and economic initiatives and by building community confidence
- 1.1.2 Improve access to and participation in a diverse range of cultural activities for all residents and visitors, especially those in outlying communities or at risk of social exclusion

Aim 1.2

Maintain and develop the services and facilities necessary for the vitality and prosperity of Shetland's cultural life

(Links to SIC Joint Future Objectives; Shetland Arts Trust's 4 Year Plan; Better Integrated Children's Services; Library Service Aims & Objectives; Strategy for Cultural Education in Shetland Schools)

Key areas

- 1.2.1 Develop and implement plans to assist and improve the sustainability of community facilities, and to ensure cultural and social activities take place
- 1.2.2 Support people who volunteer and recognise those who work in the cultural sectors throughout Shetland and promote their value in terms of the cultural life of the islands
- 1.2.3 Promote the intrinsic value of cultural facilities, activities and services throughout Shetland

Aim 1.3

Promote activities and facilities which encourage individuals of all abilities, especially young people, to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle

(Links to emerging social justice and equalities frameworks, A Healthy Shetland (Joint Health Improvement Plan), Shetland Arts Trust 4-Year Plan, Music Development Project, Shetland Sport & Recreation Strategy, Library Service Aims & Objectives, Strategy for Cultural Education in Shetland Schools)

Key areas

- 1.3.1 Ensure that a diverse range of recreational activities and facilities are available throughout Shetland to meet the needs of local communities
- 1.3.2 Support strategies and activities which encourage individuals to develop healthy lifestyles and participate (and achieve their potential) in recreational activities
- 1.3.3 Promote access to and understanding of Shetland's natural environment

Aim 1.4

Support participation in the cultural life of the islands by ensuring that there are accessible transport services to and from Shetland, and within Shetland

(Links to SIC Structure Plan, Transport Strategy, Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy,



Theme 2

Creativity and heritage

Celebrate, promote and invest in the islands' distinctive creativity, diverse culture, heritage and environment and promote these within Shetland and to the wider world.

Aim 2.1

Celebrate and build on the diversity and excellence of artistic and creative activity within the islands

(Links to Shetland Arts Trust 4-Year Plan, Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy, Library Service Aims & Objectives, Strategy for Cultural Education in Shetland Schools, Strategy for Further & Higher Education)

Key areas

- 2.1.1 Provide strategic support for cultural and creative infrastructure including training and career development opportunities
- 2.1.2 Support and develop a programme of bringing cultural activities and artists into Shetland for the benefit of residents of Shetland
- 2.1.3 Maintain and develop arts education in schools, further and higher education, and develop facilities which enable young artists to perform and develop their careers
- 2.1.4 Support individual and collective expression in traditional and new forms of creative activity

Aim 2.2

Sustain and promote Shetland's dialects and place names within the Islands and beyond

(Links to Library Service Aims & Objectives)

Key areas

- 2.2.1 Support and promote the use of, and develop interest in, Shetland's dialects, place names and literature
- 2.2.2 Promote the culture of Shetland's dialects, place names and literature



Aim 2.3

Maintain, develop and promote the rich cultural and natural heritage, arts and crafts, and archaeology of Shetland

(Links to Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 2.3.1 Maintain, develop and promote Shetland's museums, galleries, libraries, archives and archaeological heritage
- 2.3.2 Support the recording of Shetland's cultural and natural heritage
- 2.3.3 Ensure the long-term preservation of Shetland artefact, archive, heritage and library collections within the islands including the repatriation of key artefacts and digitising of library material
- 2.3.4 Continue to manage the built environment in ways that respect Shetland's outstanding and distinctive built heritage

Aim 2.4

Safeguard, promote and ensure access to the natural environment of Shetland and its outstanding landscape, flora and fauna

(Links to Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 2.4.1 Safeguard the wildlife, sealife and high quality natural environment (including landscapes) of Shetland
- 2.4.2 Promote the sustainable wildlife, sealife and high quality natural environment of Shetland
- 2.4.3 Ensure access to the wildlife, sealife and high quality natural environment of Shetland

Aim 2.5

Encourage and promote creative and craft industries

Key areas

- 2.5.1 Support sustainable creative industries and clusters of related industries in Shetland and promote high quality visual amenities in new development in the built environment
- 2.5.2 Develop traditional and contemporary craft industries and utilise their products to promote the Shetland identity throughout the world



Theme 3

Learning, economy and regeneration

Contribute to the regeneration of Shetland's quality of life, image and economy through the strategic and creative use of human, physical, geographic and financial resources

Aim 3.1

Invest in and support the contribution of cultural activities to school education and to the lifelong learning process for the wider community

(Links to Community Learning Strategy, Local Economic Forum, Strategy for Cultural Education in Shetland Schools, Library Service Aims and Objectives, Shetland Sport & Recreation Strategy, UHI Community Learning Centres, Shetland Arts Trust 4-Year Plan, Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 3.1.1 Support the inclusion of a diverse range of cultural and multicultural activities within schools
- 3.1.2 Promote the cultural benefits of learning for individuals and communities
- 3.1.3 Support the development of further, higher and informal education opportunities devoted to cultural activities

Aim 3.2

Exploit the potential of cultural activity to contribute to the economic regeneration of Shetland and promote widespread usage of and participation in these activities

(Links to Shetland Marketing Strategy, Shetland Arts Trust 4-Year Plan, Shetland Tourism Plan, Library Service Aims and Objectives, Shetland Sport & Recreation Plan, Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy, Shetland Enterprise Business Plan, Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 3.2.1 Support environmental, economic and social regeneration led by cultural heritage, cultural activity and creative enterprises
- 3.2.2 Place cultural factors at the heart of the marketing and promotion of Shetland

Aim 3.3

Utilise and promote Shetland's rich and diverse cultural life, built and natural heritage as the principal focus for developing tourism to the Islands

(Links to Shetland Marketing Plan, Shetland Tourism Plan, Shetland Arts Trust 4 Year Plan, Shetland Sport & Recreation Strategy, Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy, Shetland Enterprise Business Plan, Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 3.3.1 Develop clear and effective promotional strategies and information networks to communicate the diverse range of activities and facilities available
- 3.3.2 Work with service providers to ensure that high quality and appropriate facilities are available for visitors to Shetland

Aim 3.4

Promote Shetland's cultural life and activities in order to contribute to the retention and growth of the population of the islands, especially in rural and outlying communities.

(Links to SIC Structure Plan, Shetland Marketing Strategy, Shetland 2012: Economic Development Strategy, Library Service Aims and Objectives, Shetland Arts Trust 4 Year Plan, Shetland Sport & Recreation Plan, Shetland Enterprise Business Plan, Shetland Cultural Heritage Strategy, Shetland Interpretive Plan, Shetland Amenity Trust's Strategic Plan)

Key areas

- 3.4.1 Invest in culture to provide facilities, events, activities and employment opportunities which attract individuals and organisations to locate in Shetland.
- 3.4.2 While recognising the unique value of Shetland's heritage, ensure that cultural life and activities are promoted in a manner which demonstrates their openness to new influences and changes - a modern, developing culture
- 3.4.3 Work with the media to promote and report cultural issues, activities and achievements



Monitoring and review

Monitoring

This Cultural Strategy provides a framework for policy and the development of action plans by many different organisations, most of which have their own more detailed strategies. This Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan indicate practical methods of achieving goals.

Initially the Council, the Charitable Trusts, and the many potential partner organisations should re-visit and revise their departmental and corporate strategies the work of which will be influenced by the proposals outlined here.

Review

This is the first Shetland Cultural Strategy and it is intended to grow, change, develop, and gain status as it becomes increasingly relevant to the life and vitality of the Shetland community.

This first Strategy covers a five year period from 2004 to 2008, and within the Council it is the responsibility of the Head of Community Development.

It is recommended that during the initial five year period the Cultural Strategy should be formally reviewed at least twice by the Cultural Strategy Planning Group. The reviews should provide opportunities for changing circumstances and new ideas to be accommodated within the Strategy.

A summary review and progress report should be prepared annually and distributed widely, including on the section of the Council's web site devoted to the Cultural Strategy.

Communication

This Strategy is for everyone in Shetland, not just the Council. It is important that it is widely available and relevant. The Strategy will be published in three forms:

- the full Strategy document

- a summary leaflet version

- on the Council's web site (www.shetland.gov.uk/cultural_strategy)

Print and online versions can be accessed through the Library service.

The web site publishes updates and provides opportunities for feedback.