

Unst Community Development Plan Consultation

Summary report following an 'Ideas Day'

Held in Unst on the 23rd of October 2010.

1. Summary

Unst Partnership (a company Ltd by Guarantee with Charitable Status) was established in 2000 in response to the closure of the Unst airport. The drawdown and departure of the RAF in 2006 created a further economic setback; the population almost halved, and Between 1999 and 2007 it is estimated that FTE (full time equivalent) jobs fell by 175 or 42%.¹ During the last ten years, the Unst Partnership has sought to regenerate the island through a number of initiatives. The island remains economically fragile, though population decline appears to be stabilising and considerable strategic opportunity exists to safeguard and further develop infrastructure, business and the tourism industry on the island.

Unst Partnership recognises the need for the whole Unst community to work together to make the best use of resources and wishes to adopt a more strategic approach to community development, considering this to be particularly important during the current financial climate. The Partnership is committed to building its reputation as a progressive community development company, and has acknowledged that full community involvement in, and ownership of, its activities is crucial in order to effect real change.

Unst Partnership wishes to see a Community Development Plan compiled on Unst, and is currently working with community members, community groups, businesses and stakeholders to gather views, identify priorities and establish potential projects for implementation. The 'Unst Ideas Day' was the first of a number of community events planned as part of the consultation process. The group discussions recorded at this initial event have been transcribed below. It should be noted that this document is a first stage summary report only.

2. Stakeholders

Individual letters of invitation accompanied by a newsletter were posted to every household in the North Isles. Additional invitations were sent to the following agencies, community groups and businesses.

2.1 Agency

SIC – Infrastructure Services, Housing, Education and Social Care, Economic Development, Environmental Services, Ports and Harbours
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Social Economy and Community Regeneration Partnership
NHS Shetland
Shetland Recreational Trust

¹ Assessment of Public Impact to Unst, 1996-2007. AB Associates.

Shetland Amenity Trust
Scottish Natural Heritage
Shetland College
Train Shetland
Voluntary Action Shetland
Media
Ambulance, Fire and Coastguard
Northern Constabulary
Defence Estates
Ministry of Defence
North Isles Learning Partnership
Centre for Creative Industries
Bluemull Development Company
Shetland Arts Development Agency

2.2 Community

Unst Community Council
North Unst, Baltasound and Uyeasound Halls
Unst Heritage Trust
Unst Leisure Centre sports consultative committee
Unst Angling Club
Unst Boating Club
SWRI
Women's Guild
Playgroup
Uyeasound and Baltasound School
Youth Groups
Church of Scotland
Methodist Kirk
Grazings Committees
Unst Creative
Care for Unst
Marina Users Association
Uyeasound Waterfront Trust
Belmont Trust
UnstFest
Up Helly Aa Committees
Duke of Edinburgh Unst
Unst Brownies
Unst Senior Leisure Club
Unst Music and Dance Group
Unst Audio
Unst Agricultural Show
North Isles Childcare
Gardiesfauld Youth Hostel

3. Responses

3.1 Education and Training

- Make the school more efficient in terms of energy, people, money and resources
- Make the school innovative, providing good ways to meet the curriculum for excellence, good vocational pathways and make learning unique and interesting
- 'Always comes down to economics'
- Make the school more of a feature of the community, with adults making more use of it.
- Could the school be used to house more services, for example Adult Learning and Shetland College?
- 'Room 13' initiative in Fort William had an artists in residence at the school
- Make better use of space at the school
- Adult classes tend to be based around IT
- Help needed to encourage enterprise skills
- Young people need to understand that they have to work hard to achieve. Determination and motivation are needed.
- Education needs to be relevant
- Ideas for classes – more manual/vocational e.g. Welding, more practical
- Priorities are survival, need for apprenticeships in Unst (e.g. electricians, joiners, plumbers)
- Training for young people with special needs – post 19 years old (and adults) – supported work scheme
- Very little available by way of adult classes and lifelong learning
- Training needed in changes to technology and how to cope with change
- Better use of schools in the evening
- Include adults in the school during the school day
- Look into different types of computer language needed for I.T. Jobs
- Teach young people about volunteering and community skills
- Could Unst become a place for training e.g. short courses, field studies for people outwith the island, and conferences
- Make better use of what we have
- We are implementing the new curriculum for excellence well (new qualifications)
- Offer more practical courses (i.e. basic car maintenance, joinery etc)
- Idea for classes: cake decoration
- More scope for work placements
- Get more people on Unst to do the training on Unst (e.g. could SRT do first aid?)
- Adult classes have decreased over the years
- Topics need to move with the times
- More certificated courses needed
- Schools go – people go
- Make better use of VC – how can we coordinate this better?
- Train people on VC, Skype. ETC
- Maintain the secondary department
- How can we make the school more viable
- Make it more of a community school, include more adult learning

- 'Free' school - community managed / community run school – access education budgets
- Fight to keep schools open. More than just education; attracts people to the island, jobs, (look at Cullivoe)
- Adult classes are very limited
- Make people aware of online learning
- Social care training is mostly done in Lerwick. Issues re: money, travel, time. adds to costs
- Day time learning for practical classes or standard grades etc..
- Make use of teachers at the school
- NI training group - does it still exist? Lambing/Shearing etc..

3.2 Arts, crafts and cultural heritage

- 'Top of Britain' is a selling point for tourism
- Unst's Geology is internationally significant and very complicated
- Music is important and all types should be further developed including jazz, classical and folk
- Take care that events don't clash, use the What's On diary
- Develop music festivals. How can Mareel (Shetland Arts) do outreach, how can we make this happen?
- Don't forget to develop Choral music
- Archaeology – Viking Heritage Viking Unst important
- Craft Group should develop a craft trail
- Lace knitting and fair isle patterns should be part of the heritage/craft trail
- Recording out history before it is too late is important
- History group should preserve what we've got and get young people involved
- Schools and education is very important, link schools and the community
- Value youth culture
- Make the best use of what funding is available
- KEEP UNST FEST
- Better coordination to make for a better visitor experience
- What happens before or after the festival [unstfest]
- Develop creative industries
- Good green shoots of creative industries
- Open studios
- Lots of possibilities, create more jobs
- Develop sound points [digital signals which intersect at certain points in the landscape to create audible sound/music]
- Death tourism!
- Work with coach companies to create all inclusive cultural tours and experiences
- Make more of the Norse connections
- Better interpretation and upkeep of sites
- Viking Unst – develop and continue
- Develop more visual attractions so that there is more to see
- Better promotion of what Unst/Shetland has to offer
- Create more 'Simon King' type opportunities
- Make better use of magazines such as 'Caravan Club'
- Promote what we have to the rest of Britain and Europe
- Free music tuition

- Develop Saxa Vord as Cold War Heritage
- Further develop archaeology. We want a resident archaeologist
- Links to Universities for field trips (residential) for geology and archaeology
- Develop specialist holidays such as digs, geology etc..
- Sculpture trail/craft trail/ virtual trail
- Explore ticket development for all attractions

3.3 Health and Social Care

- There is no dedicated midwife in Unst. There's should be a post in Unst or Yell. Need continuity of care
- We are quite well off in Unst but the care centre is too small and needs to be expanded
- We need continuity of care for older folk
- There is a danger of services such as podiatry/physio being based in Yell but why has there been no consultation locally?
- If services are based in Yell this increases the cost as folk need to get taxis or a lift. If older folk are frail we need something nearer, if you're in pain it's much harder to travel. Costs to Lerwick for the hospital are paid but costs to travel to Yell are not paid
- Lack of physio's, shortage of professionals, recruitment problems
- Podiatry – patients aren't seen as often as necessary
- Unst possibly the best in Shetland for social care with care at home, home help, 24/7 extra care, day care and residential care
- The need for care will accelerate, we need more places
- Childcare is to a very high standard
- More community knowledge of services available is required – raise awareness
- Very good level of services at the care centre compared to other places
- Get appointments quickly and there's a continuity of care
- Need to try and KEEP this level of service
- Can see the nurse easily without having to bother the DR
- Make sure we lose nothing i.e. make sure we get the DR replaced
- Provision of an optician in the care centre is VERY good. Could others access this service? Use Nordalea minibus?
- Also dentist in Nordalea sometimes
- Good that we get regular chiropody
- Need to MAINTAIN services, but how?
- Could the optician and dentist visit Unst regularly specifically for older folk who have difficulty travelling? Would be REALLY good to have a dentist in Unst again.
- There is a very good level of social care, but it is costly. Can it be maintained?
- More bedroom could be added to Nordalea instead of new care homes being built.
- Are there too many admin staff in care homes (not necessarily here in Unst)
- Health care is good – can be seen at the health centre within 24 hours but fear this is not sustainable
- Need to be efficient so that services don't get cut – if well utilised there's less chance it will get cut
- Need a dentist in Unst (realistically, a permanent dentist in the N isles is very important for continuity of care)

- Threat to service – public money
- Good service compared to other places
- Further from hospital but transport links are good
- Links with health eg. Exercise, music, art classes – if link services together is a way of keeping them safer
- Social care – older folk are happier if they can be at home
- Good care in Unst for older folk but need to protect this service provision

3.4 Housing

- Not enough housing in the south end of Unst and this is a barrier to recruiting staff and to bringing new folk to the island who can't find anywhere to live
- Difficult to get any general needs housing in Uyeasound
- SHE isn't an option
- Opportunity – 'buy to rent' HHA
- SIC does not have a good idea of the housing situation in Unst
- Housing Dept is centralised, lack of local knowledge
- Incoming folk don't want to live in a housing estate, they want to come here for a rural experience
- Gateway housing would be a good option for all three areas of Unst
- Folk want to bide/work in the south end but no council /social houses
- Lack of house sites
- A register of land available for house sites would be useful
- Crofts – its difficult to get into this and know what's available
- Building projects help the local economy
- Cost of building is a barrier
- Wrong type of housing available
- Single accommodation is scarce
- Use SHE accommodation for groups such as University of the Highlands and Islands
- Lots of housing is in a poor state
- Private rental properties have suffered from a lack of investment
- Grant scheme are not taken up due to personal circumstances
- New builds (private) are a real commitment, the costs are high
- There are lots of houses but are they the right houses in the right place?
- Lack of 1 bedroom houses
- Allocation is poor – single people are blocking 3 bedroom houses due to a lack of single accommodation
- SHE houses should be knocked down
- MOD need to reinstate the land and its costly
- Bought houses have been devalued at SHE
- Social housing doesn't devalue private housing
- There are enough houses at SHE and they are on the bus route
- House sites can be difficult to access
- I'm happy to live and work in different 'places'
- Enough houses here but they need to be managed properly
- MOD sale of SHE houses could devalue other houses
- Demolition of SHE houses would be expensive
- Risk that SHE houses will be sold cheaply – holiday homes/problem tenants
- Will spending cuts affect what happens to SHE?
- Community purchase may be a liability rather than an asset
- SHE isn't being maintained

- Lack of single room accommodation is blocking family accommodation
- Housing problem is outwith the control of the community (re: MOD)
- Management of the social housing stock concerns people
- In the summer private housing is leased out to tourists
- Too many houses are unoccupied
- Too many houses are used by HHA as a dumping ground
- There's no control in a housing association, we wouldn't want it

3.5 Environment and Renewables

What do you like about Unst?

- Important Heritage = Wildflowers are important – keen of Hamar, natural wildflower areas on Unst. Maintenance of current agricultural practices seen as the way to preserve these.
- Concerned about loss of connection with peat hill – tourist/peat road development would help
- Whole of Unst is pretty good for environment – everywhere is special.
- Best environment is Skaw beach, and all the beaches
- Amazing views
- Special Qualities of Unst – the diversity of habitats is a big plus, don't destroy this, keep it 'unspoilt', integrity of the coastline
- Freshwater salmon farms changing lochs

What should be done to preserve it?

- Mussel/Salmon farms if suitably managed can provides jobs at little impact
- Keep developments in local management so that folk are interested in keeping the environment right
- Sensitive management of visitors – enhance with suggested trails, try to balance 'wild' with damage
- Lack of high density tourist attractions means that pressure is spread

Ideas on renewables developments?

- Could Unst have a Burravoe-like wind turbine installation?
- Support for Bluemull sound tidal turbines as a good idea
- Any installation should consider designated wildlife sites, but this is not a block to renewable development on Unst
- We should scope for suitable locations in unst for small-scale local wind energy.
- Feeling that Unst is limited by the requirements of Scottish and Southern Energy at the moment.
- Renewables – tidal turbines are better because of fewer landscape impacts
- Scale and appropriateness of wind farms is important
- Single turbines for community projects
- Support for a district heating scheme
- Lots of windmills required to provide energy and jobs - 'The Bigger the Better'
- Big development impacts will be short lived – in 20 years they will go again
- No point having a nice place to look at it nobody can live here
- More use of solar panels for tourist sites that require most power between March to September (when Solar most efficient)
- Renewables – concerns over industrial scale renewables projects
- To produce energy for local use is more acceptable
- Energy production should be small scale

- Marine energy is less damaging
- We should develop renewables so that skills, money, jobs and manufacturers are retained in Unst/Shetland
- Manure powered power station or methane/compost energy
- Renewables- no big aero generators wanted
- Small scale renewables is a positive idea
- Wave power combined with a fixed link to Yell (like the North Atlantic causeway in Norway)

Feelings on current Unst Partnership activities and plans?

- Current activities – recycling scheme is a good idea to reduce costs to take stuff away
- A central sorting place for recycling is required and would encourage folk to take part
- Airport is a suitable venue for a recycling centre
- COPE-style scrap store is a good idea
- District heating scheme supported
- District heating scheme – is there a resource for it – concern that not enough material be supplied
- Transport scheme is not a high priority
- Happy with current scrap store in Lerwick, not a priority to have one in Unst

3.6 Business and Tourism

- Tourism businesses – not enough people for the jobs at the moment, importing workers. Although do have the students during the summer
- Need to promote Unst to reach its tourism potential – tourism is a winner but who is promoting Shetland (and therefore Unst) at the moment? Expense of getting here always going to be a barrier and tourism businesses need to see the summer support the winter.
- Many of the tourism trips to Unst are day trips rather than overnight stays
- Lots of small businesses in Unst – may facing increased regulations
- Events and festivals need to be better coordinated
- In terms of business & tourism development, there are too many committees (i.e. three different groups for food & drink?)
- Need new businesses for job creation and to attract new people to live here
- Difficulty of tourism and other businesses having to compete with wages in the care homes (which are so high in comparison)
- Micro-businesses – there are many good small businesses but people have 2/3 jobs at a time
- There are many professional creative people in Unst. But amongst existing creative industry practitioners many are hobbyists and don't necessarily desire to grow
- Some creative businesses need premises
- Existing businesses – potentially no succession or support for succession planning (this could prevent many existing businesses from closing or from moving off island)
- Council needs to support Chevron
- Council should be serious about supporting job dispersal

- Council should consider basing the ferry in Unst
- For community enterprise projects – there is a need to always measure capital costs in relation to potential jobs created
- Micro Spinning Mill? Small niche market but evidence suggests that mills are closing everywhere
- Would a sheep skin factory offer a potential new business opportunity – many skins are currently going to landfill and are a waste product
- Development of Saxa Vord – could offer more potential in the winter, needs development i.e. en-suite facilities
- Could there be package holidays to Unst with different themes?
- Unst should have a Casino!
- Could be more proactive in creating opportunities for winter trade
- Unstfest is good for the island (although perhaps a bit too long)
- Agricultural show is good but perhaps there is limited developmental potential
- More business representation is needed on Unst Partnership/on the Board if driving forward this process
- Potential to develop existing craft/creative industries – may need design input
- Joint marketing possibilities for Unst products

3.7 Transport

- Ferry timetables need to reflect the time of year and what's on.
- Employment from the ferries very important for those based in Unst, Good quality long-term employment
- SIC needs to review this and find a cheap way of creating good quality jobs – how realistic is this (its not)
- Belmont terminal should be designed to berth the ferry overnight – job dispersal. 30 to 40% of the current crew are originally from Unst (2 skippers)
- Current ferry links are not a constraint to economic development (commuters don't agree) BUT can this be afforded?
- Concern about cut backs and upgrades
- Integrated bus service in winter, therefore do we now need all ferries
- Everyone says that the integrated bus service in winter is excellent and very important (for e.g. health appointments and court appearances). Capacity?
- You can't do a day trip to Unst on public transport from Lerwick (in Winter) – stops in October
- Social care/Salmon workers trouble travelling
- Fetlar can't commute to work, can't recruit in Unst, Fetlar folk interested
- IDEA - Unst bus service for shop run e.g from Uyeasound for disabled needing additional help, hoist. Access – community run electric vehicle?
- Value of free ferry fare –go to more stuff in Yell
- What we have is fine but we are concerned for the future
- A reduced timetable will affect Folks decisions about moving here - negative effect
- Moving here
- Used to timetable
- Ferry Timetable – speak to men who work at Sullom, and other commuters
- Why the gap between the 21.05 from Toft and the 22.15 from Unst – the ferry is already there. 2-3 cars can be sitting for ages.

- More commuters in employment – this has changed in the last ten years
- Lots of examples of 5 mins one way or the other with the timetable
- Big gap between 7.05am and 8.20am
- Huge importance of free travel between Unst and Yell – lots of salmon workers travel between the two islands, and people access dental care etc.
- Incentive to reduce car use (e.g. water taxi or bus? Across network)
- Importance of ferry link to continent (Norway/Denmark)
- Can islanders be used for the Norway/Faroe crossing?
- Tunnel? All the services mustn't go to Yell! Keep young folk here, stop the whole population commuting, doesn't feel right, no tunnel is way to keep population up.