

Sanday Development Plan 2011-15

Introduction

Sanday is one of the most northerly of the Orkney Islands. Despite, or perhaps because of its remoteness, Sanday has a thriving and active community. It is however, an increasingly fragile community and relatively small changes can have a profound effect. A population estimated at around 500, mostly involved in agriculture, fishing, education and services, sustains a junior high school with a roll of more than 60 pupils, three retail shops, a haulage firm, a number of builders, two sub post offices, two hotels/pubs, a hostel, a range of accommodation for tourists, a small craft industry, and a busy community centre. A doctor serves the community, assisted by a full-time nurse and relief nursing cover when required. The context of this plan is set against a dramatic 3 years of events, the repercussions of which are still resounding throughout the island and its community.

The 2011 Sanday development plan, follows on from similar plans drawn up in 2004 and 2009. The point of the development plan is:

- to provide key organisations and individuals on the island with a clear but flexible framework for island developments that will help us to prioritise individual projects as circumstances change and new opportunities arise;
- to demonstrate to others, such as funding bodies, that we understand the key issues facing our community and have a framework to implement the aims and objectives that are required to achieve success in tackling these issues.

It is expected that a variety of groups and organisations on the island will be responsible for furthering different projects including individuals, the Community Council, Community Association, Development Trust, Tourism and Business Group, the School etc. etc.

The vision that underlies the development plan is summed up in the following mission statement of the Development Trust:

“To create an economically prosperous, sustainable community that is connected with the wider world, but remains a safe, clean environment, where we are proud to live, able to work, to bring up and educate our children, to fulfil our own hopes and ambitions, and to grow old gracefully, enjoying a quality of life that is second to none.”

The Structure of the Plan

The plan looks 3-5 years into the future and outlines:

- Our vision of the future of the island;
- Our current situation and the challenges we face;
- The important themes that will guide our work;
- The strategies that will help us achieve our vision;
- The projects and actions that can bring beneficial change.

It also identifies the key strengths and priorities of

- The Sanday Development Trust (SDT);
- Our partners;
- How we will keep our plan up to date;
- Details of achievements to date and things that are currently happening.

This is our long-term plan. Each year the SDT will publish an operational plan to identify the agreed priorities for the year ahead.

The Vision

In the long term we envisage employment opportunities available to all who desire to live and work in Sanday. We intend to build on existing businesses, and to attract and create sustainable new ones, either in private ownership or community owned and run. We will explore ways to develop new industries that use and add value to our land and sea resources and to our culture and community. Although geographically remote, we will look for ways to connect into global economies to help grow the island economy whilst not losing the traditional values. We also envisage the community benefiting from any renewable energy initiatives, for example, through community ownership of windmills.

By creating opportunities for our young people to work here if they wish to, and by attracting economically active people to the island and keeping them here, we aim to stem and reverse the population decline of the last few decades. We aim to sustain and improve our learning facilities, health provision, shops, post offices and other services. Provision of high quality educational, cultural, social and recreational facilities for all sectors of our community is key in our vision.

To sustain economic activity, it is critical that we keep pace with advances in technology, particularly communications and renewable energy, and have improved infrastructure and internal and external transport provision. Sustainability of our fragile economy and community is critical. This concept is all the more important as we face a period of reduced central funding. Much development on the island has derived from Central Government subsidy and grant funding, we now need to make the shift away from that model.

In 5 to 10 years' time we hope to see the rich diversity of our natural and built environment more widely known, both to help conserve it and to attract visitors to see it. By attracting researchers from learned institutes to our SSSIs and noted archaeological and historical sites, we will gain greater knowledge of our heritage. By creating an archive, supported by high quality interpretation and display, we will make this knowledge and information available to as wide an audience as possible, enhancing our own understanding of where we live, and bringing others to appreciate it too.

Depopulation and age structure

Sanday's population fell from 533 in 1991 to 478 in 2001 (Census figures) and it has proved difficult to reverse this trend. Depopulation is an underlying trend that needs to be addressed.

The age structure of the population also gives cause for concern. The most recent figures (Hall Aitken, Orkney Population Change Study April 2009; Orkney Islands Council) shows that only 12% of the population fall within the 17-39 years old age bracket, whilst 42% fall within the 60+ bracket. This pattern reflects the trend of young people leaving the island to go to secondary education or work and not returning, with little to bring them back or to keep them on Sanday.

Economically active people, many with families, are attracted to the island by the quality of life and the excellent school, but often leave after a short time because of the lack of suitable employment which can provide a living wage, this has an impact on every aspect of Sanday's economy. In parallel with this, increasingly new posts are short term and part time and when professional posts become available recruitment of suitable applicants is often difficult. We aspire to develop employment opportunities upon which families can maintain a quality of life comparable with other parts of the country.

Key Areas of the Plan

Economy/Employment

Background

At the time of the 2001 census, 64% of people within the age range defining the economically active (17-64), were in employment, with twice as many women than men economically inactive, mainly due to a lack of employment opportunities. The Scottish June Agricultural Census 2009 accounted for 163 people working in agriculture on the island, and the Scottish Government, Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2008 reported 8 people employed in fishing. The number of people involved in agriculture and fishing is in long-term decline with fewer, larger farms employing fewer people because of increased mechanisation and fewer boats able to sustain a living.

Challenges

There are a number of reasons that account for the high level of economically inactive people:

- There are few job opportunities at any skills level, fully able or otherwise. Many who are earning have a number of different jobs – “modern crofting” – in an attempt to make ends meet.
- Many high-skilled people who would be capable of setting up and running sustainable businesses feel they lack the skills or seem to lack the confidence to do so. There is a lack of entrepreneurial spirit.
- Many people seem unaware of the assistance that is available to them through various agencies – for example, business start up assistance – or seem reluctant to use it because of perceived red tape and complicated paperwork.
- In some sectors, available skills do not always meet available opportunities (e.g. large building contracts when skilled workers are brought in from outside).
- There is a lack of suitable premises, to buy or lease, which could instigate new business start ups. Whilst property is widely owned, it is often of poor standard for modern business use. The capital investment of developing such premises is often disproportionately high due to the island location.

Achievements

- The Development Trust has steadily created employment opportunities over the past few years, through a mixture of grant funding and small enterprise. (7 p/t employees in 2011)
- A trading subsidiary of the Trust was established in 2010, initially to operate the local bus service, and in the longer term to develop and run other small enterprise activities.
- A new building has been established, owned by the Development Trust, which will provide youth and community activities, it will also offer facilities for small enterprise start ups, primarily office/web based activities, and develop as an information hub, with staffed office, expertise and printed material.
- A feasibility study has been carried out on an old community building, which has identified possibilities of creating small enterprise units for lease as part of the development of this building.

Key objectives

- Create, directly or indirectly, full time employment opportunities to attract economically active people to relocate to the island.
- Create facilities within the new Youth centre and Old Temperance Hall to encourage and facilitate small enterprise in areas such as craft, manufacture, food processing and conventional office space.
- Promote island produce/products, moving towards a distinct local presence and identity within local and national sectors

Transport and Infrastructure

Background

Although the introduction of ro-ro ferries in 1992 vastly improved the ferry service, its cost, timetabling and refit schedule still present many problems for the outer isles, and Sanday is no exception. An air service operates twice daily 6 days a week to the Orkney mainland, however capacity is limited. In a time of austerity in public spending, our connections to mainland Scotland and the wider world are already being challenged. All modes of transport are oil dependent, the price of which has risen sharply since 2009. The rise in core costs is being felt through increased fares, reduction in schedules and withdrawal of discount schemes. The reluctance by central government to extend the 'Road Equivalent Tariff' scheme also has a negative impact on Orkney, and in particular the Northern Isles.

Public transport facilities are restricted to a subsidised bus service which operates to and from the lifeline ferry service, and a taxi/car hire service.

Most of the islands' telecommunication network is dated and often unreliable. Broadband provision varies substantially throughout the island, and although satellite broadband has been introduced in areas of the island that could not access B.T. broadband, the relative monthly costs are high, and prohibitive to most to upgrade to speeds compatible with ordinary mainland provision. Telephone lines are in poor physical state and mobile telephone networks are patchy.

Challenges

- Where jobs are available on Mainland Orkney, ferry and air timetables make it impossible for people to commute to work on a daily or, in winter, even on a weekly basis. There is a consequent reliance on local employment, or the costs associated with living 'off island' for the week, which in many cases are prohibitive.
- Transport costs for anyone moving themselves or goods on and off the island are high, which adds considerably to the cost of living. Any increase in fuel costs has immediate implications, and fuel costs on the island are considerably higher than the national average.
- Transport issues also restrict any expansion in the tourism industry. Limited capacity places a finite limitation on the numbers who can visit Sanday. During the winter and the refit schedule, capacity is further reduced, hindering efforts to extend the tourism season. The costs of transport to and from the island make it an unattractive proposition for most visitors, even those visiting the Orkney mainland.
- Inter island travel, especially with goods, usually involves travelling via Kirkwall, and in general connections to other services are not well timed. This limits the capacity to develop North Isles hubs for specific activities.
- Expanding the current public transport provision on the island to allow access to local facilities for all our community at a realistic cost in times of reducing public subsidy is problematic.
- To prioritise the improvement of modern telecommunication provision, and ensure that the costs of equivalent provision is not financially prohibitive.

Achievements

- The Development Trust has maintained the public transport provision to and from the ferry terminal, following the previous operators retirement, by setting up a public bus service, through its trading subsidiary.
- Satellite broadband provision has been installed in the north end of the island following a protracted lobbying campaign.

Key Objectives

- Continue to work with partners to lobby for improved ferry and air services
- Test the potential to expand the public bus service to provide a regular service to local facilities
- Continue to work with partners to lobby for improved modern telecommunications provision

Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Background

A Community room was built at the school during the 1980's which along with the school hall accommodates the majority of community events and meetings. A lively and active community, large number of clubs/hobby groups, public houses, café and hostel all play their part in community leisure and recreation. The facilities available at the Community School are often used to capacity. The school hall accommodates a range of community activities from dances, wedding receptions and concerts, to a variety of sports, and sales of work. However, the hall is not big enough for most indoor sports, and plans for a separate indoor sports hall have been discussed in the past. A swimming pool and fitness suite have been added to the community wing, however both are heavily subsidised by the local authority. Although the community can use the school art/music room during school hours, there are security implications, and there is a need for dedicated facilities (studios, workshops, rehearsal and teaching room, as well as exhibition and performance areas) for the many very talented artists, craftspeople, and musicians on the island.

Challenges

- A wide range of community facilities is essential to maintain and enhance the quality of our community life. We must ensure that we can cater for the welfare of all sectors of our community, taking into account the make up of our population, the topography of the island and its remoteness.
- We need to build on the success of the local school by extending learning opportunities to all. The cost of 'off island' learning is high, and the community education budget from the local authority is contracting, and unable to meet the demands of a diverse range of courses
- Additional provision needs to be made available for community activities to complement the school/community facilities when they are at capacity and provide an alternative range of facilities for various user groups

Achievements

- A new youth and community centre is just nearing completion, which will facilitate a range of activities, courses and opportunities.
- The Development Trust have employed a Youth Development Worker during 2010, and recently secured funding to continue the post for a further 2 years to develop centre based activity and address the challenges facing our young people.

Key Objectives

- Ensure that the new Youth and community centre delivers a range of user led activities
- Ensure that any future development (i.e. The old Temperance Hall) considers any additional community needs, and makes provision to extend or compliment existing facilities.

Culture and Heritage

Background

Sanday's natural and built heritage is exceptionally rich, largely unsung, underused, and in some cases at risk. The community as a whole has a wealth of knowledgeable and talented individuals, many of whom are actively sharing their knowledge and skills, many more of whom would like to do so or simply to participate, but don't through lack of facilities or opportunity. Our culture and heritage define the way we live and think and give us a sense of pride in our achievements. Sanday has a strong tradition in music and the arts, which continues today with a variety of talented groups and individuals participating in a wide range of activities.

Challenges

- Without dedicated facilities to display and explore our heritage, it is difficult to co-ordinate and collate the vast resources that are available on the island.
- In a changing world shaped by global cultures, valuing and sharing local traditions, stories and cultural practises is challenging. There is a need to build community cohesion, particularly between young and old to inspire the next generation to have a sense of ownership of their community

Achievements

- A very successful oral history project has been able to preserve a varied account of our history and has made available a snapshot of this project on CD which is widely available on sale.
- The Development Trust have secured funding to employ an island Ranger for the past five years, who has significantly raised the profile of the islands natural heritage to a widening audience, locally and nationally.
- A temporary Heritage centre has been established over the past 3 years in rented buildings, which has served to begin the process of identifying and collating a wide range of information and artefacts, as well as publicising these to an appreciative audience. This project has brought together a group of people committed to develop a permanent centre for the display and interpretation of the island heritage.
- A feasibility study has been carried out on the Old Temperance Hall to identify the issues facing the creation of a permanent heritage centre in this building. This study has demonstrated that the renovation/alteration of this building is viable, with grant funding assistance for the capital building works, and that there is a dedicated group willing to work under the governance of the Development Trust to achieve this aim.

Key Objectives

- To ensure that there is ongoing evaluation and growth of the successful Ranger service
- That the plans for a permanent Heritage centre are progressed through funding for the capital works, and that additional uses for the building are agreed to support the project financially.
- To support the activities of musicians, artists, poets and writers on the island through initiatives which build capacity and increase public access and uptake of the arts.

Housing

Background

Sanday has a total housing stock of approximately 260 homes. Of these around 170 are privately owned and occupied, 45 are rented and 45 are unoccupied. There is a small number of social rented housing, the remainder being privately rented. House prices have risen sharply over the last few years making it difficult for local people in a low wage economy to afford to buy property. A large proportion of the housing stock is of traditional build, typically inefficient to heat and difficult to treat with energy saving measures. This leaves many households in the category defined as 'being in fuel poverty'. Traditional housing, however, constitutes a valuable part of the fabric of the Sanday landscape, which requires a balance in building to maintain

Challenges

- To ensure that there is adequate high quality housing provision to accommodate current and future demand.
- To improve the energy efficiency of older housing stock, for the health and well being of both the community and the island's economy
- To ensure that low cost, affordable housing is available for young people wishing to enter the housing market

Achievements

- Energy efficiency audits have been carried out on every house on the island, providing data which will help identify the least efficient housing. From these surveys householders have been 'signposted' to national schemes to help improve the energy efficiency of their properties

Key Objectives

- Continue to work with partners to assist householders in improving the energy efficiency of their homes, and thereby reducing the number of households in fuel poverty
- Work with partners to make provision of affordable housing for young people wishing to live and work on the island
- Encourage private development of micro renewables as a possible strategy to avoid oil dependency and reduce fuel poverty
- Encourage innovative building that reconciles the values of traditional housing with the need for energy efficient homes

Tourism

Background

Tourism is an important and increasing source of income in Orkney, with revenues in excess of £20 million a year. Sanday's geographic location and relatively short summers restrict tourism opportunities, however the island has much to offer, with a wealth of social and natural heritage as well as unspoilt beaches and a relaxed pace of life which is attractive to visitors. The island offers a mixture of serviced and self-catering accommodation which meets current demand. The Development Trust has employed a Ranger over the past 5 years who organises a range of walks and activities aimed at visitors, and a very successful range of weekend events have been held during 2011 to raise the profile of the island.

Challenges

- To develop the tourism industry in Sanday in order to create greater diversity in our economy, create jobs, and ultimately increase our share of Orkney's tourism revenue. At the same time, we need to exploit our natural assets whilst safeguarding our way of life and our environment by careful management and a sound tourism strategy.

Achievements

- A range of interpretation leaflets have been produced highlighting the islands' built and natural heritage
- A website has been produced highlighting facilities and attractions for visitors
- During 2011 a number of weekend events have been held under the title of 'Sanday Soulka' these events have attracted visitors and significantly raised the profile of the island

Key Objectives

- Work with partners in the Tourism group, to develop appropriate marketing opportunities, locally and on mainland Scotland.
- Build on the successes of the 'Sanday Soulka' weekends by encouraging further multiple day events that bring more economic value to the island
- Ensure the continuation and development of a Ranger service on the island. Evaluate and build upon the current service, by looking to maximise the economic benefit through the promotion of multiple day events across the island.

Environment, Renewables and Waste management

Background

Fertile land, abundant wildlife, rich seas, a relatively temperate climate and plentiful water supplies have ensured that Sanday has been inhabited for many thousands of years. For life to continue here in the long term, care needs to be taken that we don't overexploit or damage that environment on the one hand, and on the other that we do use all aspects of it to our best advantage. Sanday's geographic position and climate offer great potential for renewable energy projects, particularly wind and sea, both on a domestic and commercial scale. Its geographic position is also a hindrance, particularly in dealing with waste management. The costs, both financially and environmentally, are high in removing waste, and in an increasingly 'throw away' society these issues need to be addressed.

Challenges

- To develop an environmental strategy that will safeguard our environment for the future, while allowing economic development, with particular reference to environmental tourism, biodiversity and the visual impact of development.
- To develop a waste management policy to deal with the issues of waste removal, recycling and the environmental clean up of key areas
- To embrace renewables and ensure that there is community benefit, whilst ensuring that renewables development is carefully managed and the island is not over exploited.

Achievements

- A re-use centre has been opened by the Development Trust allowing a range of household items to be recycled within the community
- Regular beach clean ups are organised by the local council and volunteers to remove unsightly, and often harmful waste from around the island
- The Development Trust have secured a shared revenue agreement in a commercial wind farm on the island, which once commissioned will bring long term financial benefits to the community
- The Community Council have secured an annual grant from the current commercial windfarm on the island, which brings significant financial benefits to the island, and is distributed through a grants scheme.

Key Objectives

- Expand the current activities of the re-use centre to increase the amount of goods/items being recycled on the island
- Investigate further opportunities for the successful removal of unusable waste items from the island
- Develop a policy for the allocation of revenues generated by the new wind farm
- Ensure that any community projects embrace renewable energy resources and aspire to zero carbon status
- Continue to explore opportunities for island recycling to reduce the carbon footprint of all of Sanday

Building capacity in our Community

Background

With a population of around 500 across the age range, and many traditional opportunities for public volunteering, it is an ongoing challenge to build and maintain the capacity of all partners in this plan. Recruitment is hard to achieve and connection and accountability to the community is hard to maintain.

Challenges

- To maintain and build the capacity of community organisations in order that they can strategically address the challenges facing our island and the contraction in central and local government funding

Objectives

- To use all external agencies and support to examine our own practise and try to build accountable, community embedded organisations and projects.
- To extend membership and involvement in all aspects of community development on Sanday.

Implementing and updating our plan

To ensure that our plan is successfully implemented we will produce an annual operational plan, which will complement the overall plan and link in the key objectives. It is also essential that our plan is kept up to date and reflects changes in our community and the wider world. To achieve this we aim to:

- Hold annual meetings with our partners and the wider community, which will review our work together and set priorities for the year ahead.
- Set annual priorities in our operational plan, with clear targets and timescales
- Use the targets in our operational plan as a set of indicators to measure our progress.

Partners

Reference is made throughout this plan to the partner organisations within the island, however island development also relies on a number of outside agencies and organisations. Previous achievements and future aspirations rely on all of these partners, which include.

The Sanday Community Council
The Sanday Development Trust
Sanday Community School
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
The National Lottery
The Scottish Rural Development Programme
Development Trust Association Scotland
Scotland's Islands

The Sanday Community Association
The Sanday Tourism and Business group
Orkney Islands Council
Voluntary Action Orkney
LEADER
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish and Southern Energy
Scottish Community Foundation

**The
Sunday Plan
2011-2015**