Shetland's Economy

This is part of a Series of Papers providing information on Shetland's strategic challenges.

This paper provides information about Shetland's Economy and its key sectors, using local, regional and national data and expertise. It has been produced by a group of local experts.[i]

Shetland has a high performing economy, characterised by high employment, high output and with growth and investment across a number of sectors. This economic performance brings its own challenges though, including significant skills gaps, recruitment challenges and with the benefits of growth not being shared equally. Meanwhile, Shetland faces a significant pipeline of potential large infrastructure projects and investments, but these are set against a backdrop of different potential scenarios for the future of Shetland's economy.

This paper aims to set out the data to support consideration of possible economic futures for Shetland, so that an assessment of current economic and wider policy areas can be considered.

1. Shetland has a Strong Economy

Shetland has a strong employment market with consistently high levels of employment and low unemployment. In 2025 Shetland had the highest employment rate in Scotland, at 84.4%, and the lowest unemployment rate, at 1.9%. The Scottish rates were 74.7% and 3.7% and those for Great Britain 75.5% and 4.5%. Orkney was the only other Highlands & Islands area with an employment rate higher than the Scottish average, at 80.6%.[ii]

GDP and GVA figures are consistently higher than of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland and the UK[iii]. Shetland is consistently ranked 4th in terms of GDP and GVA per head in Scotland, below only the cities of Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. In a UK context, in 2023, Shetland ranked 82nd out of 361 Local Authority areas for GVA and GDP[iv]. In 2023, Shetland's GDP per head of population was £40,844 and GVA per head of population was £37,174.

2023	GDP / head	GVA / head
Argyll & Bute	£33,064	£29,563
Na h-Eileanan Siar	£28,192	£24,779
Orkney	£34,973	£31,773
Shetland	**£40,844**	**£37,174**
Scotland	£37,192	£33,419
UK	£39,845	£36,103

Shetland has a **high job density**, with 2024 being the first time in 12 years this figure fell below one (0.97), compared with 0.83 in Scotland and 0.85 in the UK. A density figure over one means there are more jobs than available workers, indicating a strong labour demand. Consistently higher than Scotland and the UK, Shetland's job density reached a high of 1.22 in 2020[v]. The highest rates Scotland and the UK have achieved in the last 12 years are 0.83 and 0.87.

Shetland also has a consistently **high rate of 16–19-year-olds participating in education, training or employment**; the highest in Scotland in 2024 (97.8%) and 2025 (97.5%), compared with the Scottish average of 92.7% and 93.3%[vi]. There is also a **high rate of people both going into and finishing apprenticeships**; over the past six years, the modern apprentice achievement rate[vii] in Shetland has ranged between 79-91% compared to the Scottish average range of 72-80%.[viii]

Income is relatively high; in 2025 the median and mean incomes were slightly below the UK average but broadly similar to Scotland and were the highest among Scotland's island authorities.[ix] However, these relatively higher incomes always need to be considered in the context of Shetland's higher cost of living; it costs 20-65% more to have an acceptable standard of living in Shetland than a UK equivalent household.[x]

2025	Median Income	Mean Income	Lowest Quartile
Shetland	**£41,007**	**£49,407**	**£23,173**
Orkney	£40,485	£49,815	£22,209
Na h-Eileanan Siar	£37,530	£45,754	£21,544
Argyll & Bute	£39,483	£48,632	£21,863
Highland	£44,906	£53,298	£25,141
Scotland	£41,593	£50,911	£22,818
United Kingdom	£44,634	£53,380	£24,655

There is a **strong business base and low business death rate**. In 2025 Shetland had 1,660 VAT and/or PAYE registered private sector businesses, with 95% classed as small businesses (0-49 employees). While 95% of Orkney and Na h-Eileanan Siar businesses are also classed as small, the overall number of businesses were lower. Over the past nine years, Shetland's business birth rate has been similar to Orkney and Na h-Eileanan Siar, but lower than the other Highlands and Islands areas and Scotland. However, Shetland's business death rate is also lower, at 5.7% in 2024, compared to 7.5% for the Highlands & Islands, 9.4% for Scotland and 9.8% for the UK.[xi]

With 95% of Shetland businesses being classed as small, these play in important role in employment, accounting for 65.1% of private sector jobs in 2025. This was lower than in Orkney (70.5%) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (67.4%), but significantly higher than the Highlands & Islands (51.8%) and Scotland (36.1%). **Abroad owned businesses accounted for 10.3% of private sector jobs**, higher than other Highlands & Islands areas apart from Highland, whilst EU abroad owned accounted for 4.3%, similar to Na h-Eileanan Siar and Highland but higher than Orkney (3.3%) and the Highlands & Islands (3.9%). These figures highlight the extent to which Shetland's economy is shared by both locally owned small businesses and larger externally owned companies.

These official figures understate the number of small businesses operating in Shetland.[xii] The prevalence of cottage industries, sole traders, crofters, self-employed tradespeople and tourism operators in Shetland means these micro businesses may account for more than half of all firms, which could double Shetland's number of businesses to nearer 3,500, and account for more than 2% of Shetland's overall economic activity. These may be particularly relevant to remote and rural communities.

2. A Strong Economy but with Structural Challenges

Shetland's economy is strong by many measures but there are **structural challenges** which constrain growth and affect the resilience and sustainability of the economy.

Shetland Place Standard 2025,[xiii] identified work and the local economy as key areas for improvement across Shetland, despite positive feedback about existing employment opportunities, local businesses and job availability in some sectors. Respondents highlighted concerns about limited and seasonal employment, a lack of skilled career pathways, low wages in some industries and challenges for young people entering the workforce. There was also concern about the economy's reliance on a relatively small number of industries. People want to see a more diverse and resilient economy, with more skilled full-time jobs, stronger support for local businesses, better infrastructure and connectivity, and clearer training and career pathways for young people.

Skills shortages, hard-to-fill vacancies and staff retention challenges are a major constraint on the economy. With a limited pool of available workers, employers can find themselves competing for staff, with some businesses reporting that they need to offer higher wages to attract and retain employees. This can increase operating costs, and in some sectors like construction, contribute to higher costs for end users.

The 2024 Shetland Skills Survey[xiv] found that 65% of employers had skills gaps within their business, as they were unable to recruit or retain staff with the required skills. These gaps were significantly impacting their business in terms of increased workload, operating costs and requirements to outsource work. Amongst the key findings, the survey found that within the previous 12 months:

- 82% had recruited at least one individual and 90% had arranged off the job training for their staff;
- 69% stated they had a 'hard to fill' vacancy, mainly due to a lack of applicants with the required skills (91%);
- 53% had an issue with staff retention, mainly due to competition from other employers;
- 49% were concerned about workforce displacement, with the majority (83%) introducing workplace changes to try to address this, including flexible working, pay increases and annual leave and pension incentives;
- To help address skills gaps and grow their workforce, 65% of businesses already employed an apprentice or intern, while 76% of those that did not currently would consider it.

Persistent recruitment and skills shortages may limit business growth, reduce productivity and constrain Shetland's ability to capitalise on emerging opportunities. Skills Development Scotland identifies demographic change as one of the principal long-term drivers of Scotland's labour market. An ageing population, slower population growth and increasing reliance on inward migration are expected to shape future labour supply, trends[xv] that are particularly relevant given Shetland's demographics and growing recruitment challenges. Between 2025-2028, the number of job openings generated by people leaving the labour market is projected to be 1,600, growing to 3,700 in 2028-2035.[xvi]

As labour shortages become more acute, enabling wider participation in the labour market will be an important part of addressing workforce needs. There are some residents who continue to face barriers to accessing and sustaining employment, including young people. Overall, though, Shetland's young people feel they are often overlooked in the workplace and experience unfair treatment.[xvii] Local employability services support people to overcome barriers to employment, including young people and those with a disability. As outlined in the Inequalities paper, Shetland's exceptionally high employment rate and low unemployment does mask a more complex picture of labour market participation. **Around 2,200 people aged 16-64 (15.75%) were economically inactive in the year ending 2023**[xviii] although this figure includes those who are long term sick, caring for family members, studying or otherwise not available for work.

Shetland has a greater proportion of part-time employment than Scotland and Great Britain. In 2024 the split of full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) posts was 61.5% FT to 38.5% PT, for Scotland this was 67.1% FT to 32.9% PT and Great Britain 69.2% FT to 30.8% PT.[xix] This **higher proportion of part-time employment** may reflect a combination of factors, including the structure of Shetland's economy, the availability of childcare and business actions to attract and retain staff in a tight labour market i.e. offering flexible working, higher wages and more favourable working conditions. The relatively high proportion of part-time jobs may also contribute to lower household earning potential and underemployment for some workers.

In addition, there are interconnected **structural barriers** associated with **island geography, transport, training infrastructure, housing/costs and the scale of the local economy.**[xx] Many of these will be covered in depth in future sessions but some key points:

Housing and the availability of suitable accommodation are increasingly recognised as key constraints. Limited housing supply, affordability pressures and a shortage of temporary and worker accommodation can restrict employers' ability to recruit and retain staff, constrain business growth and delay investment into the area.

The **higher costs of doing businesses** from a remote location, alongside the **vulnerability and capacity constraints of transport links** are increasingly highlighted. Employers also face additional costs and time commitments when **travelling to the mainland to access specialist training**. Recent changes to the Orkney/Inverness air service and ongoing pressures affecting the Council's internal ferry services, further underline the importance of reliable transport infrastructure. Young people have identified similar challenges through Shetland Youth Voice with transport limitations cited as a barrier to accessing employment[xxi] and as a factor that may discourage young people from returning to Shetland after completing further or higher education.[xxii]

With the economy increasingly reliant on broadband and mobile networks for business operations, remote working, financial transactions and access to services, **digital connectivity** is another issue. Damage to Shetland's subsea fibre optic infrastructure in 2025 caused disruption for several weeks at a time, exposing uneven resilience between providers and the difficulties businesses face when reliable connectivity and mobile data backup are unavailable[xxiii]. The outages also highlighted the wider risks of the shift from traditional landlines to broadband-based communications.[xxiv]

Overall, Shetland's economy is performing well, but its **dependence on a few key sectors creates a structural vulnerability**. Whilst the economy has diversified in recent years, it remains particularly dependent on the seafood sector but also oil & gas, energy related activities and tourism. An unexpected decline in just one of these sectors could have a significant impact on the wider economy.

3. Shetland's Key Sectors

Looking a bit more closely at Shetland's key economic sectors (and emerging sectors) and how their presence varies across localities provides further insight into the strengths, vulnerabilities and economic differences within Shetland.

Input-Output Studies provide key information on the value of the economy. Shetland's most recent studies were in 2011 and 2017.[xxv] Whilst these studies are a little dated, they still give an indication of the shape of Shetland's economy and its key sectors. Key messages from the 2017 study were:

- **The sectors that generate most economic output are not necessarily those that employ the most people.** Whilst the non-services sectors such as, aquaculture and fish processing, contribute the most to Shetland's total output, it is the services sectors, such as retail and schools, that account for a larger share of GVA and employment in the isles.

- **Marine industries**[xxvi] **are particularly important to Shetland's economy**. In 2017 these accounted for 37% of all economic activity measured by total output, 25% of Shetland's GVA (its contribution to the value of the economy) and 14% of its employment (FTEs). The seafood sector (fishing, aquaculture and fish processing) provided the majority of this, generating 35% of output, 22% GVA and 11% FTEs. **The seafood sector was also the main driver for Shetland's trade surpluses** of £131 million and £175 million in 2011 and 2017.
- In 2017 service sectors, such as schools, retail and social work, accounted for 69% of FTEs, with the public services sector alone contributing 28% of FTEs.
- Assessing employment in a wider context, the amount of labour contributed to £1mn of output[xxvii] was low for aquaculture and fish processing, whilst service sectors provided the highest. In 2017 two of Shetland's smaller non-service industries, **textiles & crafts and agriculture**, were near the top in terms of employment, showing that whilst they may not be ranked high in terms of output or GVA, they are **important to the labour market.**
- Economic Type 1 multipliers show the wider economic impact generated by demand in a sector, including both direct and indirect effects. In 2017, fish processing had the highest multiplier, followed by agriculture and fishing, highlighting the important role these sectors play in supporting wider economic activity through supply chains.

Below is additional information about Shetland's key sectors over the last decade.

3.1 Seafood Sector

The seafood sector (fishing, aquaculture and fish processing) is the largest contributor to Shetland's economy. It makes a particularly significant contribution to economic output, exports and employment, and supports activity across many of Shetland's communities. The sector has also shown considerable resilience and growth, although the three parts of the industry have different ownership structures and face different opportunities and risks.

Fishing

Whilst the sector has experienced a period of change and a number of challenges, the Scottish and **Shetland fishing industry has grown**. In 2024, both landings within and out with Shetland were at their highest level for over 10 years.[xxviii]

- Over 367,000 tonnes of sea fish and shellfish, worth nearly £583mn, were landed into Scottish ports by both UK and foreign vessels. Shetland ports received over 20% of these landings; 74,056 tonnes worth over £112mn[xxviii]. Peterhead was first, receiving nearly 59% of Scottish landings, and Fraserburgh third, with 4%.
- While there has been a general decline in the UK fleet, **Shetland's fleet has grown** from 179 vessels in 2014 to 262 in 2024, driven by an increase in vessels under 10 metres and over 24 metres.[xxix] This growth may have been supported by investment in new fish markets in Lerwick and Scalloway over the past decade.
- Of the 262 vessels in the fleet, 106 were registered in Lerwick, 42 in Whalsay, and 114 across the rest of Shetland, demonstrating the importance of fishing activity throughout Shetland.
- **Larger pelagic vessels make a particularly significant contribution to the value of landings**. In 2024 the 21 Scottish pelagic vessels over 40 meters made up just 1% of the fleet but landed 36% of the value of all landings and 99% of the pelagic landings. Eight of these vessels (38%) are in the Shetland fleet, and Shetland is the only Scottish island area to have vessels this size.[xxx]
- Employment has also been more resilient in Shetland than across Scotland. While employment on Scottish vessels has fallen by 15% in the last 10 years, employment on Shetland vessels has grown by over 7%. In 2024, 3,735 fishers worked on Scottish vessels, with 415 (11%) employed on Shetland vessels.[xxxi]

One of the distinctive features of the Shetland fishing industry is that most **fishing vessels remain locally owned** and the majority of crew are also local.[xxxii] However, the industry faces a number of longer-term risks, including succession planning, increasing operating costs, access to fishing grounds, uncertainties around quotas and regulation, dependence on key species and the potential impacts of climate change.

Aquaculture

The aquaculture sector is a key pillar of the Shetland economy and makes Shetland one of the UK's most important aquaculture regions.

Over the last ten years the **value of Atlantic salmon farming has grown** which, adjusted for inflation, has risen from £206mn in 2015 to **£293mn** in 2024. However, the tonnage produced has remained around 42,500 tonnes, and Shetland's share of the Scottish production has reduced slightly, from 25% to 22%. **Shetland remains the second highest producer in Scotland**, after the North Coast and West Highlands. The local salmon sector employed a total of 267 people (262FT & 5PT) in 2024, a small increase from 2015[xxxiii].

Salmon farming ownership in Shetland is overwhelmingly external and corporate. Over the past 10 years salmon production has become more consolidated, with fewer but larger farms and ownership is now mainly between two international companies.[xxxiv] This potentially brings greater stability but also creates some economic vulnerability, as decisions affecting Shetland's salmon industry may increasingly be influenced by corporate strategies and market conditions outside the islands.

Unlike salmon farming, **Shetland's shellfish growing sector is characterised by strong local ownership**, with many controlled by Shetland-based family businesses. Over the last decade, mussel production in Shetland has nearly doubled, from 5,565 to 10,234 tonnes, **with a value of £10.7mn**, further strengthening its place as the dominant producer of farmed mussels in Scotland.[xxxv] **In 2024 Shetland produced 88% of all mussels in Scotland** and there are plans for further growth, including a current research project being carried out by UHI Shetland.[xxxvi]

In 2024 there were 21 shellfish businesses employing 95 people (60FT, 20PT & 15 casual),[xxxvii] which represented a small reduction in employment compared with 2015. This slight drop in employment while production has nearly doubled further shows the sectors larger impact on output than employment.

One of the benefits of the aquaculture sector is that employment tends to be relatively well-paid, requiring a variety of skills, while providing employment opportunities in more remote and rural parts of Shetland, where the median income of households tends to be lower and the cost of living is higher.

<u>Fish & Shellfish Processing</u>

In 2025 Shetland had 10 processing plants (for caught fish or aquaculture), one live bivalve purification centre and seven live bivalve mollusc dispatch centres.[xxxviii] **Processing activity provides employment in many communities,** including rural island areas such as Yell. However, recruitment can be challenging across the sector and, having historically relied on migrant labour to fill some processing and operational roles, is vulnerable to changes in immigration policies.

3.2 Energy

Energy has been one of the core sectors of Shetland's modern economy, generating significant economic output, infrastructure investment and supply chain activity over the past 50 years. It is estimated that around **1,000 people** are directly or indirectly employed in the energy sector and ancillary services,[xxxix] with activity spread across a range of sectors including energy, transport, warehousing and specialist services.

Since becoming operational in the 1970s, Sullom Voe Terminal (SVT) has been **strategically important to the UK** energy sector. It has played a key role in processing North Sea oil and gas, making Shetland's ports among the busiest in the UK for energy-related traffic. The development of the Total-operated gas plant in the 2010s further strengthened the role of Sullom Voe as an energy hub, enabling gas from the west of Shetland fields to be processed and exported through Shetland.[xl] This activity transformed the islands' economy, creating employment, attracting inward investment and supporting the development of a **specialist local supply chain**. It also generated significant revenue streams for Shetland Islands Council through land leases and **harbour related income**, supporting local investment and services. As a result, its economic impact has extended well beyond its direct contribution to employment and output, delivering wider benefits to Shetland than many other industries of comparable size.

The energy sector is now entering a period of significant change, presenting economic risks and opportunities for Shetland. Recent modelling by the University of Strathclyde's Centre for Energy Policy has estimated that, without successful transition of SVT to new low-carbon activity, declining oil processing could result in up to 234 job losses across the Shetland economy by 2036, rising to 402 by 2050, alongside a reduction in annual GRDP[xli] of around £30million.[xlii] **The contraction or closure of SVT would have major implications for the Shetland economy** and community with the loss of high skilled jobs and high value local supply chain work activity, alongside the potential impact on public and community services due to the **loss of harbour revenues**. The Scottish Government has recently announced an investment of almost £760,000 at SVT, with the proposed hydrogen and e-methanol facility being developed by Veri Energy. This aims to transform SVT into a clean energy hub that would secure its future and support retention of the local workforce and economic activity.[xliii]

Oil & Gas (O&G) related activity beyond SVT remains an important generator of economic activity in Shetland. This wider activity is largely port-related O&G project work i.e. mobilisation, logistics, engineering, and is centred around Lerwick Harbour. Current examples include Rosebank, which has used Shetland as a mobilisation port, generating significant economic activity in the port of Lerwick and utilisation of the local supply chain. **Decommissioning of O&G assets** is also now an established part of Shetland's O&G activity with Lerwick harbour one of the UK's main decommissioning ports.

At the same time, **Shetland is developing a new role within the UK energy system**. The Viking Energy Wind Farm (443MW) represents one of the largest onshore renewable energy developments in the UK and during construction, more than 400 jobs were supported and over £70million spent with local contractors.[xliv] The project underpinned the Shetland High Voltage Direct Current Link, enabling renewable electricity generated in Shetland to be exported to the mainland UK and creating key infrastructure required to unlock further renewable energy opportunities. **Renewables is now an established industry on Shetland** with Viking Energy and other smaller wind farms supporting local economic activity. Viking Energy supports an operational workforce of c. 30 people – these are skilled jobs – and provides O&M supply chain opportunities for our local business base.

The project also provides around **£2.2 million of investment annually to the Shetland Community Benefit Fund**.[xlv] However, the development has generated local debate around landscape impacts, visual impacts from the turbines and associated transmission infrastructure, and the balance between national energy objectives and local environmental and community priorities.[xlvi] The project has also raised wider questions about local ownership, community participation and how Shetland can maximise economic value retained from developments based on its natural resources.

Shetland's energy sector is anticipated to diversify into new areas and expand, driven by a substantial pipeline of energy transition opportunities across grid transmission infrastructure, onshore and offshore wind and clean energy production. This **pipeline of activity presents a major economic opportunity for Shetland** and could see the establishment of new industries that could provide many of the benefits Shetland has captured from SVT over the last five decades - skilled jobs, supply chain activity, GRDP, legacy infrastructure and community benefit.

3.3 Agriculture

Agriculture makes a relatively modest contribution to Shetland's economic output but has a much wider role in the islands, supporting employment, managing land, and contributing to household incomes. The sector **supported 1,938 jobs in 2024 and 1,843 in 2025**. As an industry, it is locally owned, providing a supplementary income and food source for a proportion of households, helping to offset Shetland's high cost of living.

Shetland has more common grazing than most other areas,[xlvii] and in 2025 produced more sheep than Orkney and the Western Isles put together, whilst Orkney produces a lot more cattle. No agricultural production in the Highlands and Islands is significant in a Scottish context, although in 2025 Shetland held 4.5% of Scotland's sheep[xlviii] and produced 286,049kg wool. Shetland exports significantly more animals than it imports[xlix].

The structure of agricultural holdings differs significantly between Shetland and Orkney[l]. In 2025, the two islands had a similar number of agricultural holdings (1,700) but 98% of those in Orkney had sole rights to the holding, whilst for Shetland this was only 53%. Both Island communities had a similar size of workforce (1,850) but in Orkney 41% were FT, compared to 17% in Shetland, possibly linked to ownership and production differences.

Shetland's agricultural supply chain is supported by a small number of local processing facilities, including two approved egg packing centres, one dairy product processing plant, one slaughterhouse / processing plant and one woollen mill.[li]

Agriculture remains significantly dependent on public support, while the policy environment is changing. Scottish Government and EU Assistance for the agricultural sector in Shetland, accounting for inflation, has increased from £9.66mn in 2017 to £13.22mn in 2025.[lii] However, the subsidy environment for Shetland has undergone its biggest change, moving from the EU Common Agricultural Policy to a new Scottish post-Brexit system. **Agricultural policy changes and subsidies can have a significant impact on land use** and there is concern that national-level policy may not adequately recognise local contexts, and have potential adverse impacts for island economies, environments and communities.[liii]

Agriculture may also have an increasingly important role in Shetland's future resilience. With climate change impacting on global food production and the reliability and cost of transporting goods to the islands remaining ongoing concerns, the value of locally produced food is increasingly important.

3.4 Tourism

Tourism is increasingly important to Shetland's economy, with the estimated total economic impact of tourism visitors in 2025 exceeding £100m for the first time, at **£111.7 million**.[liv] With benefits extending across accommodation, food and drink, retail, transport, arts and crafts, nature, wildlife and culture and heritage, the sector also supports a diverse range of small locally owned businesses throughout Shetland, helping spread the economic benefits of visitor spending across Shetland's communities.

The visitor economy has recovered strongly from the Covid-19 pandemic and is now significantly above pre-pandemic levels. It is estimated that, in 2024, there were **88,967 independent visitors** to Shetland, with an estimated total spend of £50.3mn. While similar surveys in Orkney show their transport links enable nearly twice the number of independent visitors, 173,037 in 2024, their average stay and visitor spend is lower, resulting in Orkney receiving twice as many independent visitors but generating less than 55% more visitor spend than Shetland. [lv & lvi]

Cruise ship visitors docking in Lerwick have increased significantly in the last 10 years, from 30,430 in 2015 to 129,954 in 2025, and spread beyond Lerwick, with 43 calls at smaller Shetland ports in 2025 - the majority of which called at Fair Isle.[lvii] While the sector is vulnerable to external factors, such as geopolitical events, there is also opportunity to realise more benefit from the sector, such as creating new products and visitor experiences and increasing cruise ship calls to smaller ports/communities.

However, tourism represents both an economic opportunity and challenge for Shetland. An event held in 2026 highlighted that while some local business found tourism essential to their viability, others perceived it as having a negative impact on their business. While Shetland could grow its visitor economy and capture more value from existing visitors, structural challenges currently constrain the sector's ability to realise its full potential.

3.5 Creative Industries

Creative and cultural activity in Shetland spans a wide range of disciplines including music, crafts, visual arts, design, film, architecture and other creative practice. Whilst the sector is relatively small when measured through conventional business and employment statistics, its wider contribution to Shetland's economy and communities is likely to be considerably greater. They have **significant external visibility and impact**, particularly in relation to Shetland's global reputation, its growth in tourism,[lviii] and potential impacts on people wishing to move to Shetland.

The scale and economic contribution are difficult to quantify because the sector includes a high proportion of sole traders, freelancers, microbusinesses and people who combine creative activity with other employment or income streams. One of the last major attempts to quantify the economic contribution of Shetland's creative industries was an EKOS study in 2008 which estimated the sector's annual turnover at around **£25million** and supporting employment of **between 367 and 460 jobs**.[lix] Although significantly outdated, this study highlighted the scale and potential of the sector and helped inform subsequent investment and development, including the building of Mareel and the Creative industries provision at Shetland College/UHI.

A 2020 UHI report identified 95 employers in Shetland associated with the creative industries (arts, culture and recreation) while noting the sector's characteristics of small organisations and part-time activity.[lx]

Shetland has a distinctive and internationally recognised textiles sector, with a long and rich heritage of knitting, wool and textile production. There is also an active textile-related service sector, offering retail, workshops, tours and training provision. However, its contribution to the creative economy is not necessarily reflected within creative industries, as many textile businesses and jobs are classified as manufacturing. As demonstrated by the 2017 Shetland Input-Output Study,[lxi] **textiles & crafts were among the smaller of the non-service industries in terms of output and GVA, but they ranked highly in terms of their contribution to employment.**

A knitwear manufacturer study carried out in 2025[lxii] found that:

- With the majority of knitted products being produced in Shetland, the 14 businesses surveyed employed over 80 people, either full time, part time or as outworkers.
- There has been significant capital investment since 2020, increasing overall manufacturing capacity, and 57% of businesses were planning further growth while some smaller design businesses preferred to remain small.
- **The sector contributes to sustaining rural communities**, creating business opportunities and keeping traditional skills alive. It also a has a significant impact on tourism and culture.
- For smaller businesses (1-10 employees) 90% of sales are direct to visitors and locals in-person and 10% online, making the strength of the tourism market critical to these businesses. For the two larger businesses (12+ employees) this is less critical, with 70% of sales to trade.
- Recruitment remains a challenge and there is also a shortage of technical and programming skills.
- Several small design businesses were inactive or closing, with no succession planning.

Overall, the knitwear sector is small and, while there has been investment and growth in the knitwear industry in the past 6 years, there is also fragility and constraints on growth. Going forward, the study suggested an industry led sector development plan could help to address these issues and support sector growth.

3.6 Public Sector

The public sector plays a particularly significant role in Shetland's labour market. In 2022/23, 3,734 people worked for **Shetland Islands Council**, equivalent to 2,380 full-time equivalents (FTEs).[lxiii] In 2025, **NHS** Shetland employed a further 890 people, equivalent to 721.1 FTEs.[lxiv] Together, these two organisations employ roughly **30% of Shetland's working age population alone**. The UK equivalent is 9-10% of the working age population, whilst about 14% work in the public sector as a whole.[lxv]

Beyond direct employment, the public sector acts as an **important economic anchor**. Through its spending, procurement, infrastructure investment and support for economic development initiatives, it helps sustain activity across a wide range of sectors. For example, by funding the Promote Shetland service,[lxvi] delivering Business Gateway services[lxvii] and providing a range of economic development grants to local businesses and community organisations.[lxviii]

While the **public sector provides a significant source of relatively stable and well-paid employment for communities across Shetland**, the scale has implications for the wider labour market. Public sector pay, pensions and employment conditions can make recruitment and retention more challenging for private sector employers, which in turn may constrain the ability of some private businesses to grow. Conversely, the public sector itself is experiencing increasing numbers of long-term and **hard-to-fill vacancies**. Shetland's public sector has historically benefited from a stronger financial position than many local authorities, supported by harbour revenues, investment income and Reserve Funds. Looking ahead though, maintaining current models of service delivery is likely to become increasingly challenging, requiring ongoing redesign and greater use of digital technologies.

4. Differences Across Shetland

While many residents commute across locality boundaries for work, certain sectors of the economy are strongly associated with particular places. These concentrations can help shape local employment opportunities, income levels and business activity, whilst also creating different opportunities and vulnerabilities across Shetland's communities. This could be very broadly summarised as follows:[lxix]

Locality	Economic Description
Lerwick & Bressay	Shetland's main employment and service hub; strongest concentration of public services, retail, professional/business activity and port-related economy, further education, tourism, cultural hub.
Shetland Central	Diverse mixed economy around Scalloway and the central mainland; strong fishing/seafood, aquaculture, agriculture, construction and local services, further education, tourism increasing factor.
Shetland North	Strong rural/marine economy with fishing, aquaculture, agriculture and oil/energy-related activity; particularly relevant to Northmavine, Nesting and Delting, tourism increasing factor.
Shetland South	Highly diverse economy combining agriculture, tourism, transport/aviation; Sumburgh is economically significant. Particularly distinctive small island economy in Fair Isle.
Shetland West	Strongly rural and marine economy; fishing, aquaculture and agriculture are important, with particularly distinctive small-island economies in Foula and Papa Stour.
Whalsay & Skerries	Particularly distinctive fishing economy, with fishing and seafood-related activity forming a much more prominent part of the local economic identity.
Yell, Unst & Fetlar	Diverse island economy with aquaculture, agriculture, fishing, tourism and emerging energy/space opportunities; significant variation between the three islands.

These geographic differences have contributed to **different approaches to economic development** across Shetland. In many of the more rural mainland areas and outer islands, **community development companies** play an **important role in supporting economic resilience**, playing an active role in supporting business development, tourism, community assets, housing, renewable energy and local services.

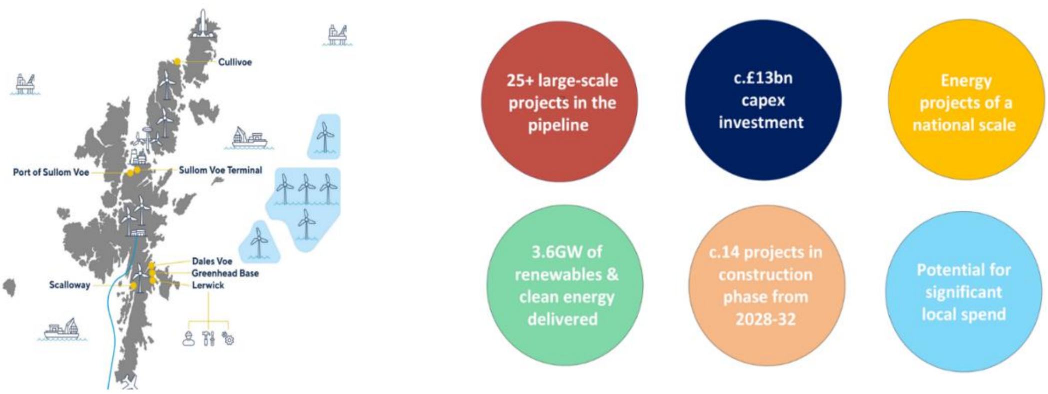
We know that household income varies geographically. Areas around Lerwick generally have median household incomes at or above the Shetland average, while many of the more remote mainland areas and outer islands have lower median incomes. Since 2014, there has been a widening disparity between those areas with a lower and those areas with a higher median income.[lxx]

5. Emerging Sectors and Pipeline Projects

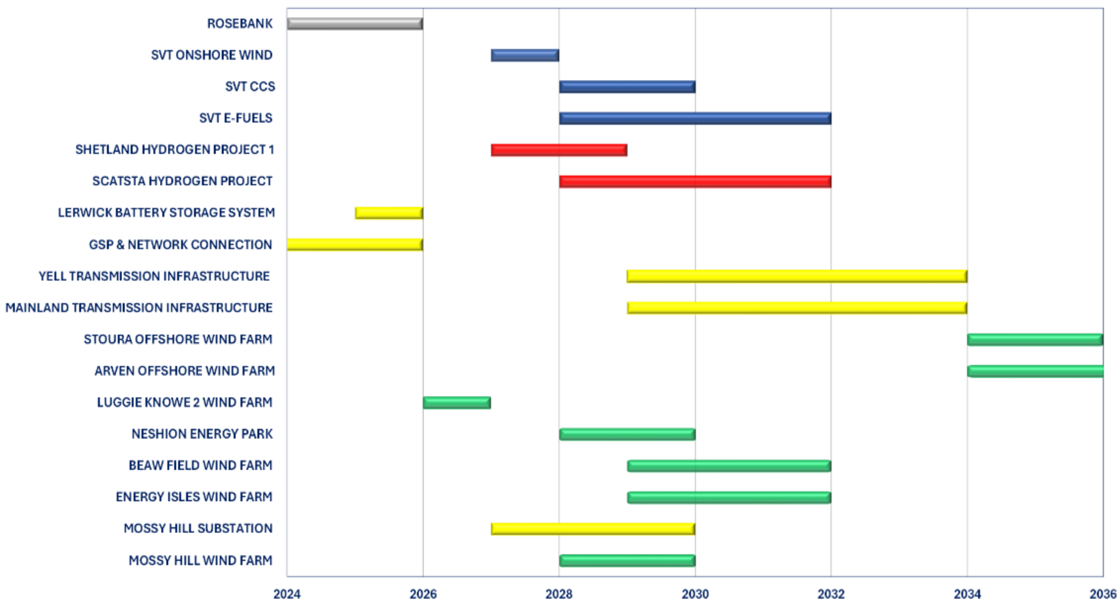
Shetland has quite a diverse and thriving economy, supported by a mix of established and emerging industries and a sophisticated supply chain. However, **the economy remains relatively concentrated in a small number of key sectors.** At the same time, **there is a pipeline of potential major projects** and **emerging opportunities** that could impact on the shape of the economy and create new employment opportunities.

Space is one of the new sectors that is beginning to diversify Shetland's economic base. In 2021, a study found that the Shetland Space Centre in Unst could have a transformative impact on the economy of Unst and across Shetland; creating 140 jobs in Unst, a further 70 jobs throughout Shetland and contributing at least £7.8 million in gross value per annum to Shetland's economy.[lxxi]

Shetland is also positioned to benefit from other emerging economic opportunities linked to the **transition of the low carbon economy**, marine innovation and new technology. The scale of the transformational opportunities facing the Highlands and Islands economy has been highlighted in an HIE report, which identifies offshore and onshore wind, green hydrogen, marine biotechnology, space, natural capital and critical infrastructure as areas with potential to generate significant economic change across the Highlands and Islands.[lxxii] **Over the next 15 years**, Shetland is forecast to make a national contribution across key UK sectors:[lxxiii]

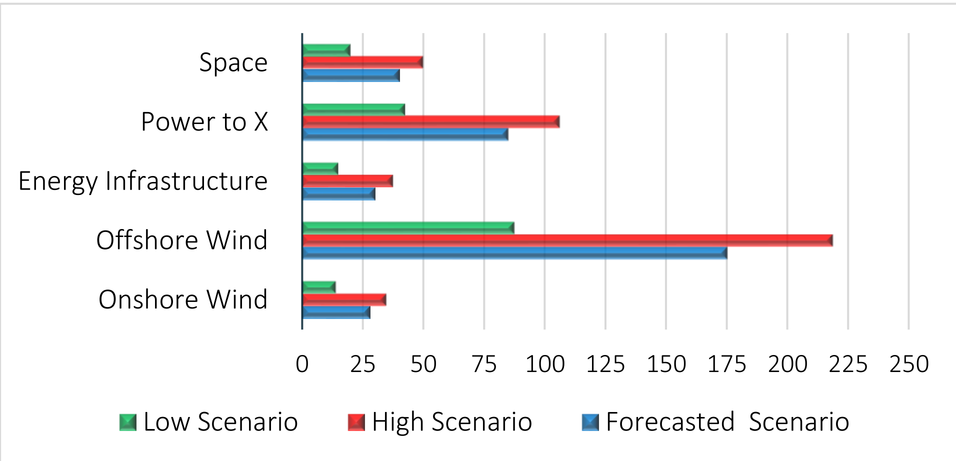


Across Shetland, there are 18 strategic energy projects currently in the pipeline, presented below:



Some analysis has been carried out on estimated permanent operations and maintenance jobs on Shetland that could be created from major developments linked to Space, Power to X, Energy Infrastructure, Offshore Wind and Onshore Wind.[lxxiv] For projected long-term employment, a mid-point estimate of 578 jobs has been presented while at its peak, 1490 transitional supply chain construction jobs could be supported.[lxxv]

Offshore wind is the sector that has the potential to create the highest number of jobs, but "spatial squeeze" is a significant concern for the local fishing fleet. The planned offshore windfarms, such as Arven and Stoura, are expected to cover areas currently used by both whitefish and pelagic fisheries.



Maximising local economic benefit from such large-scale projects will depend on Shetland's ability to capture supply chain activity, develop skills, build capacity in Shetland to support large-scale developments/address infrastructure constraints and retain value within communities. However, within Shetland, concerns have grown about the pace and cumulative impact of these potential projects, with the Association of Community Councils currently discussing a moratorium on new energy developments.[lxxvi]

Shetland's public sector and economic partners are proactively recognising these challenges and putting frameworks in place to try and maximise local benefit and maintain community confidence. The Shetland Development Charter seeks to secure a just transition through collaboration with developers, local supply chain integration, community wealth building and a fair share of benefit for Shetland.[lxxvii] However, as a voluntary framework, it has attracted mixed reactions, with some questioning whether it provides sufficient influence over the scale and impact of future developments.[lxxviii]

Appendix: Current Strategic Document Reference to Economic Interventions

A Co-Pilot Search across Shetland's key strategic documents showed the following strategic documents containing **explicit references to the economy, economic development, economic sustainability, workforce/economic growth challenges, or actions intended to address economic challenges**.

Directly focused on economic development and economic challenges

- **Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) Strategy 2023–2028**: Economic development is a core purpose of the strategy. It focuses on productivity, innovation, entrepreneurship, fair work, talent attraction and retention, community wealth building, business competitiveness, and building a resilient regional economy.
- **Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022–2027**: Focuses on developing the skills system required for Scotland's economy, addressing labour market challenges, workforce development, apprenticeships, reskilling, and employer needs.
- **UHI Shetland Strategy 2030**: Identifies skills development, enterprise, innovation and economic growth as core priorities, aiming to support the Shetland economy through education, training and research.
- **VisitScotland / Shetland Tourism Strategy 2024–2026**: Explicitly seeks to generate prosperity through tourism, strengthen the visitor economy, improve skills and infrastructure, and maximise economic benefit while managing impacts sustainably.

Local strategies with significant economic priorities

- **Shetland Islands Council Corporate Plan 2021–2026:** Economic sustainability is one of the major strategic challenges identified. The plan includes priorities around:
  - Sustaining existing jobs and creating new jobs.
  - Supporting economic diversification.
  - Skills and learning.
  - Digital connectivity.
  - Population balance as an economic sustainability issue.
  - Recovery from COVID-19 and Brexit impacts.
- **Shetland Local Development Plan:** Economic development is one of the principal policy themes. It seeks to support sustainable growth, employment, infrastructure, housing and community facilities that contribute to economic prosperity.
- **Shetland Local Housing Strategy 2022–2027:** Explicitly links housing provision to supporting economic growth. The strategy recognises housing supply as a constraint on workforce attraction, retention and wider economic sustainability.
- **Shetland Regional Transport Strategy / Transport Strategy Refresh 2018–2028 (ZetTrans):** One of its primary objectives is to underpin Shetland's economy by improving access to employment, labour markets, customers, suppliers and visitor travel. Affordability and reliability of transport links are identified as economic issues.

Strategies recognising economic challenges within a wider remit

- **Shetland Climate Change Strategy 2023–2027:** Includes a "Just Transition" approach and seeks to maximise social and economic benefits from climate action, investment and sustainable development.
- **NHS Shetland Strategic Delivery Plan 2024–2029**: Recognises role as an "anchor organisation" contributing to wider community wellbeing and economic sustainability, including workforce retention and resilience.
- **HSCP Joint Strategic Plan 2025–2028**: References financial pressures, workforce shortages and the need for sustainable service models, linking demographic and economic pressures on health and care services.
- **Community Learning and Development Plan 2024–2027**: Includes workforce development, employability, skills acquisition and reducing barriers to economic participation as key priorities.
- **Active Shetland Strategy**: Connects physical activity to wider economic outcomes through improved health, reduced inequality and workforce wellbeing.
- **Children's Services Plan 2023–2026**: Includes reducing child poverty, improving attainment, employability and life chances as strategic priorities.

Third-sector and community organisations referencing economic challenges

- **Shetland Charitable Trust Strategy 2025–2030:** Focuses on generational fairness, reducing disadvantage, strengthening communities and maintaining community infrastructure to support long-term economic resilience.
- **Voluntary Action Shetland Strategic Framework**: Supports community capacity and third-sector resilience, contributing indirectly to economic and social sustainability.
- **Shetland Arts Development Agency (SADA)**: Identifies development of skills and a diverse creative economy as desired outcomes.
- **Shetland Amenity Trust Strategic Plan**: Links heritage to a prosperous and sustainable future and includes community and wellbeing outcomes with economic significance.
- **Hjaltland Housing Association Business Plan 2025–2030**: Focus on affordable housing, sustainable communities and supporting places where people can live and work, addressing constraints on economic growth.

End Notes

[i] Director of Development and Infrastructure Services, Depute Director of Development and Infrastructure, Project Officer Economic Development Service, Community Planning Team (Shetland Islands Council), Area Manager, Head of Business Growth (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), Managing Director NB Communication.

[ii] Figures are as a % of the working population (those aged 16-64), Office for National Statistics (2026) *Local Labour Market Profile: Shetland Islands*. Nomis. Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lad/1778385229/report.aspx (Accessed: July 2026).

[iii] An area's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total monetary value of all finished goods and services produced in that area, while its Gross Value Added (GVA) figure measures the value of goods and services produced less the cost of raw materials and intermediate inputs used in production. Both figures indicate economic productivity, wage levels and the strength of the local economy, with a higher figure generally indicating a stronger performance.

[iv] Office for National Statistics (2025) *Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components*. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/nominalregionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedperheadandincomecomponents (Accessed: July 2026), Office for National Statistics (2025) *Regional gross domestic product: all ITL regions*. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/regionalgrossdomesticproductallnutslevelregions (Accessed: July 2026), Office for National Statistics (2025) *Regional gross domestic product: local authorities*. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/regionalgrossdomesticproductlocalauthorities (Accessed: July 2026).

[v] Office for National Statistics (2026) *Local Labour Market Profile: Shetland Islands*. Nomis. Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lad/1778385229/report.aspx (Accessed: July 2026)

[vi] Skills Development Scotland (2025) *Annual Participation Measure*, Available https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation-measure (Accessed: Jully 2026).

[vii] The modern apprentice achievement rate is as a percentage of all leavers.

[viii] Shetland Islands Council (2025) Shetland in Statistics 2025: No 45. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Service. Available at https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/13516/no-45-shetland-in-statistics-2025 (Accessed July 2026).

[ix] Local authorities have access to data on the income bands (£5,000 bands) of households by postcode (through CACI Ltd). The data can be used to calculate the median, mean and lowest quartile of geographic areas. Median income is the middle income value of all the people or households in an area, whilst mean income is the average income of the people or households in an area and the lowest quartile is the lowest 25% of the data.

[x] Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2016) *Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland: A Policy Update*. Inverness: HIE available at https://www.hie.co.uk/media/6441/aplusminimumplusincomeplusstandardplusforplusremoteplusruralplusscotlandplus-plusapluspolicyplusupdateplus2016.pdf (Accessed: July 2026).

[xi] Scottish Government (2026) *Sub-Scotland Economic Statistics Database*. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/sub-scotland-economic-statistics-database/ (Accessed: July 2026).

[xii] As these figures only record VAT and/or PAYE registered private sector businesses, many micro businesses are not captured. It is estimated on a Scottish level that these figures exclude around half of all firms, which contributes 2% of economic activity.

[xiii] Shetland Islands Council (2025). *Our Place – Your Say 2025 Final Report*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council.

[xiv] EKOS Ltd. (2024) *Shetland Islands Skills Survey 2024: Final Report*. Glasgow: EKOS Ltd. Prepared for Shetland Islands Council. Available at https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10667/2024-shetland-skills-survey (Accessed: July 2026)

[xv] Skills Development Scotland (2025) *Scotland's Labour Market Drivers*. Glasgow: Skills Development Scotland. Available at: https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/n5igv3fp/scotlands-labour-market-drivers.pdf (Accessed: July 2026)

[xvi] Skills Development Scotland Data Matrix, slide 37 of 43 for Shetland Islands - Available at: https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning/data-matrix (Accessed: 21 August 2026).

[xvii] Shetland Youth Voice (2025) *Jobs & Fair Work Summit 2025 Report*. Lerwick: Shetland Youth Voice. Available at: https://ugc.production.linktr.ee/dd521643-2445-4e3c-9bef-85cb53d1c6c1_Jobs---Fair-Work-Summit-2025-Report-FINAL.pdf

[xviii] The percentage figure of 15.7% is based on the Annual Population Survey and ONS warns that because of this, the Shetland estimate for economically inactive is less precise because of the small sample size.

xix Office for National Statistics (2026) *Local Labour Market Profile: Shetland Islands*. Nomis. Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lad/1778385229/report.aspx (Accessed: July 2026).
xx These issues are frequently raised at HIE Business Breakfasts and through HIE's Business Panel Surveys, and some were also highlighted in the Skills Survey.
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xxiii Fibre Compare (2025) *Broadband outages hit Shetland after subsea cable damage*. Available at: https://fibrecompare.com/news/infrastructure-news/broadband-outages-hit-shetland-after-subsea-cable-damage (Accessed: July 2026).
xxiv Shetland News (2026) *Major broadband companies 'absolutely failed' Shetland in outage response*. Published 26 February. Available at: https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2026/02/26/major-broadband-companies-absolutely-failed/ (Accessed: August 2026).
xxv Input Output Studies utilise business and household surveys, plus detailed information from Shetland Islands Council and government sources, to provide key information on the value of the Shetland economy, including total output, value added, values of local economic sectors and trends in household expenditure. The report also provides details on economic multipliers (showing the effect of increased demand on key sectors), and the trade balance (showing the difference in value between imports to and exports from Shetland). Black, J., Connolly, K. and Spowage, M. (2021) *Shetland Economic Accounts 2017*. Glasgow: Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde. Available at: https://fraserofallander.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/FAI_2021_Shetland_economic_accounts_2017.pdf (Accessed: July 2026).
xxvi Aquaculture, fish processing, fishing, marine engineering, sea transport.
xxvii Employment Coefficient.
xxviii Scottish Government. (2025). *Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2024*. Marine Directorate. Published 27 October 2025; updated 27 February 2026. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-sea-fisheries-statistics-2024/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xxix Shetland Islands Council, https://www.shetland.gov.uk/shetland-statistics Shetland Islands Council (2025) *Shetland in Statistics 2025: No. 45*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Service (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxScottish Government. (2025). *Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2024*. Marine Directorate. Published 27 October 2025; updated 27 February 2026. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-sea-fisheries-statistics-2024/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxi This refers to regularly and irregularly employed. Scottish Government (2025) *Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2024: 5 Employment*. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-sea-fisheries-statistics-2024/pages/5-employment/ (Accessed: July 2026)
xxxii Seafood Shetland (n.d.) *Our Industry in Numbers*. Available at: https://seafoodshetland.co.uk/our-industry-in-numbers/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxiii Shetland Islands Council (2025) *Shetland in Statistics 2025: No. 45*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Service. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/13516/no-45-shetland-in-statistics-2025 (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxiv Shetland News (2021) *Scottish Sea Farms to become isles' largest salmon farmer in £164m deal*. Published 30 June. Available at: https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2021/06/30/scottish-sea-farms-to-become-isles-largest-salmon-farmer-in-164m-deal/ (Accessed: July 2026)
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xxxvi University of the Highlands and Islands (n.d.) *Shell-volution*. Available at: https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/res-themes/mese/shell-volution/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxvii Scottish Government (2026) *Scottish Shellfish Farm Production Survey 2025*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-shellfish-farm-production-survey-2025/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxviii Food Standards Scotland (2026) *Approved Establishments Register: List of Approved Establishments in Scotland*. Published 2 July 2026. Available at: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-guidance/running-a-food-business/publications/approved-establishments-register (Accessed: July 2026).
xxxix Shetland Islands Council (2021) *Our Ambition 2021–2026: Corporate Plan*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/4315/our-ambition-2021-2026-corporate-plan (Accessed: July 2026)
xl Shetland Islands Council (2025) *Shetland in Statistics 2025: No. 45*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Service. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/13516/no-45-shetland-in-statistics-2025 (Accessed: July 2026)
xli Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) is the total value of all goods and services produced in a specific sub-national area.
xlii Turner, K., Karim, A., Katris, A. and Gonzalez-Martinez, P. (2026) *Hundreds of Jobs at Risk from Inaction at Sullom Voe Terminal*. Policy Brief. Glasgow: Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde. Available at: https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/95478/1/Turner-etal-CEP-2026-Hundreds-of-jobs-at-risk-from-inaction-at-Sullom.pdf (Accessed: July 2026).
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xlv SSE Renewables (2024) *Major step forward for largest onshore wind community funds in the UK*. 20 May. Available at: https://www.sserenewables.com/news-and-views/2024/05/major-step-forward-for-largest-onshore-wind-community-funds-in-the-uk/ (Accessed: July 2026)
xlvi Shetland News. (2024) *A short history of the Viking Energy wind farm project*. *Shetland News*, Published 3 September. Available at: https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2024/09/03/short-history-viking-energy-wind/ (Accessed: July 2026).
xlvii The Western Isles is considerably higher.
xlviii Scottish Agricultural Census June 2025: https://www.gov.scot/collections/june-scottish-agricultural-census/
xlix Shetland Islands Council: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/13516/no-45-shetland-in-statistics-2025

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[liv] Shetland Islands Council (2026) *Economy – Visitors/Tourism*. Shetland in Statistics. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/shetland-statistics/economy/4 (Accessed: July 2026).
[lv] Shetland Islands Council (n.d.) *Shetland Visitor Survey*. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/business-advice-support/shetland-visitor-survey (Accessed: July 2026).
[lvi] Orkney Islands Council and VisitScotland (2025) *Orkney Islands Visitor Survey 2024*. Available at: https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-insights/orkney-islands-visitor-survey-2024.pdf (Accessed: July 2026).
[lvii] Shetland Islands Council (2025) *Shetland in Statistics 2025: No. 45*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council Economic Development Service. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/13516/no-45-shetland-in-statistics-2025 (Accessed: July 2026).
[lviii] The 2024 Shetland Visitor Survey highlighted that TV programmes, especially Shetland, were the main source of inspiration for visitors: Shetland Islands Council (n.d.) *Shetland Visitor Survey*. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/business-advice-support/shetland-visitor-survey (Accessed: July 2026).
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[lxii] Weave Consult (2005) *Knitwear Manufacturing Feasibility Study*. Report prepared for Shetland Islands Council. August 2005.
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[lxiv] Shetland Islands Council (2026) *Health and Social Care*. Shetland in Statistics. Available at: https://www.shetland.gov.uk/shetland-statistics/health-social-care (Accessed: 31 July 2026).
[lxv] Numerator (public sector employment): ONS, *Public sector employment, UK: June 2025* (6.17 million employees). Denominator (working age population): ONS population estimates for people aged 16 to 64. Office for National Statistics (2025) *Public sector employment, UK: June 2025*. Statistical bulletin. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/publicsectoremployment/june2025 (Accessed: July 2026).
[lxvi] https://www.shetland.org/
[lxvii] https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/shetland
[lxviii] https://www.shetland.gov.uk/grants
[lxix] Shetland Partnership (2024) *Locality Profiles*. Available at: https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/locality-profiles (Accessed: July 2026).
[lxx] Local authorities have access to data on the income bands (£5,000 bands) of households by data zone (through CACI Ltd). The data can be used to calculate the median of geographic areas. Median income is the middle-income value of all the people or households in an area. Data zones are aggregated to form Locality level data.
[lxxi] BiGGAR Economics (2021) *Economic Impact of Shetland Space Centre*. Available at: https://biggareconomics.co.uk/economic-impact-of-shetland-space-centre (Accessed: July 2026)
[lxxii] Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2025) *Regional Transformational Opportunities research*. Inverness: Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Available at: https://www.hie.co.uk/research-and-reports/our-reports/2025/may/08/rtoresearch/ (Accessed: July 2026).
[lxxiii] DISCLAIMER: The figures presented in this section serve as an indicative guide outlining planned and proposed developments that have been publicly announced for Shetland. All timelines and job figures are estimates based on publicly available sources and/or national statistical data. They are intended for guidance purposes only and may be subject to change.
[lxxiv] These figures were prepared for Empowering Shetland Presentation – Ministerial Visit – July 2026. They serve as an indicative guide and are estimates based on publicly available sources and/or national statistical data. They are intended for guidance purposes only and may be subject to change.
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