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**THE
NEOLITHIC
HEART OF
SHETLAND
HERITAGE
STRATEGY**

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Viking Energy acknowledges that the proposed wind farm, if approved, could alter the context in which some of the heritage of the Central Mainland is viewed. Viking Energy proposes to undertake a major heritage project framed in harmony with relevant national, regional and local policies to redress this situation.
- 1.2 AOC Archaeology Group has been commissioned by Viking Energy to devise and implement this heritage strategy.
- 1.3 The overall aim of the *Neolithic Heart of Shetland* Heritage Strategy is to use the important, yet under-developed, Neolithic cultural heritage in Central Mainland Shetland to facilitate and encourage the local communities of Shetland to engage in the discovery, management, enhancement, interrogation and display of their cultural heritage.
- 1.4 The aspiration of the project is to involve and integrate as many groups as possible and to attempt to meet their diverse needs through an innovative, community-focussed, heritage work programme. Founded on stringent academic and professional standards the project will involve survey and excavation, an environmental landscape project, a schools programme and a touring regional exhibition, an archive project and, finally, access and interpretation improvements to pertinent Neolithic monuments in the area.
- 1.5 By opening up and promoting the heritage of the area to as many people and groups as possible, the project will encourage greater links and interaction not only with heritage but also between generations, genders and cultural groups. Every sector of the community will be encouraged to take part in the project. Particularly important is the involvement of young people, whose role it will be to shape the communities of the future - each activity will involve school children. The project will result in much-needed visitor and tourist attractions in the area that will boost the local economy enhance tourist potential and build community capacity. This project will make a positive and lasting contribution to local communities and their heritage and help future projects to flourish.

2 CONTEXT & CONSULTATION

2.1 National, regional and local policy and the Heritage Strategy in Context

This Heritage Strategy has been written with reference to relevant national, local and regional policies which cover the key areas of Planning, Cultural Heritage Strategies, Tourism, Economy, Education, Outreach and Access.

2.2 Consultation with key stakeholders

During the writing of the Stage One report consultation took place with the major key stakeholders. The intention of this scoping stage was to outline the project in principle and to get an indication of whether major stakeholders would be supportive in principle of the proposals.

Discussion took place with representatives of Historic Scotland (Ann MacSween; Laura Hindmarch) Shetland Amenity Trust (Val Turner; Chris Dyer) and Shetland Archives (Brian Smith). Discussion

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also took place with local councillors: Alastair Cooper (Member for Shetland North); Frank Robertson (Member for Shetland West); Gary Robinson (Member for Shetland West); Adam Doull (Member for Shetland North); Florence Grains (Member for Shetland West) and William Manson (Member for Shetland North). Discussions also took place with local community council chairpersons: Alastair Cooper (Delting); Adam Doull (Northmavine) and June Johnson (Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale). These face-to-face discussions involved outlining the project scope and ethos, as outlined in *The Neolithic Heart of Shetland: Heritage Strategy* leaflet (Appended to the rear of this document). Following the meetings all of the above-named said that they agreed in principle with the developing Heritage Strategy.

In addition, telephone discussions also took place with local community council representatives; John Priest (Sandsting & Aithsting) and Hubert Hunter (Nesting & Lunnasting).

No contact has yet been made with other pertinent local stakeholders, particularly landowners on whose land the programme of works would take place and local teachers and local heritage groups. These groups will be consulted during Stage Two of the Project.

3 PROJECT CONTEXT

3.1 The project area

The project area comprises land within a 10 mile radius around Voe, and includes Brae, East Burrafirth, Laxo, Weisdale, South Nesting, Graven, Lunnasting and Burravoe. In broad terms it covers the regions of Delting, Lunnasting & Nesting.

3.2 The cultural heritage in the area

As outlined in the Cultural Heritage Chapter of the ES and ES Addendum one of the defining features of the project area is the preponderance of Neolithic monuments, particularly chambered cairns and houses. This project will focus on these Neolithic monuments (see also Section 4).

3.3 Chronological Context

Although there has been a wealth of work on cultural heritage in Shetland over the last ten years many of the projects are concerned with time-periods later than the Neolithic. For example, the Shetland Burnt Mounds programme and the recent Cruester Burnt Mound project are concerned with the Bronze Age. Old Scatness covers the Late Bronze Age and later periods. Similarly, the Shetland Community Archaeology Programme uncovered an Iron Age building along with a later burial. Many projects focus on the Viking and Late Norse periods, for example the recent work at Jarlshof, the Viking Unst Project and the Norse stofa at the Biggins.

3.4 Geographical Context

Although several cultural heritage projects are underway across Shetland, they are primarily restricted to the Southern Mainland and/or the Northern Islands. There have been no recent cultural heritage projects in the proposed heritage strategy study area.

3.5 Access and Interpretational Contexts

One of the key aims of many cultural heritage projects in Shetland is to improve access and interpretation, for locals and tourists. This is particularly true of the work at, for example, Old Scatness, Jarlshof, Cruester and Unst. However, there is a distinct lack of accessible monuments and interpretation in the proposed Heritage Strategy study area. This is made clear when one refers to the suite of regional interpretative leaflets produced by the Shetland Amenity Trust that aims to promote

visits to key cultural and natural heritage assets across Shetland. Their ‘*Archaeology*’ leaflet highlights key sites across Shetland. On their inset map only Newing prehistoric houses and standing stones are highlighted in the proposed study area. Similarly reference to the *Nesting, Lunnasting and Delting* leaflet shows that the natural assets outweigh the archaeological assets.

This project will focus on the Neolithic monuments of this neglected area. This will facilitate connectivity between the excellent heritage assets in the Southern Mainland and those in the islands further north and assist in developing a more complete picture of the Neolithic of Shetland.

4 THE HEART OF THE STRATEGY: THE NEOLITHIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE NORTH MAINLAND SHETLAND

The background and full research design for the Heart of the Neolithic is set out in full in the Heritage Strategy Document. What follows is a summary

4.1 Shetland Neolithic Cairns and Houses

The research project will focus on the monuments, artefacts and environments of Shetland’s Neolithic Period. The monuments in question will be chambered cairns and houses and our work will focus on the excavation, analysis and publication of each monument, its architectural and engineering interpretation and its conservation and presentation to the public as a living legacy of the project. In addition, the natural environments in which the monuments were built will be explored.

4.1.1 Chambered Cairns: Excavations

It is proposed that:

- A minimum of six cairns will be explored with small scale excavation works to the extent necessary for their conservation, in the light of existing problems of erosion and information loss; these we shall call ‘salvage excavations’
- A minimum of two chambered cairns will be investigated by full excavation
- In addition five cairns/houses of uncertain form will be trial trenched to clarify their nature and extent and to provide an unambiguous definition of their character together with guidance on the identification of other similarly ambiguous monuments.
- trial trenching will be undertaken on a minimum of four monuments to clarify issues of engineering and interpretation. These will be small scale trenches, targeted to recover the necessary information with minimal disturbance to the monument.

4.1.2 The Salvage Excavations

The monuments at Laxo and Hayfield lie within the proposed wind farm’s view shed and both are in near to terminal condition. Both are currently degrading and there can be little prospect of reversing their degradation. We propose that both fragmentary sites are fully excavated and restored to their current profiles but conserved and protected from further degradation. It is anticipated that the remaining fragments will provide reliable information on the cairn structure and possibly on dating and pre-cairn environment and while there is less prospect that artefactual material may survive *in situ* it is not impossible that some artefacts may be recovered.

Following excavation, and in close discussion with Historic Scotland (both monuments are Scheduled) the project will bring forward suggestions for the conservation of the original and authentic fabric of each monument and explore the possibility of indicating on each site something further of its now missing structure. The project does not propose reconstruction on site, which would be unacceptable in terms of national and international conservation charters but we should explore creatively the possibility of augmenting the site remains to convey a sense of their original forms or functions to the lay visitor. Where possible, the project will train interested members of the local community in the skills of excavation and post excavation and, more importantly, in the longer term management of the cultural resource that each monument represents.

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Following site inspections as part of the Stage Two Report a further four monuments in this category will be selected for salvage excavation.

4.1.3 *Full excavations*

The European Union's policy for heritage (founded on the *Valetta Convention*) identifies preservation *in situ* as the preferred option for the Union's heritage and only where this is impossible, would excavation analysis and publication be acceptable as a second best alternative. This guidance, taken at face value, may seem to rule out the excavation of monuments for research reasons alone. However, the reason we preserve heritage monuments is for the value that society derives from them and that value is derived from the monuments potential to inform this and future generations about humanity's past (*Burra Charter*). At present, whilst we can draft interesting narratives about Shetland's Neolithic we certainly cannot pretend that the monuments are sufficiently well understood to inform even this generation, much less future generations. In addition, recent changes in planning policy and guidance in Scotland have emphasised the need to involve local communities in the nation's heritage and the need also for heritage to make a full and fair contribution to the nation's welfare (SPP and SHEP 2008). These monuments can do neither unless we understand them better and we can only develop that understanding by excavating them fully and to the highest professional standards available to us.

On that basis we propose the full excavation of two monuments. The choice will be made following Stage Two of the Heritage Strategy. Monuments will be selected for their potential to address the maximum number of research questions, because they typify the main categories of monuments in Shetland and because they are accessible (see section 5.1 below).

4.1.4 *Trial Trenching*

The Stage Two Report will detail the research questions to be addressed (these are outlined in the Stage One Report). With these questions in mind, field inspection of Neolithic Monuments in the area will be undertaken to assess their suitability for the project. Factors such as access and setting amongst others will also be considered at that time. Modest scale trial trenching of five cairns/houses is anticipated to clarify issues of identification. A further four monuments will be subject to small-scale trial trenching targeted to clarify particular issues of engineering and interpretation.

4.1.5 *Quality Assurance*

To ensure that the quality of the work is of the highest order we have invited outstanding scholars of the period to take part in this programme, as excavation directors and as advisers to the project. By this means we should manage to raise the profile of Shetland's Neolithic archaeology and form lasting relationships of enduring quality beyond the islands' shores.

4.1.6 *Dissemination of Results*

To ensure the widest dissemination of the results of each excavation and survey, a standard policy on publication has been formulated, below, and all participants are required to subscribe to this policy. The policy aims to provide open and transparent access to the site data, to ensure rapid dissemination of results, maximising its Public Relations value and speedy transition to full publication of the results in scholarly and lay sources; in paper and electronic forms.

5 THE HERITAGE STRATEGY

5.1 Project focus and aims

This Heritage Strategy, therefore, is focussed on the Neolithic monuments of the Central Mainland Apart from archaeological research outcomes the project will facilitate engagement with the local communities and their schools. GIS analysis of all known Neolithic sites and monuments in Shetland with reference to centres of human population and road access has been undertaken to identify those areas in Shetland populated most densely by monuments of all periods as well as areas populated

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most densely by Neolithic monuments. This analysis was undertaken for Shetland as a whole and then for the Central Mainland with reference to the most accessible areas. The density maps produced as a result of this exercise show clusters of accessible monuments around Brae and South Nesting

The overall aim of the Heritage Strategy is to use the rich Neolithic heritage in the study area to facilitate and encourage the local communities of Central Mainland Shetland to be involved in, and inspired by, the discovery, management, enhancement, interrogation and display of their cultural heritage. Centred on an innovative community programme of excavation, survey, community exhibitions, school programmes, education packs, archive projects and monument regeneration across the region the project has many inter-related aims and outcomes.

By opening up and promoting the heritage of the Central Mainland to as many people and groups as possible, the project will encourage greater links and interaction between people and the heritage, and contribute to a clearer sense of community spirit, identity, confidence and pride. Everyone will be able to identify experience and celebrate their heritage and, through their participation, promote their area, and Shetland as a cultural resource of international importance. Every sector of the community will be encouraged to take part at every stage of the project. The involvement of children through a schools programme is noted above. Communities will be invited to become involved in an archival programme that will seek to record myth and memory of Neolithic monuments in Shetland. The constant emphasis on teaching, training and education, and the varied media through which this is implemented, will encourage positive attitudes to learning and skill development in throughout the region. Further, the aim is to have a sustainable, tourist focussed heritage asset on completion of the project, in the form of excavated and conserved monuments supported by interpretation at varied scales, on-site and off. The project will empower the community to undertake further heritage projects.

5.2 Project activities

The project's geographical scope extends beyond the individual monuments, culminating in an ambitious regional community programme, which will take place during and after the fieldwork elements of the project. Community exhibitions and related heritage exhibitions will be hosted across the region in appropriate venues, complimented by object handling sessions, workshops, public lectures and guided tours. Building on SAT's successful schools initiatives the project will herald a touring school's workshop, which will be implemented across the region, culminating in a county-wide education pack on the Neolithic of Shetland. Virtual learning and access through the World Wide Web will be integral to all aspects of the work. The project will strengthen community capacity and this will enable future community projects to flourish in an ethical and sustainable way.

There are five cornerstones to the Heritage Strategy:

- Community Survey and Excavation Programme
- Community Landscape Conservation Project
- Community Schools Programme and touring regional exhibition
- Community Archive project
- Improvements to access to heritage monuments

5.2.1 *Community Archaeological Survey and targeted excavation*

Aim: To engage the community in the use of a variety of survey and excavation techniques to create a high quality record of the Neolithic in Central Mainland Shetland and to train local communities in the relevance and use of these techniques.

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The area is rich in cultural heritage. The strategy for the excavation, post-excavation and publication has been outlined above (Section 4). In summary, the focus will be on the Neolithic, particularly the chambered cairns and houses in the viewshed of the proposed wind farm. The project will focus on the excavation, analysis and publication of each monument, its architectural and engineering interpretation and its conservation and presentation to the public as a living legacy of the project. Each intervention in a monument will be preceded by laser scan survey so that the initial form of the monument is preserved by record. As excavation proceeds, further geo-referenced survey, mainly by laser scanning, will take place at each significant change of level. The accumulation of laser surveys will allow future scholars to 're-excavate' the site and to interrogate the original site record in great detail.

As noted above, this programme will be undertaken with the aid and active involvement of an international steering group of relevant academics who will act to ensure that the research is of the highest quality and disseminated to a wide audience.

This first community project will, therefore, involve two main components: survey and excavation. The first stage will involve a detailed survey of the monuments using; field walking, setting up of grids, EDM survey and GPS, 3D laser scanning, digital recording and GIS interpretation. Geophysical Survey, specifically, Electrical Resistivity Survey, will also be undertaken, in an attempt to detect buried buildings and structural remains. If deemed appropriate, metal detecting (later Bronze Age re-use etc) would be undertaken by local metal detecting groups and other volunteers under close supervision.

As well as aiding site recognition and recording, some of the survey data, particularly the terrain model and the 3D laser scan, are suitable for public presentation and educational purposes.

Following interpretation of the results from the survey programme, excavations of salient monuments could be undertaken. At present, 17 sites are envisaged. The local community will be supervised and trained by professional archaeologists. With daily training local volunteers will learn a suite of techniques including; excavation, sampling, finds recognition and recording, remedial conservation, planning, recording and photography.

5.2.2 *Community Landscape Conservation Project*

Aim: To explore the relationship between people and place by taking palaeoenvironmental cores from suitable sediments which have a high probability of recording local environmental change in response to human interventions and relating these to samples excavated at the Neolithic monuments.

Allied to the site-specific survey and excavation will be a Landscape Conservation Project. Six pollen cores will be removed prior to the commencement of development within the Viking Energy wind farm site and their potential to inform us about past environments will be assessed by palynologists as part of this project. Pollen cores will also be collected from areas adjacent to excavation areas or nearby areas where palaeoenvironmental potential is judged to be high. All of the pollen cores collected will be sampled and assessed and resources will then be concentrated on the most promising deposits.

A programme of reconnaissance coring in the area around the monuments will also be undertaken with a view to identifying and mapping anthropogenic deposits to locate zones of past human activity and to date the local onset of peat formation. This will allow for the involvement of volunteers and their training in the techniques of soil survey. All sediments will be recorded using proforma prompt sheets and descriptive aids for all of the major sedimentary characteristics required. A database recording soil description will be compiled in the field using PDAs and synchronised with a GIS database, allowing soil horizons to be mapped and displayed as surfaces across the areas

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under study. The soil reconnaissance survey will be carried out on a grid uploaded to a GPS system. Areas where anthropogenic deposits are encountered will be cored at greater intervals.

5.2.3 *Community Schools Programme and touring regional exhibition*

Aim: To engage the young people of Shetland with their heritage through participation in excavation, survey and research integrated with a designated schools programme closely linked to the Curriculum for Excellence.

As well as taking part in the community survey and excavation programme through designated on-site school activities and school visits the project will implement a series of 'in-school' initiatives. This will cover all of the local primary schools in the area, which totals nine (Brae, Moss Bank, Olnafirth, Nesting, North Roe, Ollaberry, Urafirth, Whiteness & Tingwall). Brae Secondary School will also be included. Every school will be visited and the children encouraged to learn about their past through a series of activities using PowerPoint presentations, object handling sessions, mock-up excavations and the like. This programme will culminate in the creation and publication of a teachers' pack for the Neolithic which can be used in every school across Shetland. Within reason, the project will provide help and support to any school in Shetland, albeit that its main focus will remain in the Central Mainland area.

A regional, touring exhibition will provide information and display in appropriate venues (e.g. Shetland Museums, community halls, libraries, local government offices, schools etc) across the area. The intention is to create community displays that, although having the archaeology of Shetland as their foundation, have the stories of local communities at their heart. Past work with school teachers in other areas has demonstrated the desire for local school children to tell their stories about their heritage, and their thoughts would be integrated in the displays. This project would ensure that the ambitions and results of the project would be presented to as wide a range of ages, groups, genders and cultures as physically possible. Such an approach will not only promote community wellbeing and civic pride, but also create equal opportunities for everyone to access and enjoy new facilities and improve understanding of the region's heritage. All displays will comply with disability requirements.

5.2.4 *Community Archive Project*

Aim: To link the community survey and excavation programme with the historical record thus providing an opportunity for local communities to investigate the more recent heritage of North Mainland Scotland.

Building on existing successful archive projects such as the Shetland's Place Name Project, the community archive project will involve undertaking an extensive community history project focusing on myths and memories of the Neolithic within the Central Mainland. This will create a community archive telling the story of the Neolithic of the Central Mainland via resident's testimonies of past excavations (for example Calder's excavations in the 1960s employed local crofters). The project will also involve the collation and analysis of old historical records, photographs, literature etc relevant to the archaeology within the specific study area. The archive project will also aim to investigate how the presence of Neolithic monuments in the landscape have been perceived and understood in the more recent past. For example many of the Neolithic Chambered cairns within the study area appear to address the sea and it is probable that they have been used throughout prehistory and history as navigational landmarks for fisherman. The results will be made available as a publication and/or via the internet.

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5.2.5 *Improving access to heritage monuments*

Aim: To improve physical and interpretational access to the monuments of Central Mainland Shetland, adding to the visitor and local enjoyment of the area and creating heritage tourist assets with the prospect of added social and economic benefits.

There is significant opportunity to provide considerable improvements to access to heritage monuments in the project study area because the existing access to heritage is poor. As discussed above, part of the heritage legacy of the project will subsist in conserved monuments for which detailed interpretation will be available and to which improved access will be provided. The project will provide on-site interpretational panels and supporting documentation.

Visitor information about the individual sites and monuments will be provided which aims to allow the visitor to perceive each monument within its wider physical landscape, and its role in a range of conceptual prehistoric and historic landscapes considered as a chronological sequence.

At individual monuments and at specific locations, the message will be conveyed on standard outdoor weatherproof panelling. All panels will share a common design concept mirroring in the signage directing visitors to them. Wider, indirect access to information can be provided via existing heritage web sites and Shetland-based tourist and public affairs websites. In addition, the same content and images will be used for web-pages; teaching-packs, community-leaflets, etc, where it will be augmented by more extensive information presentation. In total, this will provide a wide and rich interpretational framework, capable of interrogation at levels, ranging from the superficial to the professional.

5.2.6 *Conference and publications*

To ensure widespread dissemination and promotion of the project an annual national conference and publication is envisaged. It is anticipated that the proposed high-profile Neolithic Shetland research programme will generate media and public interest in addition to international scholarly interest.

6 BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

6.1 Academic and Economic

The project and its outputs and products will have significant academic benefit in terms of the testing of currently relevant hypotheses, creation of a sound chronology and furthering studies of Neolithic quarries and their products. The project has the potential to contribute to economic growth by providing an interesting and varied physical legacy supported by a sophisticated interpretational framework and protected by community engagement and ongoing maintenance. The direct capital spend within the area will of course provide an economic boost and the training it provides will create some work into the future. However, the projects greatest potential to contribute economically lies in its contribution to tourism partly, as noted in the provision of 'visitable' and interesting monuments, but also in creating links with academics and others in Northern and Western Europe and throughout the British Isles. Properly managed by the Island's tourist board, the connections made by the project offer a real opportunity to raise the Island's profile internationally.

The project has the potential to contribute strongly to the softer, quality-of-life dimensions of life on the islands by providing foci of local interest, engaging with young and old, encouraging social cohesion in the realisation of a shared identity and fostering the already strong local knowledge economy and developing community capacity.

6.2 Protection of the Environment

National, regional and local plans have identified the natural and cultural environments as key community assets. Engaging a range of groups and individuals with their rural environment and heritage landscapes is central to this project. It will consistently emphasise the importance both for

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individuals and groups, now living and our collective responsibility to hand on heritage to future generations augmented and not diminished.

Many aspects of the project, particularly the fieldwork and monument regeneration scheme, encourage groups to access, experience and enjoy their environment. The wider regional programme, which promotes the enjoyment of the natural and cultural resources of the region, should also encourage individuals to access and enjoy the other valuable monuments and landscapes of which Shetland has many. By their participation many individuals will become more aware of their natural environment, their wildlife and rural landscapes and the deep roots by which they connect to them.

All of the project partners will work to the highest ethical and professional standards and through their guidance individuals and groups will become more aware of the need for and complexity of sustainable development. All of the components of the proposed project will carry a strong message relating to the ethical, moral and legal obligations we all have in relation to our heritage environment. One of the major outcomes of the project should be that any future local community group developments which may take place after the proposed project ends, will be conceived and carried out in an ethical and sustainable manner that is not detrimental to the natural and cultural environment.

Throughout the project all project partners will endeavour to reduce waste and pollution as a moral principle. For example, the use of recycled materials (e.g. for graphic panels, leaflets' teachers' packs) and rechargeable materials. Recycling opportunities will be used or developed to minimise the amount of waste materials generated. Where practical, the use of public transport, as opposed to car, will be encouraged.

7 THE HERITAGE STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL, LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The proposed Heritage Strategy is complimentary to relevant national, regional and local policies, including: Scotland's National Cultural Strategy; Historic Scotland's Corporate Plan; SHEP 2008; Scottish Planning Policy 15 Planning for Rural Development (2005); Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; Shetland's Single Outcome Agreement: An agreement between the Shetland Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government (June 2009); Shetland Structure Plan 2001-2016 (Shetland Islands Council, 2000); The Shetland Local Plan (Shetland Islands Council, 2004); Shetland Islands Council Corporate Plan 2008-2011; Shetland Cultural Strategy: A Vision for Cultural Life in Shetland; Shetland Amenity Trust Aims and Objectives; Shetland Islands Council Core Path Plan (2009); The Shetland Tourism Plan; Heritage Tourism Investment Programme 2008-2011 (Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Unit; October 2008).

Full description of how the Heritage Strategy fits in with these policies is developed in the full Heritage Strategy document.

8 CONCLUSION

The *Neolithic Heart of Scotland* Heritage Strategy will use the important yet under-developed Neolithic cultural heritage in Central Mainland Shetland to facilitate and encourage the diverse local communities in Shetland to be involved in, and inspired by the discovery, management, enhancement, interrogation and display of their important cultural heritage.