

SANDNESS



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2023 – 2026

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MAP 1: Sandness



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sandness is a community on the West Side of Shetland's Mainland with a population of around 160 covering about 9.5 square kilometres.

This Plan for the future development of Sandness is based on the wishes of the community, first set out in 2012 and more recently towards the end of 2022. It was developed by the Sandness Community Development Group and adopted by Sandness Community Development Ltd (SCD).

The overall goal is **to nurture a safe, strong, sustainable, self-reliant community, for the benefit of all.**

The Plan identifies immediate priorities in taking advantage of assets like the former Doctor's Consulting Rooms and Melby Pier, increasing the range of activities that bring the community together, and equipping the community with the capacity it needs to fulfil the following ambitions.

- strengthen the bonds that connect the community
- facilitate better access to food, services (including broadband), advice and support
- have enough affordable houses (to buy or to rent) for those who want to live and work here
- develop opportunities and facilities that enable people to work in Sandness
- safeguard its diverse and attractive landscape, along with its natural and cultural heritage
- move from fossil fuels to a reliable, renewable energy supply
- welcome tourists and visitors without detracting from Sandness' particular charm
- be well prepared to respond to emergencies and other disruptions

The Plan sets out in greater detail how these longer-term ambitions might be realised, and has been refreshed in September 2024.



2. INTRODUCTION

This Development Plan is for the community of Sandness, an area defined by properties in the ZE2 9PL postcode bounded by the coast and the line of hills running eastwards from Ramna Vord, the Hill of Melby, across to The Spinner and then to the Hill of Boust. (see Map 1 on p3).

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a framework for delivering activity and projects that have come from and been agreed by the community of Sandness. It is a “working document” and will continue to be refreshed in the light of progress and the emergence of new issues and ideas.

The Plan belongs to the community of Sandness and Sandness Community Development Ltd will update it as required, providing reports on progress to the whole community and, where appropriate, to those with whom they work in partnership. Everyone (residents, organisations, groups, and businesses active in Sandness) is welcome to support and achieve the objectives of this Plan for the benefit of the community of Sandness.



3. SANDNESS

3.1 Sandness the place

Sandness is on the remotest edge of Shetland's West Side, taking in the sweep of coastal land north of Sandness Hill that stretches from Huxter in the west, through Melby and Norby to Bousta. Lerwick, Shetland's main town, is thirty miles away, and the nearest facilities are seven miles away along a single track road to Walls, which has a shop, post office, and health centre. While this relative isolation suggests Sandness is a fragile community which is vulnerable to decline, it can claim unique features and opportunities which offer potential for development. It has Shetland's only spinning mill, locally run and providing local employment, and Transition Turriefield which is inspiring Shetland to increase the proportion of food grown locally.

Sandness folk are resilient, pulling together when the need arises. If in the past this meant arguing for fair rents and security of tenure, or building a road, more recently it has been about making the case to retain the primary school and supporting the vulnerable when lives are disrupted. Sandness has its own development company and, with partners, will continue to contribute positively to its own future.

The community has responded to the major challenges they face with a broad range of ideas of varying scale. There are local people willing to give their time, skills and knowledge to support development, but the community's overall capacity is underdeveloped, and much more is possible if the right focus and support are in place.

3.2 The community of Sandness

The data on which this Plan has been based has been gathered over the past eleven years. Ward estimates and a recent community head count suggests that the population of Sandness is now 159, with a more detailed breakdown set out in the Community Development Plan 2013-2016. The following is a representative picture of Sandness today:

- A mixture of people with strong local associations and those who see themselves as incomers
- A landscape that is actively crofted by folk who live in Sandness
- A school roll of 12 in 2024/25. 10 are projected for 2025/26 and there is a steady trickle of pre-school age children
- A trend towards a larger proportion of older and retired residents, and fewer of working age
- Jamiesons' Mill enables a higher proportion of local residents to work in Sandness than would be normal for a community of this size.
- Most homes are privately owned or rented homes. There are 16 units of social, of which 10 are provided by Shetland Islands Council and 6 by Hjaltland Housing Association

- There are 17 properties without full-time residents of which two are actively marketed as self-catering lets. The remainder are either used privately as holiday homes or are vacant.
- Sandness continues to enjoy the presence of some residents who are English speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Travel is overwhelmingly by car with a minimal (though appreciated) local bus service
- The level of deprivation is slightly better than the average for all of Scotland. The experience on crime, health and education is better than average, but lower than average for housing and especially for geographical isolation.

NB: The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation does not offer Sandness specific data, so this is based on data for Shetland's Westside

3.3 The economy of Sandness

The Community Development Plan 2013-2016 cited a 2008 report which considered Sandness to be “vulnerable to decline and suffering from a poor local economic base, with poor access to services, reduced community cohesion and a reduced ability of the community to fulfil its own social and economic needs.” This assessment is shared by many rural areas and is only part of the picture in Sandness.

Sandness is distinctive in having the locally owned and managed Jamieson's Woollen Mill providing jobs for some local residents and others who commute from elsewhere. Some residents are also able to work in Sandness. They include crofters, most of whom manage their land alongside other paid employment, Transition Turriefield, some who run their own business from home, and others whose employers enable them to work from home. However, the majority of residents in paid employment have to commute some distance to work in Lerwick or elsewhere in Shetland.

3.4 Public services in Sandness

Other than the provision of standard utilities (water, power and telecommunications), the most visible public service in Sandness is the school. First established in 1741, this is a highly valued part of the community. Between 2001 and 2011 the community successfully resisted three attempts to close the school, arguing for its contribution to the resilience of Sandness, a perspective that endures today.

There is no longer a shop, post office or petrol pump in Sandness and the churches have either closed or no longer hold services. The nearest health centre is eight miles away in Walls though concerns linger about its long-term future. The next nearest health centre is twelve miles away in Bixter. The leisure centre and secondary school is fifteen miles away in Aith. Waste continues to be collected and the cemetery and adopted roads are maintained. Some local services (such as home care and the mobile library) are still provided, and one major supermarket in Lerwick will deliver to Sandness as will the Walls Shop in some circumstances. Many public and commercial services are increasingly available online. While broadband connections are strong for properties close to the 'green cabinets' near the Mill and the Hall, those on the outer edges of Sandness (notably Huxter and Bousta) are poorly served.

4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SANDNESS

4.1 Sandness Community Organisations

Sandness Community Development Group (SCDG) was established by residents in 2011 with the aim “to support residents, non-resident home-owners and workers to build a safe, strong, sustainable, self-reliant community, for the benefit of all.” In 2023 it became a company limited by guarantee under the title ‘Sandness Community Development Ltd’ (SCD) with an initial membership of 30 (19% of the total population). During 2024 SCD secured charitable status which enables it to be in the best position to secure additional benefits for Sandness and its community. The following ‘Objects’ for the organisation have been adopted:

- (a) The advancement of community development (including the advancement of rural regeneration) principally within the Community of Sandness, Shetland, alone, or in conjunction with others, to nurture a safe, strong, sustainable community for the benefit of all**
- (b) the advancement of environmental protection or improvement of the Community of Sandness**

Sandness Community Development will advance these objects by/through:

- i. consulting with, informing and representing the Community;
- ii. taking all appropriate measures to conserve and regenerate the Community through social and environmental works
- iii. fostering, planning, encouraging and at its discretion, assisting in all types of development for the benefit of the Community;
- iv. enhancing the reputation and standing of the Community within Shetland and beyond;
- v. building strong beneficial partnerships for the betterment of the Community;
- vi. assisting the people of Sandness in the generation of economic and sustainable benefits for the resident Community, that will maximise the potential of the natural and human resources of the Community;
- vii. creating and enhancing opportunities for education, training and experience for employment and personal development.
- viii. protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the Community
- ix. acquiring, conserving, and managing land in the Community and associated assets for recreational, social welfare and educational purposes for the benefit of the Community and public generally.

But only to the extent that the above purposes are consistent with furthering the achievement of sustainable development.

SCD provides a valuable resource for the community in supporting (often with vital contributions by individuals) the continuation of services and activity in Sandness. Examples include maintaining the Melby toilets, coordinating the supply of fresh fish, coordinating the local Voar Redd Up, funding for seasonal community events and responding to emergency and urgent needs (eg Covid-19, severe weather and power outages). SCD is also well placed to explore and deliver community benefits that for which individuals would not be eligible (eg procuring the Collaster phone box, exploring a community fibre partnership and exploring the feasibility of acquiring Melby Pier).

Sandness has other community groups that offer important support to local people and enable community-based activity. They are independent of SCD and include:

- Sandness Hall Committee
- Sandness Primary School Parents Group

4.2 Community Development Plan 2013-2016

In 2012 the recently formed Sandness Community Development Group (SCDG) undertook an exercise in research and community consultation which identified priorities for development and improvement in the quality of life. The resulting Feasibility Study Report included a Community Development Plan 2013-2016 which is an invaluable resource of information and a baseline for what should happen from 2023. Important points are included here but, to avoid simple repetition of that material, the 2012 report should be considered an essential precursor to this plan.

Residents of Sandness understand that the joy of living here also involves accepting that some facilities and opportunities taken for granted in larger communities will not be immediately available to them, but they want to see improvements made to attract people to live year and encourage them to stay, especially young people and families.

To achieve this the 2012 Plan aimed to create firm social and economic development in Sandness by:

- Building confidence, both for individuals and the community
- Supporting residents to take on leading roles in the development of groups
- Creating groups to explore and take forward specific developmental ideas
- Developing activities for community benefit
- Encouraging whole community participation
- Sourcing training to enable residents to take on leading roles

4.3 Delivering the Community Development Plan 2013-2016

While progress was made in some areas, there was not a sustained programme of work to fully deliver the detailed plan. The critical factor in this lack of progress was the lack of available capacity within the community because of other commitments.

In 2015 the SCDG recognised this but remained in existence in order that Sandness had a group that would:

- negotiate with the Council should the need arise
- enable community assets to be utilised at short notice
- be a first port of call for support should individuals or groups propose ideas for community development
- offer a small source of income that could support the community fireworks, up-keep of the toilets and other community initiatives.

In looking at the present and future priorities for Sandness, consideration is needed of the wider strategic context in which the community sits.



5 THE WIDER CONTEXT

5.1 We're living in a different world

Since 2012 the world has changed dramatically. The following issues have been identified by Shetland Islands Council as having a significant impact on Shetland's communities and which require a response:

- The percentage of the population of a working age is declining and net migration is away from Shetland
- The need for recovery and renewal after the Covid-19 pandemic
- Shetland is the 2nd most vulnerable area in Scotland to impacts from Brexit
- The need to tackle climate change, moving to net zero by transitioning from fossil fuels
- Sustaining current jobs and creating new ones
- Equipping the workforce with the skills and learning that Shetland needs
- Digital connectivity is essential for businesses to thrive and individuals to access opportunities and services
- The considerable pressures on Shetland's health and social care provision
- Tackling the inequalities that still exist in Shetland
- Developing a transport system that is fit for the 21st C

As a small isolated rural community, the direct impact of some these factors on Sandness is immediately obvious, while the influence of others will only grow over time. In addition, the growth in using small scale, short-term funding aimed at community based organisations, and a desire among public bodies to divest themselves of assets is both an opportunity and a risk for Sandness.

5.2 The strategic response in Shetland

The strategic response to these themes has evolved in the last ten years, with different language and the relative emphasis has shifted (eg the increasing impact of climate change). Alongside its own priorities, Sandness' development depends on constructive alignment with these strategic partners. These include:

5.2.1 Shetland Partnership Plan 2018 – 2028

This community planning partnership for Shetland brings together the broad range of publicly funded bodies operating in Shetland, third sector and community organisations. Their shared priorities are:

- Participation: people participate and influence decisions on services and use of resources

- People: individuals and families thrive and reach their full potential
- Place: Shetland is an attractive place to live, work, study and invest
- Money: all households can afford to have a good standard of living

5.2.2 *Shetland Islands Council: Draft Local Development Plan 2*

Shetland Islands Council works within the framework of a Local Development Plan, the latest version of which is in preparation and an expectation that it will be adopted in 2028. Current expectations are that the Plan will support (*Shetland Main Issues Report 2022*):

- The creation of new affordable housing supply
- COVID-19 – recovery
- Sustainable economic development
- Tackling climate change and our route to Net Zero
- The ‘just transition’ away from hydrocarbons to low-carbon alternatives
- Digital infrastructure and better connectivity
- Better wellbeing through better design
- Healthy, sustainable, low-carbon travel choices

SCD is actively exploring the preparation of a Local Place Plan that, if recognised by Shetland Islands Council, would be part of the statutory planning framework.

5.2.3 *Highlands & Islands Enterprise*

As the economic development agency covering Shetland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise has the following priorities:

- Strong, capable and resourceful communities
- Successful, productive and resilient businesses
- Conditions for growth

These themes are further reflected in the priorities set out by a other partners funding bodies, too numerous to mention here.

6 THE PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SANDNESS

6.1 Revisiting community development in Sandness 2022

In April 2022 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), recognising the continued vulnerability of a community like Sandness, approached SCDG to explore ways HIE could offer support. Along with advice and guidance, this included financial support for a community engagement and development plan process. This would open the way for further discussion about how the plan's outcomes might be delivered.

As a result, renewed enthusiasm for development arose in 2022 and the community agreed to reinstate the SCDG as an active body at an Extraordinary General Meeting. Appointments were made to all the necessary officer roles at an Annual General Meeting in August 2022.

Further needs assessment was carried out in late 2022 in order to establish whether significant changes should be taken into account. Taken together with updated publicly available data, this provided the basis for this refreshed development plan for Sandness.

6.2 A Place in Childhood

In September 2023 Sandness School participated in a project in which the bairns identified their own priorities for Sandness:

Environment • Plant more trees • Treating each other & the environment well • More recycling & reusing of materials	Local facilities • More help for small businesses • Small local shop in Sandness • Improve access to Doctors
Community • More events and better promotion of opportunities • Better communication to young people about things happening	Play & Recreation • More opportunities for older children (10+) and young people • Cafes & restaurants on the Westside
Transport • Improving access to Aith from Sandness (buses)	Housing • Local people get good homes

6.3 Significant local issues requiring urgent attention

The Community Development Plan 2013-2016 was written in a different context from that which applies in 2023. Much about Sandness remains familiar, though subtle changes have taken place in the decade since to both the landscape, the buildings and the community for those who live here. However, a significant reason for revisiting community development in Sandness is that there are some issues requiring immediate attention. If they are not addressed, assets and opportunities that are important to Sandness in the longer term may be lost.

These issues are:

- the former Doctor's Consulting Room (next to Sandness Hall) – the building is owned by the community, which needs support to develop it as a community asset, now that NHS Shetland no longer use it
- Melby Pier - Shetland Islands Council has indicated that it wishes to dispose of this asset
- in 2023 SCDG was an unincorporated body which restricts its capacity to act fully in the community's interest
- the community's desire for a wider range of activities that bring people together

In 2023 there was insufficient capacity in Sandness to support its response to these issues and to develop a longer-term plan.

6.4 Longer-term: a realistic approach

Having re-convened the Sandness Community Development Group (SCDG) to facilitate local development on its behalf, the Sandness community agreed to form a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The new Sandness Community Development Ltd (SCD) continues to be subject to the wishes of the whole community.

Community development in Sandness is a long-term programme, but the basics have to be sound. The community wants SCD to develop its capacity, skills and confidence, and respond to the urgent priorities identified in this report. While it may be possible to start some other activity and longer-term projects at the same time, a healthy mix of realism and ambition is needed.

To make a positive difference to Sandness, SCD will need support from others to get things underway. Perhaps the most important contribution will be organisational capacity to get through what is, in effect, a 'start-up' phase. SCD members are willing to get involved, but all have constraints on just how much time they can contribute. There are better prospects for self-reliance once this intensive period passes.

6.5 Aim and Objectives of this Plan

SCD has refreshed or created its constitution, policies and procedures, and they will be updated as appropriate. Everything points towards the overall aim:

To nurture a safe, strong, sustainable, self-reliant community, for the benefit of all

Looking forward over several years, this plan's objectives (set out here in no order of priority) are to:

- strengthen the bonds that connect the community
- facilitate better access to food, goods, services (including broadband), advice and support
- have enough affordable houses (to buy or to rent) for those who want to live and work here
- develop opportunities and facilities that enable people to work in Sandness
- protect and enhance the natural environment and cultural heritage of the community
- take action to address climate change
- welcome tourists and visitors without detracting from Sandness' particular charm
- be well prepared to respond to emergencies and other disruptions

6.6 Immediate priorities: Community Development Plan

The initial focus has been to lay some firm foundations for future community development, to tackle the urgent business set out in 6.2 above, and to develop a longer-term plan for 2024-26. To achieve this, we aimed to deliver the following (with **progress shown in bold**):

- A: To enable Sandness to access the resources it needs to drive the community's development*
We will incorporate SCDG as a company limited by guarantee so that it can, if required, own assets, employ staff and raise funds
SCD is now a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity
- B: To strengthen the capacity of Sandness to develop*
We will discuss with HIE how to secure additional organisational capacity to deliver this plan.
We have appointed a Development Worker for Sandness - now entering the second year of three.
- C: To develop the Doctor's Consulting Room as a community asset*
We will support the Sandness Hall Committee, as it takes back responsibility for the building and its future development.
All funds relating to the building have been passed to the Hall Committee and we are supporting them in the next steps.
- D: To secure (if the community wishes) Melby Pier as a community asset*
We will (if the community wishes) acquire the site and prepare a development plan for its future use.
We have appointed consultants to carry out a feasibility study for the site, including consultation with the community. They are due to report to SCD by Christmas 2024, and this will inform the final decision whether to acquire Melby Pier.

E: To strengthen the bonds of our community

We will encourage and enable activities in Sandness that bring people together

We have supported several activities in the community (including the film nights and ice cream teas). There is more to be done

F: To deliver the longer term wishes of the community

We will develop a full community development plan for Sandness 2024-26 by the end of 2023.

This revised Plan provides this additional detail.



6.7 An Action Plan for Sandness 2024 – 2026 and beyond

Our Plan contains ideas from the community drawn from consultation exercises in 2012, 2022 and 2024. It now sets out actions under each objective in the short-term (next 12 months) and medium-term (2025-27). An indication of the resources required for delivery is shown, with greater detail to be shown as each project becomes 'live.'

Ambitions into Action

Turning our ambitions into positive improvements in the community requires necessary but less visible planning work. We will:

- keep consulting with the Sandness community so that the plan delivers what residents want,
- gather information and evaluate options to inform our choices
- raise funds, build our capacity, and develop strong partnerships
- monitor and evaluate our progress, enabling us to refresh this plan
- encourage Sandness residents to be involved in developing their community
- keep the community informed about progress and what is happening in Sandness

This will be basis on which we can *build a safe, strong, sustainable, self-reliant community, for the benefit of all.*



Objective 1: To strengthen the bonds that connect the community

Ambitions

- Residents participate in a wider range of social, leisure and project activities in the community
- There are activities accessible to young people, children and families, older people and those of working age
- There are cross-generational activities, projects and events that bring the community together
- There is a high level of connection and communication between community members

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Develop a plan for a wide range of activities / events / projects in Sandness – including an approach to evaluation • Consult on community priorities & needs • Organise & deliver activities / events / projects • Support partners to deliver activities / events / projects • Promote & encourage co-ordination & participation • Develop & strengthen approach to communication within the community • Identify funding opportunities	• Ongoing from short-term • Secure funding for activities / events / projects • Monitor / Review / Evaluate • Develop & maintain website for Sandness (for SCD/ Hall etc) • Provide financial & practical support for activities / events
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding (for activities and website), IT skills	

Objective 2: To facilitate better access to food, goods, services, advice and support

Ambitions

- There is a clear understanding of the community's priorities for access to goods and services
- Access to public services is maintained and improved
- There is easier access to food, goods and services in Sandness
- Sandness residents have access to transport that meets their needs
- All of Sandness has access to robust and resilient digital services

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Consult with community to establish priorities • Explore & assess options • Engage with external providers & partners • Respond to any real or potential unexpected loss of services (eg school, health, transport) • Communicate how existing goods & services can be obtained by the community	• Develop plan to deliver the community's priorities • Research & secure funding for agreed priorities • Provision of improved community transport • Sandness Skills Bank • Revisit the options for extending 30Mbps broadband for the whole of Sandness
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding	

Objective 3: *To have enough affordable houses (to buy or to rent) for those who want to live and work here*

Ambitions

- There is a good mix of housing for, in particular, young people, families and those on low incomes
- There are fewer vacant properties in Sandness
- Sandness has housing that is owned or managed for community benefit

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Consult with the community on housing priorities • Explore options for feasibility • Engage with external partners and providers (including SIC Empty Housing Officer) • Explore the development of a Local Place Plan	• Develop community housing plan (including funding, new community owned/managed housing, and vacant properties) • If agreed, complete & register Local Place Plan
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding	

Objective 4: To develop opportunities and facilities that enable people to work in Sandness

Ambitions

- Sandness has stronger communications networks which benefit businesses and working individuals
- Sandness is an attractive place in which businesses and self-employed people can operate
- More job opportunities are created locally

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Engage with business owners and community to establish priorities & opportunities • Within the Melby Pier feasibility study explore the potential opportunities for employment • Explore the development of a Local Place Plan	• Explore the potential for a Sandness Community Hub (eg shared working spaces) • Revisit the options for extending 30Mbps broadband for the whole of Sandness • Engage with external partners and providers • Explore options for long term income generation • If agreed, complete & register Local Place Plan
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding	

Objective 5: To protect and enhance the natural environment and cultural heritage of the community

Ambitions

- Sandness is preserving and celebrating its distinctive traditions and historic environment
- Sandness is actively regenerating our natural environment
- Sandness adapts to disruptive environmental changes

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
Develop plan for the restoration and preservation of local sites of historic & environmental significance	- Plant more trees - Secure funding & materials for priority projects: eg - Bousta trees; Huxter Mills/Broch; Bousta Noosts; documenting the historic environment / artefacts; community archaeology - Support ideas & initiatives seeking to preserve the cultural heritage of Sandness - Advocate & lobby for Sandness regarding coastal erosion & sea-level rise to the responsible agencies
Resources Staff & volunteer time, funding, available land for woody areas, fencing, saplings. Heritage & cultural expertise	

Objective 6: To take action to address climate change

Ambitions

- Sandness has a reduced carbon footprint towards net zero
- Sandness is taking practical steps to adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change on the community
- Sandness will have a greater resilience to the longer-term effect of climate change

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
- Identify, communicate & promote opportunities for local community to reduce carbon footprint - Build awareness of ways to adapt to the known effects of climate change - Work with external partners to seek opportunities for carbon reduction in regards to land use - Supporting local people who want to grow their own food	- Research the specific impacts of climate change on Sandness - Explore the potential for renewables in Sandness
Resources Staff & volunteer time, funding, knowledge & skills in food growing	

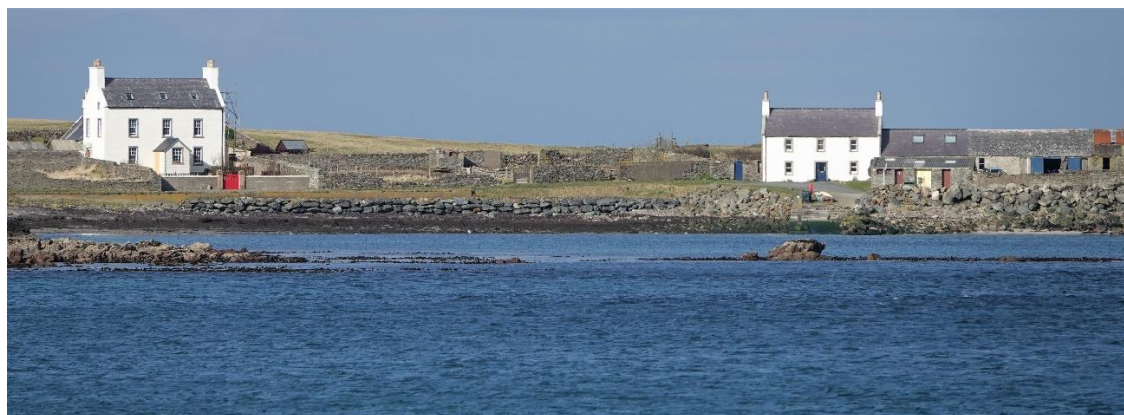
Objective 7: To welcome tourists and visitors without detracting from Sandness' natural charm

Ambitions

- Visitors to Sandness have all the information and facilities they need to get the most from their visit
- There are more ways for visitors to enjoy their time in Sandness
- Visitor infrastructure in Sandness is maintained
- The community is benefitting from visitors to Sandness
- External agencies/partners better understand what is available for visitors to Sandness

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Develop visitor engagement plan • Secure funding • Gather information of value to visitors • Complete Melby Pier feasibility study • Complete Tronascord Walk (phase 1) • Make links with relevant external agencies and partners	• Take forward recommendations from Melby Pier feasibility study • Install on-site visitor information (eg QR codes, map) • Complete Tronascord Walk (phase 2) • Ensure website contains visitor information • Seeking income generation opportunities from tourism
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding, signage, gates, stiles	



Objective 8: To be well-prepared to respond to emergencies and other disruptions

Ambitions

- Sandness is ready to respond to future emergencies

Actions

SHORT TERM (next 12 months)	MEDIUM TERM (2-3 yrs)
• Prepare Community Resilience Plan (CRP) • Implement any urgent actions identified in the CRP • Assemble resources & agree roles (eg support & help networks)	• Implement medium term actions from the CRP • Review & update CRP & make any necessary changes
Resources • Staff & volunteer time, funding, emergency equipment	



7 ASSETS AND RESOURCES

Even as a small community, Sandness will draw upon an extensive range of assets and resources for the delivery of this plan. natural, economic, community, heritage and human. They are intrinsic to its character and ongoing resilience

7.1 *Natural assets*

- Fine sandy soils support a typical Shetland crofting landscape of dispersed small farms and fields
- A long and varied coastline with views across St Magnus Bay and to Papa Sound; in places the coast and coastal path is being eroded
- Sandness Hill and the full line of hills to Bousta
- Common grazings with peat banks (potential for wind power)
- Inland lochs from Huxter, through Melby and Norby to Collaster and Bousta (wildlife & fishing)
- Strong currents in Papa Sound (potential for tidal power)
- Diverse sea and land based fauna and flora – orcas, seals, otters, breeding and migratory birds, wild flowers and some rare plants

7.2 *Economic assets*

- Jamieson's Woollen Mill – privately but locally owned and managed. In addition to employment, the Mill helps the community in practical ways eg storing fresh fish deliveries pending collection.
- Transition Turriefield is a social enterprise with Shetland wide engagement, sales and influence
- Land is owned by the Vaila Estate and local residents
- Croft land is farmed by local residents
- Inshore waters are commercially fished from West Burrafirth, Aith and Brae, and individually by residents from Melby and Bousta.
- Melby Pier, toilets and surrounding area are used by local residents and visitors (eg motor caravans and kayakers). The Pier remains of interest for residents of Papa Stour.
- Digital infrastructure offers some potential for growth in people working within Sandness, but is not fully developed
- Potential for entrepreneurial initiative (eg land for a vacant industrial unit beside the mill)
- Local craftspeople - some actively sell; others do so on an ad hoc basis, or produce for family and friends
- The audit of skills undertaken for the 2012 feasibility study will have changed in detail, but the overall picture remains of a wide range of skills located within Sandness on which the development and delivery of this plan can draw.

7.3 *Community assets*

- Sandness School – is vital for community resilience by attracting families to come to Sandness and stay locally
- Sandness Hall – offers space and facilities for community activity (eg café, social events, funerals, committee meetings, craft nights). The Hall also hosts a defibrillator and recycling bins. Managed by Sandness Hall Committee for the community.
- Doctor’s Consulting Room – former NHS building beside the Hall. Currently unused.
- The outdoors – residents habitually meet and greet while out and about
- A bus service is provided every two hours in the mornings, and one service at the end of the day. This links to the Walls-Lerwick service. There is also a ‘dial-a-bus’ service, and buses are laid on for children going to school in Walls and Aith.

7.4 Heritage assets

- Huxter Mills and other examples that are representative of the crofting and fishing way of life
- Unique 19thC redesign of croft landscape
- Melby House and North House area (privately owned)
 - Several Neolithic, Bronze Age and Early Modern archaeological sites
 - Traditional red telephone box in Collaster

7.5 Skills in the community

A wide-ranging set of community-based skills were identified in 2012. These remain with minimal changes and are listed below:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| • Construction | • Healthcare (GP, nurse) | • Strategic management through public service provision | • Marine farming |
| • Joinery | • Social care | • Third sector service provision | • Animal husbandry |
| • Painting & decorating | • Business | • Administration | • Vegetable production |
| • Bus driving | • Management | • Agriculture | • Textile design and working |
| • Large plant operators | • Teaching | • Crofting | • IT |
| • Plant mechanics | • Education | | • Writing/authorship |
| • Car mechanics | • Sales | | |

7.6 Financial resources

SCD and other community groups in Sandness have sufficient reserves to sustain their present activity, but the financial resources required to deliver this plan (both short-term and longer-term) will need to be increased. With the vision and objectives set out in the plan agreed in 2023, SCD was able to secure the following additional resources. More will be required to deliver the plan's wider ambitions.

- 7.6.1 HIE have committed to cover the costs of the Development Worker until 2026, providing the capacity to take forward the projects identified in this plan.
- 7.6.2 Research, identify and apply for grant funds towards activity identified in the plan
Funding secured from the Scottish Land Fund, Shetland Islands Council and the Shetland Community Benefit Fund will pay for the Melby Pier feasibility study.
- 7.6.3 Encourage, facilitate and support community-led fund-raising to support activity for the benefit of Sandness
This was demonstrated by the raising of c£2,000 towards the end of 2023 through a sponsored 'Everest climb.'

7.7 Programme oversight and project delivery

SCD will oversee the overall programme on behalf of the Sandness community, and deliver some projects and activity within the programme identified in this plan. However, there will also be projects and activity that are undertaken by other groups and individuals independently which either form part of the plan or are consistent with it.

7.8 Communications

Sandness is currently able to inform residents of developments as required via email updates from the secretary of SCD. This reaches almost every occupied household in Sandness and some non-resident owners as well. The Development Worker has communicated with residents in person and through newsletters. There are community noticeboards at the Hall, the School and the bus shelter outside the woollen mill. Each community organisation also has its own ways to share information. Where needed, door to door mail drops have happened, and general and public meetings are held in the Hall when required.

There is scope, especially if community development activity is to increase and handle larger scale issues, for reviewing and improving this approach. The goal is to ensure that everyone in Sandness has access to the same information about developments in the community, and that they have the same opportunity to express their view.