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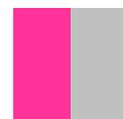
Report

Study on the impact of cultural development on Shetland

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CENTRE FOR CULTURAL POLICY RESEARCH

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Executive Summary

Background

In 2003 Shetland Islands Council adopted a new Cultural Strategy for the period from 2003 to 2007. Both Shetland Islands Council Community Development Services and Shetland Arts Trust (SAT) are committed to ensuring that this Strategy and the activities which flow from it exemplify good practice in rural cultural planning. Indeed, they suggest that they offer a model of service integration to other rural areas.

Shetland Islands Council Community Development Services and SAT wished to gather evidence of how the Strategy operates across the Council and other relevant agencies. To facilitate this they asked the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the University of Glasgow (CCPR) to undertake a study to provide this evidence. This work was undertaken during August and September 2004 by CCPR members Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion.

The aim of the study was to research the cultural activity that is currently taking place within the Shetland Isles and to examine how this activity articulates with cultural and other policies being pursued by the Council, the tourist board, and the economic development agency.

The CCPR reviewed the current activity across the Shetland Islands to give an indication of the range and scope of cultural activities and to understand how this links other local regional and national strategies. To this end the research team undertook –

- desk research – that reviewed existing policies at island, regional and national level;
- field research – that facilitated face to face and telephone interviews with key individuals in the Shetland community on the impact of cultural activity on islands life; and,
- analysis – presenting and synthesising the information gathered.

The Shetland policy framework

The Community Planning process was used to develop the Shetland's Cultural Strategy 2003-2007. A Cultural Strategy Planning group, which reports to the main Community Planning Board, was led by Shetland Islands Council's (SIC) Community Development Department, chaired by Councillor Eddie Knight. The planning group brought together –

- Shetland Arts Trust
- Shetland Amenity Trust
- Shetland Recreation Trust
- Islesburgh Trust
- Shetland Enterprise
- Shetland Tourist Board
- Economic Development Department (SIC)
- Education Department (SIC)
- Scottish Natural Heritage

Public consultation, in the form of public meetings and focus groups, was also used to inform

the process.

Findings

The development of the Cultural Strategy in Shetland is happening at a time when strategic direction at a national level is in flux. There is, in this, an opportunity for Shetland to influence national policy and, at the very least, to ensure that the debate and decisions are not dominated by an urban and central-belt agenda.

One other factor that should encourage Shetland to seek ways of influencing the national debate is that cultural work in Shetland, and work by the Shetland Arts Trust in particular, is highly regarded by the key agencies such as the Scottish Arts Council.

At a 'regional' level – that is, across the Highlands and Islands and in the context of HI~Arts itself – the 'Shetland experience' is similarly well regarded. However, there is a danger that attention will shift away from island-based activity as a consequence of the development of the Year of Highland Culture 2007 which is, of course, focused on the mainland.

In Shetland itself, and over the last twenty years, investment in culture has brought wider social benefits that we identify in terms of –

- 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 developments 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.

Shetland is blessed with a rich culture which has grown out of the isolation of the geographical remoteness, and the industries and communities of fishing and agriculture. This cultural legacy – and its contemporary manifestations and engagements – is one which many other areas of Scotland might envy.

In addition, and again developed of many years, Shetland also has an infrastructure of organisations set up to develop its culture and, particularly significantly, has serious ambitions for major new projects.

Internally, across Shetland's own agencies, there is a great deal of commitment to work together. This approach fits in with new national thinking on cross-cutting agendas and network organisations. Shetland is already well down the route which other areas will aspire to take in the future.

So, in short, the Shetland approach to cultural development is well regarded externally by regional and national agencies.

Things are not all positive, however. The main challenges facing Shetland are economic and

arise from a need to avoid the bust after the boom of oil and also how to address potential decline in fishing. Culture is seen to be at the heart of any new Shetland. Not only is a strategic approach to Shetland's cultural development an important aspect of Community Planning but it is vital for the future health and prosperity of the islands

The development of the Cultural Strategy did articulate with the Community Planning process and was successful in bringing 'round the table' a range of key agencies that had an interest in culture in Shetland. There was also a public consultation process – albeit limited to the period prior to the production of the strategy. The strengths of the approach came from the engagement of Shetland-wide agencies and their willingness to see culture at the heart of future programmes.

There were, however, weakness, in both what was done and how it was done. These centre around the length of the process and a subsequent failure to capitalise on the opportunities for public engagement.

We also found that the aspirations of the Cultural Strategy were not reflected clearly in the plans of the partners. In the case of the various trusts, this was partly due to the uncertainty surrounding their future.

The Cultural Strategy document is still in draft form and needs either to be completed and the word 'draft' removed or advanced by the production of a new snappier document which encapsulates the key aspect of the strategy. The subsequent document and plan needs to be communicated widely throughout Shetland.

The production of the Cultural Strategy has been a tedious process and needs new energy to be taken forward. There needs to be a renewed commitment by the agencies (and individuals) that this is worth doing.

Recommendations

The Cultural Strategy Planning group should –

1. Take immediate action to publish (a version of) the Cultural Strategy.
2. Lead a communications strategy to consult the public on the key actions arising from the strategy and ensure those working in the cultural sector are aware of how they can support and deliver it.
3. Demonstrate how the cultural strategy and the partnerships which flow from it, will work in practice. We suggest that this be done by selecting three projects -- the Island Games 2005; the opening of the new museum and archive centre 2006; and, the development of new indigenous crafts strategy 2006 onwards – for joint working each of which has its own monitoring and evaluation programme.
4. Resolve the issue of the re-structuring of the existing Trusts as soon as possible.

Introduction

Background

In 2003 Shetland Islands Council adopted a new Cultural Strategy for the period from 2003 to 2007. Key features of the Strategy include commitments to –

- create access to cultural facilities
- the development of work in schools;
- the development of the role of the volunteer;
- the development of cultural facilities and on-line access to support cultural pursuits;
- development of facilities for tourists; and,
- promotion of wider cultural activities such as environmental and archaeological sites.

The Strategy also highlights important opportunities for partnership with creative industries, tourism, and regeneration agencies and projects.

Shetland Islands Council Community Development Services and Shetland Arts Trust (SAT) are committed to ensuring that this Strategy and the activities which flow from it exemplify good practice in rural cultural planning. Indeed, they suggest that they offer a model of service integration to other rural areas. They wished to gather evidence of how the Strategy operates across the Council and other relevant agencies in order to:

- support future development of the Strategy; and,
- promote the work of the agencies in Shetland to the newly established Cultural Commission.

To facilitate this they asked the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the University of Glasgow (CCPR) to undertake a study to provide this evidence. This work was undertaken during August and September 2004 by CCPR members Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion.

Aim

The aim of this study was to research the cultural activity that is currently taking place within the Shetland Isles and to examine how it articulates with cultural and other policies being pursued by the Council, the tourist board, and the economic development agency.

The study also looked at how the approach taken in Shetland links with wider regional strategies (coming from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and HI~Arts) and nationally (from the Scottish Executive and its agencies).

Scope of the research

The CCPR team reviewed the current activity across the Shetland Islands to give an indication of the range and scope of cultural activities and to understand how this links other local regional and national strategies. Our work was principally, although not exclusively, focused on

the activities of the SAT. While it was intended that the study focus on what is happening now, it was also agreed to give some regard to the development of the cultural landscape in Shetland over the last nineteen years during which the SAT has been in existence, examining the impact of key strategies developed by the Trust.

It was agreed that the final output would be a report that would contain –

- a review of cultural activity currently happening in Shetland to provide background and some context to the new Cultural Strategy;
- a review of existing studies into the impact of this work;
- a review of the other relevant policies of the key public agencies at island, regional and national level; and,
- commentary on how cultural activities link and/or articulate with other policy areas, and how they are perceived to be contributing to island life by those in key positions public life on the islands.

In addition, the CCPR committed to producing a report that would –

- draw conclusions on how cultural activity currently contributes to island life generally;
- offer analysis of the strengths/weaknesses of the approach to cultural planning; and,
- make recommendations on future development of the Strategy particularly in the area of monitoring and evaluation.

It is hoped that the study – including this report – will highlight an important example of rural cultural planning for the Scottish Executive.

To achieve the objectives identified above the research team undertook –

- desk research – that reviewed existing policies at island, regional and national level;
- field research – that facilitated face to face and telephone interviews with key individuals in the Shetland community on the impact of cultural activity on islands life; and,
- analysis – presenting and synthesising the information gathered.

Development of the brief

Over the period of this project, the brief has developed and became more clearly articulated. In particular the fieldwork in Shetland, and subsequent discussions, highlighted a number of issues which became increasingly important for the final report.

One of the key developments is the uncovering of the expectations from the agencies that contributed to this work. These do not conflict with the original brief but recognising them does give it – and this report – greater clarity and purpose. These developments can be summed up as:

- the need for a shared language/understanding about exactly how cultural activity contributes to economic development;
- a commentary on how the Cultural Strategy – and the action plan which flows from it

- can be seen to fulfil the commitment of the Council and other agencies to community planning;
- an analysis of how far the Cultural Strategy is understood by those who are delivering cultural activity on the ground; and,
- a reflection on the legacy of investment in the arts in Shetland via the SAT – and the implications that might have for cultural planning in other areas.

This study has also and necessarily been informed by several major public agency initiatives happening or planned for Shetland over the next few years. These are –

- the development of ‘Shetland the brand’;
- the proposed re-structuring of the various island trusts;
- the Island Games planned for 2005
- the opening of the new museum in 2006; and,
- plans for the development of a music and cinema venue

The report is organised and structured to take account of these developments.

The report

We start the report, as we started the research, by looking at the context – local, regional and national. In particular we are concerned to understand the experience and outcomes of Community Planning which is, after all, the framework which produced the Cultural Strategy. In the absence of any specific guidance produced in Scotland on community planning and culture, we looked at Shetland’s approach with reference to guidance produced by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in Whitehall.¹

In our research – and as a consequence in this report – we seek to understand the Scottish Arts Council’s approach to area development and community planning. We reviewed the agenda of the Cultural Commission and consider the implications of its work for Shetland and its cultural planning. Additionally we explore and seek to account for the role of HIE and HI~Arts. We also provide some local context – which may not say anything new to the Shetland readership but which is important for a wider audience!

The next section – *Context* – addresses culture in Shetland and, principally, the role of the Shetland Arts Trust – although we also refer to the role of the Amenity Trust, the Islesburgh Trust, and the Recreational Trust. In this section we look at some specific schemes and activities.

Then – in the section on the *Cultural Strategy* itself – we then consider the approach to the planning process – how it worked, who was involved and what it has produced. This allows for an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current plan and the process which led to its development. This section of the report suggest what the threats are to the successful implementation of the Strategy, and its subsequent Action Plan, and the opportunities which exist or are on the horizon for the role of culture in Shetland.

¹ See Creative Cultures, "*Leading the Good Life*": *Guidance on Integrating Cultural and Community Strategies* (London: DCMS, 2004). Available on line at <http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/lgf_guidance_ICCS>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

The final sections of the report – *Conclusions* and *Recommendations* – make recommendations on how these might be taken and identify three projects which could be used to drive the Culture Strategy forward.

Context

Policy framework

I don't think they [the public] know about it [the Cultural Strategy]! They have never been told about it. No publication or anything. It's a complete mystery to 95% of the population. They might read it if they knew about it.

– interviewee, August 2004

Statutory framework: Community planning

Community Planning was established under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 as a process to ensure public services were responsive to and organised around the needs of communities.² Two important aspects to Community Planning are: the involvement of the community in decisions regarding services which affect them; and, the development of partnerships with key agencies to reduce duplication, ensure coordination and streamlining services, and increase accountability. The statutory partners in the community planning process are local authorities, health boards, police boards and enterprise companies – although the Community planning process can, and does, take in a larger number of partners where this is appropriate. These additional partners might include voluntary and community organisations (for example, Community Councils), tourist boards and, in the case of Shetland, the various trusts which deliver aspects of the Islands' services.

For Shetland the Community Planning process was additionally used to develop the Cultural Strategy 2003-2007.

A Cultural Strategy Planning group, which reports to the main Community Planning Board, was led by Shetland Islands Council's (SIC) Community Development Department, chaired by Councillor Eddie Knight and involved –

- Shetland Arts Trust
- Shetland Amenity Trust
- Shetland Recreation Trust
- Islesburgh Trust
- Shetland Enterprise
- Shetland Tourist Board
- Economic Development Department (SIC)
- Education Department (SIC)
- Scottish Natural Heritage

There is no specific guidance in Scotland for cultural strategies and local planning. However, DCMS has produced guidance for local authorities in England and Wales which is a useful reference point. This guidance stresses how culture can play an important role in community planning by promoting the development of: a common vision for the local community; shared objectives; opportunities for integrated programmes; and, the chance to develop funding partnerships.³ The document goes on to stress, however, that using community planning as a

² Scottish Executive, *The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Community Planning: Statutory Guidance* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/localgov/cpsg-00.asp>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

³ Creative Cultures, "*Leading the Good Life*", p. 7.

way of developing cultural strategies does not mean subsuming culture within a wider community development agenda. Importantly, it recognises the importance of a separate culture strategy which promotes the 'sheer enjoyment and pleasure' of cultural activity.⁴

Shetland, as we will see, has had some success in using the development of the cultural strategy to promote closer working between agencies and celebrate Shetland's culture.

It is clear from our research that the development of the Cultural Strategy did articulate with the Community Planning process and was successful in bringing 'round the table' a range of key agencies that had an interest in culture in Shetland. There was also a public consultation process – although that was limited to six public meetings and one youth forum led by a consultant – before the publication of the draft Strategy.⁵

The Council and the Community Planning Board subsequently adopted a draft version of the plan completed in June 2003. From this has been developed a more detailed action plan which indicates the various activities necessary to implement the Strategy.

The strengths of the approach undoubtedly came from the engagement of Shetland-wide agencies and their willingness to see culture at the heart of future programmes. There were, however, weaknesses, in both *what* was done and *how* it was done. These centre around the length of the process and a subsequent failure to capitalise on the opportunities for public engagement.

For example, we found that the aspirations of the Cultural Strategy were not reflected clearly in the plans of the partners and, in the case of the trusts, this was partly due to the uncertainty surrounding their future. We will discuss these issues further in the final section of this report.

National arts perspective: Scottish Arts Council

[The funding agencies take] a form of colonial approach – if something comes from outside it is thought to be better. I have been told that if you get Scottish Arts Council funding [for a project] then there is external validation.

– interviewee, August 2004

The Scottish Arts Council's involvement with Shetland is as a funding body for the SAT and via its various programmes, and with a strategic role in supporting education development. The Scottish Arts Council is responsible for disbursing £60 million of public and lottery funds.⁶

The Shetland Arts Trust has been a revenue-funded (now 'core-funded') organisation of the Scottish Arts Council since it was founded.⁷ As well as the core funding – which amounts to some £80,000 in current year – the Scottish Arts Council also supports activities such as

⁴ Creative Cultures, "*Leading the Good Life*", p. 12.

⁵ See the Shetland Islands Council web site, <www.shetland.gov.uk/cultural_strategy>, [accessed 9 September 2004].

⁶ £38 million from the Scottish Executive and £22 million from the National Lottery. See Scottish Arts Council, *Annual Report 2003/2004* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 2004), pp. 47-74.

⁷ The SAT was constituted in 1985, but did not begin its development work until staff were appointed in 1987 at which point it received support from the Scottish Arts Council.

music development through its lottery funds, and crafts development with input from the Crafts Department.⁸

In recent years a Scottish Arts Council strategic priority has been in the development of links with education and implementing the Executive's policy of increasing the involvement of schools in the arts – and vice versa. To this end the Scottish Arts Council manages the Creative Links and the Cultural Coordinators Programmes. The former involves supporting key strategic posts in education departments of local authorities; and, the latter provides support for posts which make the links between schools and arts organisations. Researching in summer 2004 we saw that SIC has a newly appointed Creative Links officer.

Through its Department of Planning and Area Development, the Scottish Arts Council also promotes and advocates to local authorities a strategic approach to cultural development, including the inclusion of culture in Community Planning.

The SAT is, according to Scottish Arts Council officers, a well-regarded and effective arts development agency which has pursued, over the years, a rigorous approach to developing new activities and has undertaken careful analysis and research before embarking on new areas of work. This reputation has resulted in support for new initiatives and the acknowledgement that the SAT staff have a contribution to make in policy development at a national level.

National arts perspective: Cultural Commission

Culture defines who we are. Our innate creativity is the most potent force for individual change and social vision.

– Cultural Commission web site⁹

The Cultural Commission was established by Frank McAveety MSP, the then Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, in April 2004. It was charged to undertake a major review which will be, in the words of the Minister a 'generational opportunity – to look seriously and maturely at our culture and decide the framework for its support in the future.'¹⁰

The timetable for this review anticipates an interim report in autumn 2004 and a final report in June 2005. At this stage – September 2004 – the Commission is seeking views and ideas which address its vision which it describes in the following terms:

We envisage a future in which Scottish citizens can be enthusiastic for, and participant in, cultural activity in Scotland. Those citizens will appreciate excellence, and accordingly will be demanding of the cultural sector whether as consumers or artists.

In parallel, the cultural sector will have developed congruently such that it is able to satisfy demanding citizens, aspirant artists, international visitors and audiences around the world.

⁸ Shetland Arts Trust, *Business and Operating Plan 2004/2005*, internal document.

⁹ 'Introduction', Cultural Commission web site, <<http://www.culturalcommission.org.uk/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

¹⁰ 'Our remit', Cultural Commission web site, <<http://www.culturalcommission.org.uk/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

Scottish cultural activity will reflect an appreciative, creative, cosmopolitan and multicultural society.¹¹

At this stage it is too early to tell how the outcome of the review might affect Shetland, but there is certainly an opportunity for this study to influence the review. For example, we do know from the influential speech made by the First Minister in November 2003 – and from references in the remit for the Cultural Commission – that the ‘cross-cutting agenda’ is central to thinking at national level. In other words, part of what the Commission is looking at is how to engage other areas of public life – for example, education, health, social justice and economic development – in cultural planning. This is something that Shetland has already sought to explore and implement. At the very least in this respect, Shetland may have something to contribute to the Commission’s deliberations.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise and HI~Arts

What was done in Shetland during the 1970s and after [...] was predicated on the confidence, the energy, the ambition, which Shetlanders began to show in the 1950s and '60s. This confidence underpinned Shetland County Council's drive to turn round the Shetland economy. This confidence explains why the council was able to conclude so favourable a deal with the oil majors. And this confidence, [...] stemmed ultimately from Shetlanders' newfound faith in their own cultural inheritance.

– James Hunter, September 2003¹²

The approach Shetland has taken to the development of its Cultural Strategy – and particularly its inter-agency co-operation – is regarded as a possible model for other rural areas across Scotland. While there may be lessons of a wider application than rural Scotland, a key area of influence must be the Highlands and Islands area.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is the economic and social development agency for the Highlands and Islands. Its activities include: provision of business support services; delivery of training and learning programmes; assistance for community and cultural projects; and, measures for environmental renewal.¹³

HIE works within the Scotland-wide policy framework *Smart Successful Scotland*. Importantly, and uniquely, HIE's four divisions – Developing Skills, Growing Businesses, Making Global Connections, and Strengthening Communities – are shown graphically, in the document *Smart Successful Scotland: The Highlands and Islands Dimension* as framed within a cultural context.¹⁴ HIE – and its leadership – certainly recognises the importance of Shetland culture in strengthening the community and, then, delivering new business.

HIE's commitment to cultural development is clearly manifest in its support for HI~Arts. HI~Arts is a limited company with charitable status, contracted by HIE to deliver, on its behalf and with support from the Scottish Arts Council, a programme of arts development and promotion. In

¹¹ 'Our remit: A vision of Scotland', Cultural Commission web site, <<http://www.culturalcommission.org.uk/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

¹² Notes from a speech by James Hunter at Heritage Lottery Fund Highlands and Islands Event, Inverness (September 2003).

¹³ Full details can be found on the HIE web site, <<http://www.hie.co.uk/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

¹⁴ Highlands and Islands Enterprise, *Smart Successful Scotland: the Highlands and Islands Dimension* (Inverness: Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2002), p. 11.

addition to Scottish Arts Council core funding, special projects – such as the Screen Machine and the MIDAS music project – are funded with additional lottery or other sources of revenue and one of the priorities for HI~Arts is to lever into the Highlands and Islands national sources of funding.

HI~Arts also administers funds on behalf of HIE and the Scottish Arts Council. For example, it handles small funding applications, on behalf of the Scottish Arts Council, from individual visual artists (which has benefited artists in Shetland) and has funding from HIE to support touring arts companies. It also has as a priority the development of the music industry in the Highlands and Islands, and its work complements that of the music development project run by the SAT.¹⁵

HI~Arts also sees its role as that of an advocate for arts in the Highlands and Islands and to promote good practice across the area: indeed it was as a result of the interest of the Director of HI~Arts, Robert Livingston, that this piece of work was commissioned.

National and regional picture: implications for Shetland

I think a strategy should not just be a pile of empty words. I think a strategy should be something which says where we are where we want to go and how we get there. I don't disagree with a strategy, but it should not be vacuous.

– interviewee, August 2004

The development of the Cultural Strategy in Shetland, and the other activities which flow from it, has come about at a time when strategic direction at a national level is in flux. In a sense at the moment cultural policy in Scotland is operating in something of a 'planning blight'. Whilst artists are still creating and making work, whilst audiences are still attending and engaging in work of all kinds, and whilst cultural organisations are grappling with cultural ambition, budgetary constraints and other demands, decisions about future development of funding structures or major organisations are on 'hold', as debate is increasingly channelled through the Cultural Commission. There is in this an opportunity for a community like Shetland not only to influence national policy but also, and at the very least, to ensure that the debate and decisions are not dominated by an urban and central-belt agenda.

At a 'regional' level – that is, across the Highlands and Islands and in the HI~Arts context itself – the 'Shetland experience' is well regarded. However, here too there is a danger that attention will shift. For example, the Year of Highland Culture 2007 is focused on the mainland and, in some degree, on Gaelic speaking communities of the Western Isles, with the new venue at Eden Court in Inverness being an important centrepiece.¹⁶

Against this policy framework we can see that this is a critical and intriguing moment to enhance Shetland's profile across the cultural field – from archaeology and the environment to fiddle music, dialect writing and crafts – and celebrate the diversity of Shetland cultural life and highlight the processes by which this is supported and promoted. As we will now show, there is the basis of a very strong platform on which to take forward culture and Shetland while there remain some issues which need to be addressed.

¹⁵ HI~Arts web site, <<http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

¹⁶ Information on the Year of Highland Culture 2007 can be found on its web site, <<http://www.highland-2007.com/>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

Shetland, My Land

[For an artist coming in to work] Shetland is an extra special step. You can travel in the central belt, but coming to Shetland is a major life decision.

– interviewee, August 2004

This section of our report looks at the wider Shetland context in which the Cultural Strategy sits. While some of this is surely familiar to a Shetland readership, it is not so well-known to a wider one. Further it is also useful to be reminded of some of the key issues facing the community.

The Shetland Islands is 338 kilometres north east of Aberdeen – and almost the same distance south west of Bergen in Norway as it is from the northern tip of the British Isles.

The Islands are home to some of the UK's most remote communities. With 100 islands – of which only 15 are inhabited – Shetland has 1,450 kilometres of coastline. The (2001 Census) population of 21,988 is scattered across these 15 islands, with the largest concentration in the town of Lerwick.¹⁷

From this basic topographical information some of the challenges which face a Cultural Strategy and a provision of a cultural programme for the islands are already revealed.

There are key issues of remoteness – from the mainland of Scotland but often also from Lerwick itself. This has implications for bringing work into Shetland; for exporting indigenous work to wider market; for attracting tourists of any sort (but, for the purposes of this study, attracting 'cultural tourists' in particular); and, for ensuring that cultural activity is common in and available to the far flung communities of the islands.

Aside from geography, the size of the population also presents challenges in developing sustainable cultural provision. Within Shetland the potential size of audience/attendance is, by definition, not large – and this is further mediated by population scatter.

However, it is the way of the Shetlanders *not* to view themselves as 'remote' and as a closed and, in this sense 'exclusive' community but to forge links – cultural and otherwise – with the mainland of Scotland and, increasingly, with Iceland, the Faeroes, Norway and now Denmark thanks to improved transport links.

According to a Fraser of Allander report from 1998, the value of the Shetland economy is a significant £760 million.¹⁸ Oil production and operations, and fishing (including fish processing) are still the two largest economic sectors, with agriculture, knitwear, and tourism the other key private sector areas of the economy. However, the public sector is also vital to the economy, with Shetland Islands Council itself being a key economic driver.

The role of the oil industry is in decline, although the rate of decline has slowed. The problems with aspects of fishing are well documented. The response to these economic challenges by the Shetland agencies must be based on a diversification of the economy and the move from a

¹⁷ Unless indicated all data is taken from Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Unit, *Shetland in Statistics* (Shetland: Shetland Islands Council, 2003).

¹⁸ Quoted in Shetland Local Economic Forum, *Shetland 2012, Economic Development Strategy* (2002), p. 4.

'boom and bust' model to a more sustainable approach. This ambition represents one of the reasons behind the development of a Cultural Strategy: SIC and other agencies are keen to explore how far culture can be part of the long-term solutions to Shetland's future economic prosperity.

In the economic strategy *Shetland 2012* SIC's Economic Development Department identifies 'technology, renewables and culture/heritage' as areas where 'significant growth' is anticipated.¹⁹ The music sector has already demonstrated its importance to the Shetland economy: a 2003 report argued that the music sector in Shetland generates over £6 million in the local economy which results in over 170 FTE jobs.²⁰ There are reasonable expectations that other culture-related activities can generate economic activity of a related scale.

Shetland 2012 also proposes that tourism and knitwear are areas which, despite investment, have not progressed and argues that there is an opportunity, through the Cultural Strategy, to help to further support and encourage development in both these areas. The underdevelopment of the craft sector is also identified as being a weakness in the tourist 'offering'.

It is clear from our review of the documentation, web sites and from interviews, that there is a widely held view that tourism has enormous potential in Shetland – and that culture has a hugely important role to play in that, be it in the form of music on cruise ships or as the interpretation of archaeological sites. A common observation was that Shetland, unlike Orkney, has not yet done enough to promote its heritage – both built and natural – its crafts, its music and its unique dialect to promote the islands as a tourist destination.

Challengingly, the attraction of relatively secure and well-paid jobs subsequent to the rapid industrialisation of Shetland's economy has contributed to a movement away from traditional industries and the potential 'dying out' of some crafts. Apart from the decline in traditional industries, Shetland continues to face challenging issues surrounding the retention and attraction of an economically active workforce. A familiar but particular concern is the retention and attracting back of young people. The development of the University of Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute (UHIMI), and the role of Shetland College in that network, is predicted to have a positive effect on the retention of young people who wish to gain higher-level qualifications.

In the reverse of issues which face other parts of the UK, Shetland has had no serious unemployment issue for thirty years: in June 2002 the unemployment rate was only 1.8%. However, the other side of that prosperity is the issue of skills gaps and a lack of labour for traditionally low paid jobs and roles in the catering and hospitality industry.

In fact it is a mistake to imagine that Shetland's prosperity has benefited all. Cost of living is higher than in the rest of Scotland, and public transport between different areas or islands, as with many rural areas, is limited.

Through both its formal schools' education service and its role in community development and learning, the Community Services Department of SIC has adopted strategies that address issues of skills and retention as well as promoting opportunities for community learning for all.

¹⁹ Shetland Local Economic Forum, *Shetland 2012* (Shetland: Shetland Local Economic Forum, 2003), p. 18.

²⁰ AB Associates, *Social and Economic Impact of Shetland Music* (Scalloway: AB Associates, 2003), p. 4.

The relationship between this service and those delivering cultural programmes is critical to ensuring that the aim of reaching geographically and socially excluded communities is addressed.

Shetland is at a crossroads. It needs to re-invent itself again – as it has done before in its history – and find new ways of sustaining its communities and developing its economy. The Cultural Strategy puts the role of culture – in relation to tourism, to economic development, to community learning and to development and education – at its centre. The challenge now, for those committed to its implementation, is to understand and to explain how culture does interact with all of these aspects of Shetland life.

The need for change has been further illustrated by the development of ‘Shetland the brand’. This is an initiative led by SIC, but involving other agencies and the wider public, to develop a new branding for Shetland. The intention is that this will be the ‘umbrella’ under which goods, services and opportunities from Shetland will be promoted. The brand consultants have developed an approach to promoting Shetland in all its aspects and which puts its people and culture at its heart. The proposals have been very warmly received by those we spoke to – despite initial reservations about a bunch of consultants coming from London telling Shetlanders what to do.

The new branding succeeds on many levels but perhaps most importantly it reflects Shetland to the Shetlander in a way he/she recognises: the phrase ‘like looking in the mirror’ was used when we discussed the branding during our fieldwork.

We would have liked to be able to illustrate (literally) the brand and reflect further on what we took from what we saw and heard about it. However, the branding has not yet been launched. Suffice to say that the challenge now for the Council is how to implement it; and, the challenge for the cultural sector is to live up to it the promise of the brand.

Cultural infrastructure

I have a friend who thought everything was run by the SIC and I said, ‘No, the arts are not run by SIC, they are run by the arts trust.’ Most other councils have arts within them, here it is leisure and recreation – not arts and recreation – so, to what extent do the councillors and the Council feel a responsibility to the arts? I get a sense that they think, ‘Oh, the arts trust deals with it. We are not responsible. So when they look at their big budget meetings at issues about the quality of life in Shetland, the arts don’t figure.

– interviewee, August 2004

A legacy of the oil industry has been the funds which have accrued from the industry to Shetland over the last thirty years. The Charitable Trust was established in 1976 to manage the income from the investments from the oil revenues that were assigned to Shetland. Its objectives are: to improve the quality of life for Shetlanders, especially in the areas of social need, leisure, environment and education; and, to support traditional industries, in ways where a charity and a trust might usefully assist, particularly agriculture, fishing and knitwear.²¹

²¹ Details can be found at Charities Direct <<http://www.charitiesdirect.com/charity5/ch004495.htm>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

A series of specific trusts were additionally set up to provide particular services. There are currently four trusts operating and all are, to a greater or lesser degree, directly involved in cultural services. They are the:

- Shetland Arts Trust;
- Islesburgh Trust;
- Amenity Trust; and, the
- Recreational Trust.

An overview of their functions is given below and this is followed by a consideration of some strands of work, mainly but not exclusively developed by the SAT, which are intended to define how cultural infrastructure has developed.

The oil industry investment has ensured that the cultural infrastructure – in its broadest sense – has been strengthened.

Recreational Trust

The Recreational Trust has the role of managing the key leisure facilities in Shetland and for developing recreation and leisure activity, particularly sport, for the people of Shetland. There are eight leisure centres, run by the Recreational Trust, with swimming pools and dry sports areas. The largest of these, the Clickimin Centre, is also home to regular events from ideal homes exhibition to music events.²²

It is widely recognised that sports and leisure has benefited hugely from the investment of the oil money, not least through the provision of first class leisure facilities.

The Recreational Trust will have significant involvement in the Island Games which will be taking place in Shetland in 2005. The role of the Games in promoting Shetland's culture is discussed in the final section.

Amenity Trust

The Amenity Trust has responsibility for improving and enhancing of the heritage of the islands. This covers everything from the astonishing 6080 registered archaeological sites (including Neolithic, Iron Age and Viking sites) through to the industrial and domestic heritage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Amenity Trust is also leading on the development of a new museum and archives centre which has funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as the Charitable Trust. This £10 million project is a major step forward in offering a centre for promoting Shetland's rich past in a modern interpretative model.

The museum project is just one of the developments proposed at Hay's Dock on the waterfront at Lerwick. The same area is also identified for a proposed new cinema and music venue. These developments in the cultural infrastructure have the potential to be a catalyst for regeneration of the whole area.

²² Shetland Recreational Trust, *Annual Report 2003/2004* (Lerwick, Shetland Recreational Trust, 2004).

Additionally the Amenity Trust also has the responsibility for developing and improving 'facilities for the enjoyment of the Shetland countryside and its flora and fauna'.²³ This role is shared with Scottish Natural Heritage which has responsibility for 'safeguarding and developing the natural heritage'. There are 81 sites of Special Scientific Interest in Shetland and three National Nature reserves. The scale of the resource that Shetland shepherds is the astonishing statistic that the islands are home to 95% of the British population of several species of birds.

Islesburgh Trust

The Islesburgh Trust has a diverse range of responsibilities. It exists to support –

- social, cultural and recreational opportunities, programmes and facilities;
- training facilities and resources to support community initiatives;
- accommodation and wet weather facilities for tourists; and,
- services and development opportunities in the arts, children's work, community work, tourism and youth work.²⁴

The Islesburgh Trust has a promotion role, programming theatre and film at the Garrison Theatre in Lerwick, which is also the home to the Islesburgh Drama Group.

The Islesburgh Community Centre – which the Trust owns – is the centre for an exhibition of Shetland crafts and culture, and has an extensive programme of events and classes. There is also an equipment bank (including technical equipment for arts events) which is managed from the Centre by the Trust.

Shetland Arts Trust

The Shetland Arts Trust (SAT) was formally established in 1985²⁵ and is charged 'to encourage, stimulate and promote an interest in, and understanding of, artistic and related pursuits among the inhabitants of Shetland'.²⁶ As with similar arts development organisations, the SAT operates with a small core management and administrative team (based at its offices in Lerwick) and a range of specialist development staff supported through part time and sessional staff who are engaged to deliver specific arts programmes. It also runs the Bonhoga Gallery at the Weisdale Mill.

A wide range of arts events and activities are provided via the SAT from an ongoing exhibition programme at Bonhoga, through a range of classes and activities in creative writing, drama and music. In the course of our research we have mainly concentrated on the music, crafts, literature and drama programmes. Further discussion of the SAT programmes is to be found below.

²³ Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Unit, *Shetland in Statistics*, p. 60.

²⁴ See the Islesburgh Trust web site <<http://www.islesburgh.org.uk>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

²⁵ However, no staff were appointed until February 1987 – and so this latter dates represents the start of its real development work.

²⁶ 'Trust Objectives', Shetland Arts Trust, *Annual Report 2001/2002*.

General

Alongside the trusts, the Council also is a key provider of cultural facilities and services. It manages the library service, currently runs the museum and has responsibility for 68 community halls of various size and use all over the islands.

The recent decline in stock market values has led to a reappraisal of Shetland's charitable funds and a decision has been taken to re-structure the trusts. At present proposals are still in the discussion stage but it is anticipated that the management of youth and community work of the Islesburgh Trust will become part of the Council's Community Development Department, and that the arts activities of Islesburgh and the work of the SAT become part of the work of a new arts development trust. The Garrison Theatre, which currently is run by Islesburgh Trust, would, under these proposals, become part of the portfolio of venues run by the Recreational Trust.

The process of consultation is currently going on and the final decision on the future structure of the trusts is not likely to be made until later in the year.

This review of the Trusts is inevitably creating uncertainty amongst those who potentially will be affected by the changes. This uncertainty does present immediate difficulties for the implementation of the Cultural Strategy, although it is anticipated that the changes will lead to a more effective approach in the future.

The legacy

[As an artist] It is possible to come from Shetland and work internationally.

– interviewee, August 2004

It keeps coming back to this point about building confidence. There is a young boy who walked into a hotel and got a job. His mother told me that he would never, *never* had the confidence to do that if it was not for the youth theatre.

– interviewee, August 2004

[Shetlanders] go to events. They attend workshops. They publish. They buy books: every single Shetland book which is published. They buy the magazines. You can see they care because they take part.

– interviewee, August 2004

Over the past decade or so there has been a growing recognition of the role of the arts and culture in social and economic development. While much attention has been given to major capital projects like Tate Modern or the regeneration of Gateshead Quays there is a deepening awareness, within government (at Scottish and UK level) and its agencies, of the benefits of arts activity. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), for example, led a cross-departmental policy review into the role of the arts and sport in addressing social exclusion.²⁷

²⁷ DCMS, *Policy Action Team 10: Report on Social Exclusion* (London: DCMS, 1999), <http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_1999/pat10_social_exclusion.htm?properties=archive%5F1999%2C%2Fglobal%2Fpublications%2Farchive%5F1999%2F%2C&month=>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

Non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) like the Scottish Arts Council, Arts Council England and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council are also adjusting policy and funding patterns to take account of these concerns.

On the other hand, from recent research into rural touring arts, we found that those departments and agencies concerned with rural affairs have not yet shown much interest in the potential contribution of the arts to community life and its sustainability. Shetland bucks this trend and it is clear that its agencies want to understand more about the role of culture and the results of their investment.

In its own way – and for two decades and more – Shetland has also invested in culture. However, it is arguably the case that the ‘job’ that investment in culture seeks to do has changed significantly over years but – in the context of the Cultural Strategy and the island re-branding it is essential to ask what has nearly two decades of investment in Shetland’s cultural infrastructure delivered?

Our report can only go so far in answering that question – not least because there is no baseline information on outputs, for example as regards levels of attendance and participation. Similarly, even if it were possible to identify the direct causality between cultural projects and these social impacts, there is no long-term analysis which could identify the specific outcomes of engagement in cultural activity terms of health (mental or physical), inclusion, crime reduction or educational attainment.

Recognising the lack of some important types of data, we looked to understand other non-quantitative legacies. We drew on our experience of investigating Glasgow’s experience as 1990 City of Culture, which argues that important and long-term legacies of cultural investment are connected initially to image and from that to economic, social, personal and cultural returns. And we have also drawn in recent research on arts, particularly theatre, in rural areas.²⁸

One thing that 1990 did achieve for Glasgow was a raised and changed image of the city that has been maintained in terms of profile and distinctiveness across the ensuing years. This is important because it can influence patterns of migration – who chooses to come to or stay in the city – which can ease that problematic shift from post-industrial to service or even creative economy. There are parallels to be drawn with the case of Shetland which, through cultural investment, has created a climate of opportunity through culture and, specifically, a context of excellence, accessibility and inclusivity in the business of traditional music.

Through cultural investment Shetland has also scored in another key area: community cohesion, citizenship, confidence and self-esteem. This can mean confidence of artists in their own work but there is a wider dividend of community strength and confidence as the consequence of shared achievements, common goals and the capacity (learned from experience) to deliver from grassroots level. Examples in this ‘capacity building’ can be seen in rural parts of Scotland in the development of networks of voluntary promoters who sustain the touring circuit of performing arts, develop a knowledge and discernment of the national and international performing arts circuit, yet remain rooted in their own communities and programme work which reflects local needs.

²⁸ Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion, *The Same, But Different. Rural Arts Touring in Scotland: The Case of Theatre* (Stroud: Comedia, 2004).

Shetland's investment in culture may now be articulated as a strategic requirement for economic growth but this builds on the level and quality of cultural activity already in place and the local capacity to facilitate and support its delivery. Shetland's investment in culture has brought wider social benefits that we might identify in terms of –

- *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 developments 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.

Below we examine these areas in more detail.

Cultural development

People who do not get on with school, perhaps, sort of oddballs, if you like, it [drama] is good for them. People at school who did not quite fit in – people are quite tolerant of people here. From my own point of view, I found a niche I could fit into which I could not find before.

– interviewee, August 2004

Over the years, has the SAT developed various strands which have been informed by research, including a review of existing provision and the identification of gaps which are informed by public consultation and local demand. Aspects of cultural provision and activity that have benefited from this approach include developments in literature, music, drama and crafts which have all worked from initial studies into full-blown projects.

There is a balance to be found in the programmes offered – a balance between the indigenous and the 'imported', the amateur participant and the internationally recognised 'home grown' talent, a respect for tradition and the development of the new. These are tricky areas of negotiation for those involved in cultural development in other parts of Scotland – particularly in other parts of the Highlands and Islands where the 'incomer v indigenous' debate can be very polarised. In contrast, in Shetland, there appears to be a real link developed between these different aspects of programming. Whether conscious or not, there is also a balance which has been struck between offering programmes which address the social and cultural needs of Shetland people and the economic opportunities which can come from the creating an international market for cultural goods, and raising skills and confidence in the workforce.

Perhaps the most successful project of all – effectively negotiating these balances – is in relation to music and a music development project involving range of Shetlanders, young and old, and focused on preserving and developing a cultural tradition. This approach has encouraged and in some degree created an international business which sells Shetland music – and Shetland itself – to a worldwide market. Shetland musicians work internationally and tourists are encouraged to visit and experience this unique musical culture on the islands.²⁹

²⁹ AB Associates, *Social and Economic Impact of Shetland Music*.

Community development

I would like to think across the board, all the trusts, we are continually talking to the community about what we are doing. The Cultural Strategy should be about fine tuning, and polishing and close gaps.

– interviewee, August 2004

One of the things that the Trust funding has brought is a high level of attendance and participation in Shetland. That has to have been achieved by providing the kinds of activity people want and, arguably, need.

The SAT's evaluation of its 2002/2003 Business and Operating Plan reports that 161,113 people attended 859 events. Put crudely, this suggests that more than 70 events happen every month and that, if the audience was drawn only from Shetland, every islander goes to over seven events in one year. These figures show something of a drop in activity – there were 1,075 events in 2001/2002 – but an increase in attendances from the previous year's level of 156,388.³⁰

Variations from year to year can happen for many reasons. For example, it is possible that one year has several major concerts attracting a large audience, while another might involve more events or workshops – and these in more remote areas – which draw on smaller numbers. The importance is not the figures in any one year but the trends and what they represent overall in levels of participation. Looking back over several years we can see a steady increase in levels of participation even if the number of activities or events fluctuate.

A further breakdown of the figures for 2002/2003, as reported to the Scottish Arts Council, indicates that this high level of participation is spread across various types of activities. Exhibitions, at the Bonhoga, numbered 168 with attendances of 77,203. Education and outreach projects, which numbered 103, attracted 64,660 participants and 97 performances attracted an audience of 18,600.³¹

It is not easy to compare levels of participation in one area with those in other parts of Scotland: there are a large number of variables in terms of size of communities and levels of investment as well as different approaches to delivering or gathering data on arts projects.

For example, the Scottish Arts Council report in 2002/2003 reveals that the SAT is considered to be a 'strategic organisation – a category made up of mainly arts centres or arts development agencies.'³² The only other organisation in that category is Eden Court Theatre in Inverness which draws on a much larger population base and has over 160,000 attendances/participants at its events. The Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association (DGAA), which has a similar remit to the SAT and serves a population of 148,000, has a programme half the size of the SAT and attracts an audience to its performances and visual arts events of less than 20,000. However, it is important to note that the level of local funding for DGAA is only £115,000 in total compared with the £500,000 the SAT receives from the Charitable Trust.

³⁰ Shetland Arts Trust, *Evaluation of Business Plan 2002/2003*, internal document

³¹ Scottish Arts Council, *Annual Report 2002/2003* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 2003), p. 137.

³² Scottish Arts Council, *Annual Report 2002/2003*, p. 137.

But the legacy goes beyond the outputs of participation, impressive thought they are. The links across organisations and agencies and the development of new projects in partnership also reflect a confident community. Projects such as the development of the museum and the proposal for music and cinema venue are, of course, dependant on their fruition on funding being available, but they also rely on a strong community to drive them forward. However, it is not only in these 'flagship' projects that strong links can be seen.

Shetland is a community which prides itself on its level of engagement and volunteering—and therefore it would be surprising if the arts and cultural activity was not part of the glue which holds a community together. There are strong – and growing – partnerships between schools and a range of community arts activity (in crafts, drama and literature to name but three). We also came across examples where community development was supported through the creation of an arts activity—in one case a traditional dance class.

Personal confidence

Me and my friend decided to get involved [in Shetland Youth Theatre]. You would not believe it to see me now but I used to be really shy.

– interviewee, August 2004

During our research we encountered remarkable consistency in a view that Shetlanders are traditionally slow in coming forward. This view came from Shetlanders themselves as much as any other group. We found that, in expressing this view, people would often go on to say – almost with a sense of surprise – that this diffidence is not to be found with the younger generation and that, today, young people have a welcome confidence.

We cannot simply say that these younger people have gained confidence because of the cultural programmes which have been part of their experience at home, at school and beyond but we can point to areas where engagement in cultural activity can be seen, in a literal sense, to give people a voice: for example in relation to literature and drama.

In the wide field of literature we encountered an astonishing range of activity. All types of writing is being done in Shetland and, building on a great publishing tradition *via* the *Shetland Times*. Further, writing in Shetland gets done and gets out; for example, one can see shelves of books about Shetland in the *Shetland Times* bookshop.

Not least amongst the literature activities in Shetland is the huge significance of dialect work, spoken as well as written. There are, perhaps, parallels to be drawn with music development – although the dialect tradition might lack the international appeal of Shetland music – but language is certainly important in defining who Shetlanders are and also significant in exploring who they might be by way of dialect projects.

Drama development particularly important in relation to confidence building, especially with the young. While certainly attracting a wide range of participants our interviews also revealed that drama was an inclusive, valuable and rewarding activity for those 'odd balls' – as one participant put it – who are not interested in sport and are not musical. After ten years of busy activity by the Shetland Youth theatre there is a generation of young people who are truly engaged in culture. Some may and have found a career in this, but others have found a life-long love of something which enriches their lives as young Shetlanders and has equipped them

to deal with whatever is thrown at them. One of our interviews illustrated this point in relation to her experiences of the Shetland Youth Theatre –

I work in a shop and it helps when people come in and complain – being able to communicate – some people are so shy and that. Which is why I think it should be encouraged in schools because it helps kids so much.

The legacy of investment by the Charitable Trust is high levels of participation, community and individual co-operation and networking, and the expectation of more. The culture-based activities undertaken under the auspices of the Trust have been confidence boosting for individuals and for the communities of Shetland as a whole. Whilst not all can be said to be as a result of the SAT – or the similar work of other trusts – some has and it is clear that many islanders value and recognise the worth of their rich cultural landscape.

What the Cultural Strategy now offers is an opportunity to widen the reach of these benefits and to address those who have still not become involved. The Strategy is also concerned with the wider Scotland, European and international perspective and so offers a plan through which Shetland can project that confident message to the wider world.

Cultural strategy

Process and plan

The development of the Cultural Strategy began in 2000: this predates the Community Planning process. However, with the creation of the Community Planning Board it was agreed that cultural development would be one of the four key themes (the others being economic, social and environmental).³³

As indicated in the Introduction, the Strategy was developed through a public consultation process and the involvement of a large number of agencies, led by SIC. This agency partnership is responsible for monitoring its implementation via the Action Plan. The reaction to the plan, and to the process which developed it, from those we interviewed was remarkably consistent.

On the positive side, there is a clear view that the Cultural Strategy marks a shift in approach and attitude. The view was that, although sport is also an important element in cultural planning and development, this particular Strategy has been an opportunity to bring a greater focus to Shetland's arts and heritage. While the investment in sports infrastructure -- buildings and capacity building -- is welcomed as being a huge positive asset to Shetland, there was also a view that it was time for culture, in the sense of arts and heritage, to be given equal weight: 'Culture is the new sport', declared one of our interviewees!

There was also a widely held view -- from within the SAT and from elsewhere -- that up until now the strategic framework had been set with little or no reference to the Council. There was a sense that the Council handed over the money, via the Charitable Trust, and that the SAT was left 'to get on with it'. Indeed there is a sense in which the strategic direction was driven not so much by local policies and priorities but by national ones via the Scottish Arts Council. This does not imply that the direction taken was 'wrong', or in anyway conflicted with the SIC's priorities, but it did leave arts development out on a limb -- arguably linked to a wider Scottish rather than Shetland agenda. This new approach allows for a better understanding of how culture, as a whole, might contribute to islands' well being.

The process was viewed most positively. It was acknowledged that the right people were round the table at the right time, and that there was the potential to create a sense of ownership -- for the Strategy and its subsequent Action Plan -- across several bodies. There was some positive reaction to the document itself and to the fact that it was a framework which allowed for a range of activities and programmes to flourish. The Amenity Trust and the SAT also acknowledged that they had developed, through this process, an understanding about their complementary roles: which they articulated as bringing the past to life and developing arts for the future.

However, there were also negative reactions or comments. Significantly, none of these were about the fundamental importance of having a Cultural Strategy for Shetland. However, it is clear that many felt the process had been tedious and that it had gone on for too long. In that there is a real danger that the whole approach loses impetus and interest drops away.

³³ Shetland Islands Council, *Toolkit for Community Planning in Shetland* (Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council, 2003).

The documents that emerged – the Cultural Strategy and the Action Plan which came from it – are also criticised: on the one hand, for failing to reflect what has already been achieved; and, on the other, for lacking ambition and failing to grasp the opportunity for change. We tend to concur with the view that the Strategy is not strong enough in its celebration of what is unique about Shetland’s culture: we subsequently pick up on this point when looking at opportunities to build on what has been achieved by Shetland’s long-term investment in culture.

Now, with the process complete and the documents in circulation, we would expect to see reference to the Cultural Strategy in the plans and planning of the different agencies, including the SAT itself. Disappointingly this is not always the case. In the case of the SAT, this absence is explained to some extent by the vacuum created by the proposal to re-structure the trusts. To a significant degree this has put the annual planning process on hold. (And, in passing, this is another factor why the issue of the trusts would be best resolved sooner rather than later.) However, while all those we interviewed who were involved in the process expressed strong support for the Cultural Strategy – and similarly strong support for the role of culture in Shetland – this was not always reflected in their own strategies.

Positively the economic development department of SIC does reflect the role of culture in its *Shetland 2012* strategy and it is clear that the new Creative Links officer in education creates an opportunity to build a more strategic link between the work in schools and the work of the SAT. The tourist board ([visitshetland](http://visitshetland.com)), while acknowledging the need to develop a new tourism plan, is currently working closely with both the SAT and the Amenity trust on programmes: the intention is to use the links established with the cultural sector when developing its new tourism plan for Shetland. There was less of a clear focus on culture from the local enterprise company – although, as pointed out earlier, the wider HIE network does recognise the importance of culture in supporting economic development. However, Shetland Enterprise, it must be acknowledged, has a different role from other similar organisations in the HIE network in that it is relatively small in comparison with the Council. Its contribution to projects and programmes will, therefore, be commensurately smaller. However, there was a view that expressed disappointment that the interest in culture was not always clear in its spending priorities and criteria.

Beyond the agencies, however, there is also need to communicate with the public and those delivering on the ground. We are not great advocates of glossy documents but it is clear that there is a lack of any real knowledge and understanding of (and respect for) the Cultural Strategy the further away you move from the perceived ‘inner circle’ of those who developed it.

In passing, one interesting observation on communication was echoed by several respondents: don’t assume that just because Shetland is a small community, that everyone knows what is going on. As one interviewee reflected:

Not only is there an assumption [in Shetland] that everybody knows everything but that everything is also assumed: and, therefore, if you don’t know, actually you don’t even know what question to ask. You don’t know you don’t know!

There is, then, an equally pressing need for a formal communication approach.

In short, the Cultural Strategy is not yet fully informing the way in which work is done: we return to how this might be addressed in the next section.

All of this may seem rather harsh – not least since this is the first attempt at such a process – but it is clear that the stakes are high for Shetland as a whole. We would concur with the view – expressed in the Strategy and underpinned by the imminent branding campaign – that the Strategy needs to be ‘out there’ and offer a bit more of a reflection of Shetland and the priorities for the whole community in terms of its culture. In the next section we discuss some opportunities for doing this.

Pride of place

We want to make it cool to use Shetland dialect.

– interviewee, August 2004

Our report has sought to contextualise community planning and the role of local, regional and national agencies in supporting and developing culture in Shetland. We have surveyed the local context and the challenges facing Shetland in the period ahead as identified by the SAT and others and the plans for taking on these challenges. We have looked at the cultural programmes on the ground and reflected on the legacy that nearly two decades of investment has created. We have then identified the strengths and weaknesses of the Cultural Strategy – both the process and the eventual outcome.

In this section we move on to reflect on the major barriers to the success of the Cultural Strategy (and the Action Plan) and the opportunities which exist if these barriers are removed. We then make some recommendations for future action.

Shetland is blessed with a rich culture which has grown out of the isolation of the geographical remoteness, and the industries and communities of fishing and agriculture. In addition, it has assimilated influences as the result of its position on ancient trade routes. It has a confidence in its cultural roots and heritage making it open to new influences which are not regarded as threatening. The protection of the indigenous and the development of the new are both treated as being equally important. The richness of this culture is reflected throughout the island not least in its archaeological past, music, crafts and literature. This cultural legacy – and its contemporary manifestations and engagements – is one which many other areas of Scotland might envy.

In addition, Shetland also has an infrastructure of organisations set up to develop its culture over many years and has serious ambitions for major new projects.

Internally, across Shetland’s own agencies, there is a great deal of commitment to work together. This approach fits in with new national thinking on cross cutting agendas. Shetland is already well down the route which other areas will aspire to take in the future. The Shetland approach to cultural development is well regarded externally by regional and national agencies.

The main challenges facing Shetland are economic and arise from the need to avoid the bust after the boom of oil and also how to address potential decline in fishing. The most pressing question is ‘how can a sustainable community be developed?’ This fundamental question is being tackled by a root and branch reappraisal of the place and nature of Shetland in the twenty-first century.

Clearly culture is seen to be at the heart of this new Shetland. Not only is a strategic approach to Shetland's cultural development an important aspect of Community Planning but, we would argue, it is vital for the future health and prosperity of the islands. This is not to argue that cultural programmes will solve all Shetland's current and future ills – it won't – but that culture is a unique and potent tool with which to shape Shetland's future. The importance of Shetland culture is already acknowledged in the development of the new brand, itself an important investment in Shetland's future.

This recognition of the importance of Shetland's cultural portfolio may be self-evident to those on the Cultural Strategy Planning Group, but it is not a message which has spread much further, nor is it yet translated into any clear sense of purpose despite the Action Plan.

At a simple level, the Cultural Strategy document is still in draft form and needs either to be completed and the word 'draft' removed *or* advanced by the production of a new snappier document which encapsulates the key aspect of the strategy with some headline programmes and projects which can both celebrate what is currently going on as well as signal what is about to happen.

This new document – either one of the two options would do – then needs to be launched. We are not communications experts – least of all in Shetland – but we suggest that the Planning Group should consider producing and circulating a printed document and promote a debate around the Strategy, perhaps using the web and certainly connecting with Shetland's various networks (including well-established youth networks) and media outlets such as the *Shetland Times* and Radio Shetland. Provoking a debate around a strategy can be either a hostile experience (you find that no-one likes it) or a sterile one (no-one turns up). But consultation is a key part of the Community Planning process – and put bluntly – there is, at the very least, an obligation to invite feedback.

A more complex challenge is that the production of the Cultural Strategy has been a tedious process and needs new energy to be taken forward. There needs to be a renewed commitment by the agencies (and individuals) that this is worth doing. This requires clear leadership and visibility within the community.

We saw that sometimes in the planning effort there is duplication, or even worse, no cross-referencing. It is not our job to analyse the approach to planning taken by the various SIC departments or Shetland agencies, but we would note that the system is not very streamlined and that there appear to be (current and 'live') plans which do refer to culture but which do not acknowledge or reference or articulate clearly with the Cultural Strategy. This also leads to a lack of clarity as to who funds what, not least in the area of economic development.

There are situations where policy is fragmented and far from 'joined up'. For example, the proposal to reduce the support for knitting in primary schools comes at the same time as the development of indigenous craft skills is recognised as important in the economic and cultural terms. Another example is the growing demand for drama amongst young people – last year 97 primary age children and currently there are 70 secondary school aged pupils signed up for out of school drama classes – but there no provision to pursue drama at Standard Grade or Higher Grade because of an absence of drama teachers. In contrast, in 2004, some 82 Shetland candidates were presented from Music Standard Grade, 14 for Intermediate 1 and 2, 32 for Higher and 9 for Advanced Higher.

A very real issue for the Cultural Strategy and its implementation is the need to recognise that hard decisions on priorities are part of the process of implementation. A considerable success has been achieved in the production of a document which everyone can support, but the danger is that to reach a consensus, the ambition is in danger of disappearing. The document itself is commendable in the way it reflects a wide definition of culture and produces a joined up approach to heritage, environment, arts and sport. And from our interviews and discussions we are confident that there is a good level of cooperation between the various trusts, notwithstanding the ongoing issue of the re-structuring.

But the strategy is less helpful when determining the priorities between different programmes and challenging the other partners (community development, education, tourism, economic development, and so on) to re-visit their priorities in order to ensure they can contribute to the delivery of the Action Plan. This is not just a planning abstraction. The partners we spoke to need to be able to 'translate' the Cultural Strategy and the Action Plan into 'their language' to justify devoting staff and financial resources to supporting cultural projects. Again, a refreshed document with strong examples partnered with good leadership will facilitate this.

None of this can happen overnight and we recognise that Shetland is at the early stages of this challenging process but, if the whole thing is going to deliver on its promise (which is significant), the Cultural Strategy Planning Group is advised to address these issues.

To assist this we recommend that the Planning Group take three initiatives and look at them as ways of 'testing' the approach of partnership working. These related to –

- the *Island Games* in 2005;
- the opening of the *new museum and archives centre* in 2006; and,
- the development of the next phase of indigenous *crafts project*.

We suggest these projects because they are already on the agenda – we are not suggesting anything new. These three projects are useful because they offer a range of approaches to culture – one is an event, one a capital project, and one a programme of development – and because all three offer the chance to address cultural, social and economic development, and can be measured as such. They can also be seen to be 'uniquely Shetland', and so work within the new brand. In addition, there is some evidence from elsewhere (in Scotland and beyond) that these are exactly the kinds of initiatives – events, capital investment and ongoing programmes – which could form successful 'culturally-led regeneration' projects.

However, before explaining more, it is important to stress that we are suggesting ways in which, for example, economic development can invest in a cultural project for *economic development* reasons *not* for cultural ones – which should have their own ambitions and goals – and in each case there has to be a clear monitoring and evaluation process.

Island games

The Island Games take place every two years. The Games were last held on Guernsey in 2003 and the next games will be in Shetland in 2005, and Rhodes in 2007. During the games, competitors from each [member] island come together to participate in a range of sports. The Island Games have high sporting ideals and foster friendship

between the member Islands.

-- International Island Games Association web site³⁴

We detected some scepticism about the significance of this project from agencies not directly involved. We have no expert knowledge of the sports side of this, nor of the credibility of the Games within the world of competitive athletics, however, from our research background in examining the cultural programme that surrounds big multi-sport events – not least the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games – we would argue that this is a project worth examining.

While our work has concerned large-scale global events, there is an important lesson which can be applied on a much smaller scale.³⁵ (Nevertheless, size is, of course, a relative thing and whilst in international sports an event attracting 2,500 competitors may be small beer in the global market place, the impact on Shetland – with its community of 22,000 inhabitants – of the arrival of 3,000 athletes and support staff in mean this is a very major event for Shetland.) The lesson, from this and other CCPR research, is that the long-term legacy of such events is best supported through a cultural programme which allows for the interaction of the local community with the international visitors. It generates a sense of local pride and social cohesion and promotes local projects and services to a wider market. This moves beyond the kinds of flagship events you find in opening and closing ceremonies – which, for the global event have particular importance for media image – but have more to do with the opportunities outside the sporting arena for guests to experience a ‘Shetland welcome’.

We would suggest that a programme of cultural events – including, for example, free, street-based events – be developed which promote Shetland culture and create a ‘buzz’ around the Games. Such a programme should include opportunities to involve the local community through the volunteering network which will be created for the Games, to ‘sell’ Shetland; to showcase Shetland culture and to promote Shetland goods.

We suggest that those on the Cultural Planning Group consider how hosting this event might be a further opportunity for cross-agency co-operation – even beyond what already exists – under the clear banner of the new Shetland brand.

Additionally the monitoring and evaluation of this event has to demonstrate the economic social and cultural return in terms of visitor numbers, spend and attitudes, as well as the attitudes of local population, perhaps most especially young people, to the hosting of the Games. For example, the media is a very interesting way of looking at how an event is perceived at home and away.³⁶ This is not about column centimetres but should look at positive and negative stories in both the print and broadcast media.

³⁴ ‘About the Games’, International Island Games Association web site, <<http://www.islandgames.net/>>, [accessed 21 September 2004].

³⁵ Beatriz García, ‘More Than A Game: the value of Olympic arts programming to increase local participation’, *MAiLOUT* (August/September 2004), pp. 9-10. Further information on Beatriz García’s research on the Olympic Games can be found in the research section of Centre for Cultural Policy Research’s web site <<http://www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk/>> [accessed 5 November 2004].

³⁶ Beatriz García and Matthew Reason, ‘Glasgow’s Image Transformation: tracing the origin of current media narratives (1986-1991, 2003)’, *Images of the City: Glasgow’s Changing International Appeal*, Centre for Cultural Policy Research, Glasgow, 23 January 2004 <<http://www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk/>> [accessed 5 November 2004].

However, importantly these evaluation and research projects should be planned for now.

Museum and archive centre

You should have the museum as a hub of tradition and history and then the croft house down south and, yes, you have Scatness and not just the Iron Age and, of course, the Vikings but representatives of other areas of Shetland have come through – the crofting, the Victorian era, and so on. Then you have the arts and craft – historical and contemporary – and this should be all linked – geographical as well as sectoral.

– interviewee, August 2004

The establishment of the new museum and archive centre is another opportunity to build on inter-agency co-operation: a £10 million investment in a new cultural building in the Shetland community is a unique initiative which has huge potential in cultural, social and economic terms.

There are several issues around the new museum which impressed us. First, there the architectural vision and the creation of what will be a flagship building, itself something of a 'new icon' for Shetland. It has the potential to be the catalyst for regeneration for the whole area in Lerwick -- not least in 'raising the bar' for the development of the music and cinema venue. The opening of iconic cultural buildings in cities such as Newcastle (the Baltic) to Dundee (Dundee Contemporary Arts) and, of course, in Bilbao (the Guggenheim) have led to physical regeneration. This building should have parallel ambitions for Lerwick and Shetland.

The vision of the museum as a gateway to the rest of Shetland and its heritage – from Neolithic to Victorian – is a simple, clear and workable concept.

We do not presume to tell the museums and archive staff their job – and it is clear from the existing programme, and the plans for the new space, that there is a dedicated and effective curatorial and education staff. So, our proposal is not about changing how the museum works but about finding ways of gaining *extra* value from the whole project.

The kinds of ideas we would suggest for the Cultural Strategy Planning Group to consider are how might the new museum be encouraged to provide a context – through its collection of art for Shetland visual culture and for contemporary crafts and visual arts practice?

In education terms, how is the education service going to take advantage of this new resource on its doorstep? In terms of economic development, how can the museum be supported to develop new opportunities for local craftspeople to sell their work? What can be done to support the 'buzz' which will surround the opening of a new resource?³⁷ What role will planning have in encouraging 'creative' businesses to establish themselves?

In terms of tourism, we know that the tourist board is aware of the opportunities afforded not only by the opening of the new museum but by the overall strategy of development of heritage – as led by the Amenity Trust. Normally the challenge for the tourist industry which has one

³⁷ A study undertaken of the impact of Dundee Contemporary Arts, uncovered something called 'the DCA effect' – that is, the buzz created around the new arts centre which then attracted more business into the area. See Steve Westbrook, *Economic Impact Evaluation of Dundee Contemporary Arts* (Dundee: Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2003), p. 48.

'big thing' to sell is to encourage visitors to travel around and experience other aspects of the local culture. In Shetland there are imaginative approaches already happening such as the attempt to take the culture to the cruise ship for the passenger who will not leave the boat – and the museum's fundamental vision to be a gateway site for the rest of Shetland is key here.

It is possible that there are already plans to have a new monitoring framework in place for the new museum – not least to address requests for information from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Cultural Strategy Planning group should consider what additional monitoring and evaluation might be useful to measure the economic and social outcomes, alongside cultural outcomes. There are examples of how this has been achieved in other places not least DCA in Dundee where the City Council and Enterprise Company took the lead in commissioning such work.

Crafts development

What I have discovered is that there is loads of money for anything called 'community': the latest Scottish Executive thing. Lots of emphasis on what comes up from the grass roots.

– interviewee, August 2004

The third area we have chosen to highlight is the area of crafts. The current Scottish Arts Council/SAT/SIC/Shetland Enterprise funded project is due to end February 2006 and from those we interviewed and material we consulted, it is clear that it – or at least the crafts development officer – has had a huge impact on how crafts are developed in Shetland.

We interviewed this officer – Hazel Hughson – and it was clear that her starting point is cultural, and that she has been true to her core approach of developing crafts as an aspect of cultural life in Shetland. She is identifying where excellence technique (for example, in knitting) can be shared, but also where it can benefit from the injection of new ideas and approaches. This project is working from the classroom through the home to the studio.

On a cultural level what is particularly exciting is the involvement of the crafts development project in some very innovative thinking, not least through involvement with the *On the Edge* research project which has pushed a challenging practice-through-research approach with Shetland College and Robert Gordon Institute. The impact of such collaboration will not be fully realised for some time, meanwhile the process is usefully documented on its own web site.³⁸

The crafts development project has also had an impact in schools where, for example, the knitting teachers have benefited from new input and there are opportunities being offered for other craft workers to make links with the classroom.

In economic development terms, this project has had some success – in supporting and encouraging craft makers to become full time and to set up their own business. It is clear from our discussions, however, that this is an area still open for future development, particularly in the area of product development and marketing.

³⁸ See Maakin web site <<http://www.maakinlab.org>>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

Between the development of the practice and the establishment of the small business, is the area of mentoring and training. Some work happening here, again through the development project, but it has scope for expansion.

Overall, we argue that the crafts development project offers the same potential rewards of the music development project in that there is an education/community development opportunity alongside and cultural and economic approach. Working with indigenous crafts means working with something special to Shetland, but with the right approach, new ideas can be introduced to develop something new and innovative.

International links – both commercial and cultural – are already there and the crafts project could be another way of bringing the different partners together to promote a key aspect of Shetland.³⁹

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the existing craft development project has its own approach which would be a useful starting point. What the music development project demonstrated is that you can apply an economic impact model to such cultural projects: some work of this kind in relation to other forms would be useful.

³⁹ At the other end of the spectrum, the industrial production of Shetland knitwear has a global market. We did not interview the knitwear manufacturers on the island but it did strike us that there might be an opportunity in the Shetland knitwear market to develop a high value fashion collection as Pringle, cashmere and Harris Tweed have done.

Conclusions

The Clickimin Leisure Centre has set a standard for leisure. We need to do the same for arts. [We need to create a] 'DCA feel' and market everything on in Shetland. The [cinema and music centre] will be a focus.

– interviewee, August 2004

Each of the projects given above are examples of how the agencies involved in cultural, social and economic development could focus their work, through the Cultural Planning group, to give a real impetus to the Cultural Strategy and demonstrate, in a concrete way, how the plan is being implemented.

These ideas are already in the Action Plan but our suggestion is to pull them out and give them greater focus. This does *not* imply that other projects – such as the establishment of a skateboard park or the skills development to allow communities to develop their own cultural projects – are not important. The examples we have selected – representing an event, a major capital investment and a programme of work – are ones where inter agency co-operation across all partners in the Cultural Strategy could add real and lasting value to the project.

The monitoring and evaluation approaches which we have proposed are straightforward and workable, but they are just suggestions and there is at least one other way in which we think in the long term the agencies in Shetland might assess the efficacy of their strategy. That is regarding community confidence.

Intangible though that is, James Hunter summed this up most usefully:

HIE has invested heavily in cultural renewal – not only because our cultural traditions are important in their own right, but also because people who take a pride in their background are likely to be more self-confident and, therefore, more enterprising.

This link between cultural renaissance and economic regeneration is at the heart of our philosophy.⁴⁰

The exciting prospect for Shetland is that the legacy of the last two decades means that there is already in place a cultural infrastructure.

Our research into 1990 City of Culture – whilst very different from the current project – does contain some transferable lessons, as it does argue that arts programming can greatly contribute to a wider regeneration agenda but that the potential benefits of such profiling can be limited by factors such as a lack of co-ordination amongst partners and potential partners. Our work on rural areas – in Highlands and Islands in particular, has highlighted was in which arts in rural areas contributes to personal and community development.

Shetland is also moving into a new era in its social and economic development. Through its approach to the Cultural Strategy and Community Planning it could become a model which

⁴⁰ Jim Hunter, the (then) chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise commenting on the announcement of the programme of events for Highland year of culture 2007. John Ross, 'Highland plan for year of cultural events', *The Scotsman*, 25 February 2003, <http://www.entertainment.scotsman.com/headlines_specific.cfm?id=6786>, [accessed 5 November 2004].

takes forward some of the ideas of the link between cultural engagement and economic and social regeneration in rural Scotland.

Recommendations

The CCPR recommends that the Cultural Strategy Planning group should –

1. Take immediate action to publish (a version of) the Cultural Strategy.
2. Lead a communications strategy to consult the public on the key actions arising from the strategy and ensure those working in the cultural sector are aware of how they can support and deliver the strategy.
3. Demonstrate how the cultural strategy and the partnerships which flow from it, will work in practice. We suggest that this be done by selecting three projects for joint working each of which has its own monitoring and evaluation programme. We advise that these projects are –
 - the Island Games 2005
 - the opening of the new museum and archive centre 2006
 - the development of new indigenous crafts strategy from 2006 onwards.
4. Resolve the issue of the re-structuring of the existing Trusts as soon as possible.

Appendix one: interviewees

The research team would like to thank Shetland Arts Trust for their generous help and hospitality.

The following were interviewed as part of this research project:

Mary Blance, writer
Alex Cluness, Shetland Arts Trust
David Cooper, Shetland Amenity Trust
Linda Coutts, Shetland Islands Council
Caroline Docherty, Scottish Arts Council
Davey Gardner, Shetland Arts Trust
Alastair Hamilton, Shetland Islands Council
John Haswell Shetland Arts Trust
Vic Hawthorne, Shetland Islands Council
Neil Henderson, Shetland Islands Council
Noelle Henderson, Shetland Islands Council
Hazel Hughson, Shetland Arts Trust
James Johnstone, Shetland Amenity Trust
Councillor Eddie Knight, Shetland Islands Council
Robert Livingston, HI~Arts
Nicola McCartney, playwright
Roxane Pelmar, artist
Jenny Perry, artist
George Smith, Shetland Islands Council
Andy Steven, visitshetland
Fiona Stirling, Shetland Islands Council
Issy Swanson, Shetland Islands Council
Austin Taylor, Shetland Islands Council
John Thorne, Shetland Islands Enterprise
Arthur Watt, Shetland Arts Trust

And members of the cast of Shetland Youth Theatre's production of *Macbeth*

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International Island Games Association	http://www.islandgames.net/
The Maakin Lab	http://www.maakinlab.org
Shetland Amenity Trust	http://www.shetland-heritage.co.uk/amenitytrust/
Shetland Islands Cultural Strategy	http://www.shetland.gov.uk/



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