

Shetland Partnership

Annual Report 2025/26



A Shetland Partnership Report

September 2026



Table of Contents

Our Annual Report.....	1
Our Duties	2
Shetland Partnership Plan	2
Monitoring Progress.....	3
Indicators: 2025/26	3
Analysis April 2025 – March 2026.....	3
Table of Indicators	11
Case Studies	14
Delivery Plan Implementation and Next Steps	17
Shetland’s Place-Based Approach	17
Person-Centred Shetland.....	18
Compassionate Shetland	19
Climate Conscious Shetland	20
EmPowering Shetland.....	21
Supporting Projects.....	23
Shetland’s Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan	28
Locality Planning.....	28

The Shetland Partnership

The Shetland Partnership is the Community Planning Partnership for Shetland. Community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to people’s lives. The Partnership is made up of a wide range of public agency partners, and community and third sector bodies, who work together to deliver our collective ambitions for the future. Find out more at the [Shetland Partnership website](#).

Our Annual Report

This is our Annual Report for 2025/26. The purpose is to share information with communities and partner agencies on what has been achieved through Shetland’s Community Planning Partnership to support activity to improve outcomes for Shetland’s communities. Progress is monitored using outcome indicators, alongside case studies illustrating collaborative working to improve outcomes across the four priority areas of Participation, People, Place and Money. This annual report also provides an update on progress against the current Delivery Plan, updates on Supporting Projects and the Locality Plan.

Our Duties

Our Duty	Achieved?	Progress Report
Prepare a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 	✓	The Shetland Partnership Plan outlining the agreed long-term vision and priorities for Shetland was published in 2018. The plan was initially supported by a delivery plan published in 2019. Since the conclusion of our first Delivery Plan a decision was made to move away from the model of three yearly plans, moving instead to publishing a rolling Delivery Plan on the Shetland Partnership Website. The partnership continues to meet regularly to discuss and review priorities.
Carry out Locality Planning 	✓	In 2020 the Shetland Partnership produced its first Locality Plan, the Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan. A Second Locality Plan for these Islands was approved by partners and communities during 2023/24. Delivery continues with a renewed emphasis on connection between islands, regular engagement and responding to local concerns.
Review and report publicly on progress with the LOIP and Locality Plans 	✓	We are accountable to the Shetland Community for the work we do as a Community Planning Partnership and whether or not we are making a difference to the people of Shetland. This report is an important tool for helping people understand what we do, what we have achieved and whether we are fulfilling our statutory duties. In this report you can find details of the work that has been carried out in 2025/26 as well as a data update, which describes how the outcome indicators included in Shetland's Partnership Plan have changed since the Plan was agreed.

Shetland Partnership Plan

[Shetland's Partnership Plan 2018–2028](#) was adopted by community planning partners in June 2018. It identifies a shared vision and four key priorities for all of us to work towards, both individually and collectively, to improve the lives of everyone in Shetland.

Our shared vision: ***“Shetland is a place where **everyone is able to thrive; living well in strong, resilient communities; and where people and communities are able to help plan and deliver solutions to future challenges**”***

Our shared priorities:

 People participate and influence decisions on services and use of resources	 Individuals and families thrive and reach their full potential
 Shetland is an attractive place to live, study and invest	 All households can afford to have a good standard of living

Monitoring Progress

Indicators: 2025/26

The Shetland Partnership monitors various 'outcome indicators' that provide insights into life in Shetland. These indicators and their baseline levels are included in [Shetland's Partnership Plan](#) (Appendix 2, pages 16-20) and the [Shetland Partnership Website](#). Most indicators are updated annually, with changes shared on the website and in this Report.

Analysis April 2025 – March 2026

The long-term effects of the cost-of-living crisis continue to present significant challenges for Shetland and low-income households continue to face difficulties. This crisis has resulted in higher household debt, strained public and third sector services, increased inequality, and worsened mental health. Different households, services, and sectors have been affected in various ways, and further action is needed to support those most negatively impacted.

The effects of climate change are already visible and go beyond just environmental issues. It is a broad problem that impacts the ecology, society, and economy, affecting communities, businesses, infrastructure, and daily life in Shetland. Additionally, a shrinking working-age population is putting pressure on businesses and services.

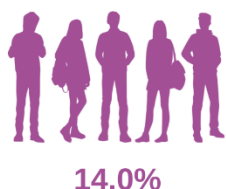
Trends are emerging for some indicators, while others do not fully reflect the local situation. Challenges include: lack of updates from sources, changes in data capture methods, or definition changes beyond the Partnership's control. The knowledge and experience of partners remain crucial for interpreting data and providing context.

The **Fragility Index** was added as an indicator to the Shetland Partnership's monitoring in 2024. It is a combined index of three indicators: depopulation, old age dependency ratio (the ratio of people aged 65 and over to the working-age population aged 16-64), and rural depopulation (the change in the proportion of the population living in rural or rural remote areas). A rising index indicates an increasingly fragile demographic. This indicator is compiled by the [Improvement Service](#) for their [Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#) (CPOP).



In 2023/24, Shetland's **fragility index score** was 113.2, the second highest fragility index compared to other local authorities in Scotland, behind Aberdeenshire. Other areas of the Highlands and Islands are not experiencing the same change in fragility, measured in this way. Although Shetland's score is a reduction on the 114.3 score from the previous year, this is largely due to an update on figures due to changes in population figures. The trend remains upwards, representing an increase in Shetland's fragility, and at a higher trajectory than Scotland, at 109.0.

Over the past 10 years (between 2014 and 2024), Shetland's population decreased by 0.60%. **Demographic changes**, however, were more significant. In this same period the percentage of people aged 65 and over increased from 18.28% to 22.37%, while the working age population (16-64) dropped from 63.13% to 60.33%. Changes in population in this period differ for different areas of Shetland, for example Shetland Central experienced a population increase of 7.23%, whilst inversely Whalsay & Skerries experienced 7.55% decline. Aside from Shetland Central, both Shetland South (3.64%) and Shetland North (1.85%) experienced population increases, whilst Shetland West (-6.50%), Lerwick & Bressay (-3.64%) and Yell, Unst & Fetlar (-0.06%) joined Whalsay & Skerries in experiencing population decline.



In 2025, 14.0% of the **population were aged 16-29**, a 0.2% increase from the previous year. This is down from the baseline of 15.5% and below the 2021 target of 18%. Scotland's lower birth rate compared to the rest of the UK may contribute to this decline. Data on migration

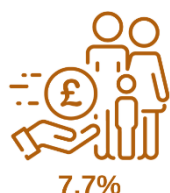
broken down by age is difficult to come by, however the authors of the report "Rural Scotland – trajectories of young people and young adults" were given access to age-based migration data. In Chapter 2, age group data for Shetland was reported: for 2017-2019, Shetland experienced negative net migration in the age groups 16-29, driven in a large part by high out migration for ages 18-20. Shetland's overall migration between 2023 to 2024 was net positive, driven by positive international migration.

Foodbank usage tripled between 2018/19 and 2023/24, but 2024/25 and 25/26 saw a reduction in monthly parcels distributed. An average of 85 parcels were distributed per month in 2025/26, down from 137 in 2023/24. These supplies supported 1,620 people, with approximately 30% under 16, a 13% increase on the previous year. The Foodbank data shows an uptick since the start of 2026, predicting up to 100 parcels a month later in



the year. Previous figures came from both the Shetland Foodbank and Anchor for Families. However, the Shetland Family Centre no longer distributes food or financial support.

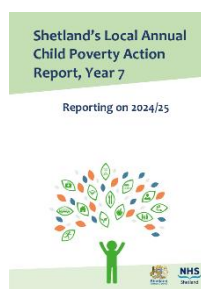
In 2024/25, Shetland had the third lowest level of **children living in low-income families** (before housing costs) in Scotland, behind East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire.



7.7% of children were living in low-income families, a 0.5% increase from the previous year. This compares to 9.3% after housing costs, a 0.2% decrease on 2023/24. The [methodology for measuring this indicator has changed](#) across the UK meaning, on average, child poverty levels appear

to have decreased by 2%. However, direct comparisons cannot be made due to the change in calculations. It remains higher than the Shetland Partnership's baseline and target levels. While levels remain lower than the Scottish figure of 12.3% in 2024/25, neither the higher cost of living in remote and rural Scotland nor the Council's [Winter Payments](#) to low-income families are taken into account in these figures.

Other indicators such as Free School Meal uptake, Education Maintenance Allowance and School Clothing Grants can provide a more rounded picture of child poverty. The [Local Child Poverty Action Report](#) contains further detail about how the partnership is monitoring and working to overcome child poverty in Shetland.

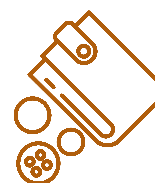


Fuel poverty levels have again increased in Shetland, since the new methodology used for the three-year average 2016/18. Levels for the three-year average 2022/24 are now 40%, an increase from 31% in 2017/19 and 27% in 2016/18, and the joint third highest in Scotland.

The [Scottish Islands Data Overview \(2023\) shows](#) island residents face higher fuel poverty. Many rural homes lack energy efficiency and gas grid access, relying on expensive heating fuels. The [2021 National Islands Plan survey](#) found that nearly three quarters of island residents saw increased heating bills. Shetland's cold climate, poor insulation, and lack of cheap energy options worsen the situation.

Related case study: *Warmer Homes Through Partnership.*

The [Rural Scotland Data dashboard](#) shows that while rural areas have lower levels of relative poverty overall, low-income households living in rural areas face particular challenges. There is widespread evidence that rural areas, and remote and island communities in particular, experience higher costs of living for some goods and services, such as weekly food costs and fuel.



Although there is no new data for the indicator **businesses struggling to recruit labour**, feedback from the [Shetland Islands Skills Survey 2024](#) highlighted that 61% of employers surveyed had a 'hard-to-fill' vacancy.

Whilst not directly comparable to the Employment Survey this indicator is based on, it does help to illustrate that businesses are continuing to struggle to recruit. Likewise, the March 2025 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) business panel survey found that **47% of employers** in the region face a skills gap. The main barriers are **short supply of required skills, business location, and lack of accommodation**. Locally, Promote Shetland is working to attract people to hard-to-fill professions like teaching, social care, dentistry, medicine, and planning.



12,700

The **number of employees** in Shetland in 2024 decreased to 12,700 from 13,600 the previous year and a recent peak of 14,200 in 2021. It is difficult to know the reasons for the overall decrease; however, it may be due to the use of modelling in an area (Shetland) of relatively low population. While

those are the figures for 2024, the [Office for National Statistics](#) shows that the employment rate in Shetland was 84.3% in 2023, compared to 76.6% for Great Britain and 74.7% for Scotland.

The latest **carbon emissions** figures, released June 2026, relate to the year 2024.



In 2024:

- Carbon emissions in Shetland Islands Council area were 13.4 tonnes per capita compared to 4.3 for Scotland (a slight decrease on the previous year of 13.9 and 4.5 respectively);
- Carbon emissions directly impacted by the Council in Shetland were 4.2 tonnes per capita compared to 3.9 for Scotland (down from 4.7 and 4.1 respectively in the previous year).

Shetland's carbon emissions directly impacted by the Council are higher than Scotland's average, though not to the same extent as for the Council area as a whole. Shetland's emissions per capita are significantly higher than Scotland's average due to remote location, population distribution, economy and geology.

The Shetland Climate Change Strategy includes a series of short-, medium- and long-term goals. One such short-term goal is:

Clear Data – We monitor the impact of climate conscious activity, using our specialist knowledge and data

As part of the Shetland Climate Change Strategy Implementation Plan, there is a commitment to develop a mechanism for collecting, analysing and reporting on data annually. This builds on the Net Zero Route Map work and will help to show progress of climate action in Shetland. This includes inputting key Shetland climate data into the ClimateView platform, working with the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service, to make Shetland superusers. The platform will allow for monitoring and reporting on emissions annually. It is planned that this platform and data will be available from 2026, with a framework set up to allow data to be updated efficiently each year.

There has been no update to the **satisfaction with public services** indicator since the 2023 figure (53%). The Scottish Household Survey team have confirmed that the 2023 figure will be the last update made, and that the combined public service indicator has been dropped.



21%

In 2024, 21% of **people felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area**, a 3% decline on the previous year, which was already the lowest level recorded since monitoring began in 2016. This represents a 13% decrease from a peak of 34% in 2021 and is now lower than the baseline. Shetland has slipped down the ranking of Scottish Local Authority areas, to 11th, having previously been amongst the highest ranking. It is still above the Scottish average of 19%.

30% of people said they wanted **greater involvement in decision making** in 2024, the same percentage as the previous year. This is a 15% decrease from 2021. This compares to a Scottish average of 33.5%. The indicator does not explain why demand for greater involvement has fallen and should be interpreted alongside evidence on influence, engagement and participation.



30%



There were Community Council elections in November 2025. There was an emphasis on publicity to promote the elections, but there were no **Community Council seats contested**. There were 115 nominations received, of which 114 were eligible, filling 70% of the 163 seats. By 31st March 2026, a further 23 members had been co-opted, meaning 137 seats, or 84%, were filled.

Related case study: Community Council Elections 2025.



18%

The three-year average, 2021/24, of 18% of people in Shetland **drinking at harmful levels**, continues to be a gradual decline from 27% as the three-year average 2012/15. This is lower than the Scottish rate of 22%. Almost a fifth of people in Shetland drink above the Chief Medical Officers' low-risk guidelines. This includes 12% of women and 27% of men (2019-2023). More information on alcohol harms in Shetland can be found on [Alcohol Focus Scotland's local profiles](#).



14.7%

The percentage of **children who are not a healthy weight in Primary 1** decreased to 14.7% in 2024/25, from 17.9% in 2023/24. In Scotland, the average was 17.4%, and showed a slight increase, having been on a downward trend. The [Primary 1 Body Mass Index statistics for the 2024-2025 school year](#) highlight that the proportion of children classified as having a healthy weight in Scotland ranged from 77.2% in NHS Orkney to 68.3% in NHS Western Isles, with 75.3% of children in Shetland having a healthy weight¹.

In 2023, 82% of **people engaged in some form of sport and physical activity**, a decrease from 87% the previous year. However, this is an increase on the baseline of 77% and exceeds the 2021 target. It is also above the Scottish level of 79%. There is no update for 2024 for this indicator, due to the Scottish Household Survey moving to asking the related question on a biennial basis, the next update will be for the year 2025.



82%

¹ This is using the epidemiological category as opposed to clinical. Epidemiological thresholds are used for population health monitoring purposes and refer to those at risk within the population.



97.5%

Shetland maintains a high **participation rate** (percentage of 16-19 year olds who are in education, employment, training and personal development) with 97.5% in 2025. This was the highest in Scotland, with Shetland being among the top four local authorities since Shetland Partnership began monitoring in 2016. In comparison, 93.3% of 16–19-year-olds in Scotland were participating in education, employment, or training.

Of those participating in education, employment or training in Shetland in 2025, 65.3% of those were in education, 29.6% in employment and 2.6% in training and development. 1.9% were not participating (those unemployed and seeking, or not seeking), and 0.7% had an unconfirmed status.

Related case studies: Saltire Awards 2025 and YouthBank.



87%

Between 2016 and 2024, Shetland has experienced a higher percentage of **people who feel part of their community** than Scotland as a whole each year. 87% of people felt part of their community in 2024, compared to 79% in Scotland. There has been no substantial change in these figures, since local monitoring began in 2016.



In 2016, the nationally developed **Place Standard** tool was used in Shetland as the best way to establish what people think about their place, give people the chance to say what should be improved and identify how best to make improvements. People were invited to rank the place they live against 14 themes which focused on the important connection between physical and social environments and how this affects our health and sense of wellbeing. The tool has a seven-point scale, where a score of 7 means that less improvement is needed, and a score of 1 indicates that more improvement is needed.

The study was carried out again in 2025. It should be noted that for 2025 there were 15 themes, with Nature & Land Management added. A further change included updating the name of the Facilities & Amenities theme (2016) to Facilities & Services (2025).

Place Standard Average Scores from the 'Our Place – Your Say' 2025 – Quantitative Findings include:

- Public Transport **3.5**
- Work and Local Economy **4.2**

- Housing and Community **3.8**
- Natural Space **5.4**

There was a slight increase in the score for Work and Local Economy between 2016 and 2025, and slight decreases for Public Transport, Natural Space, and Housing and Community. However, the substantial difference in the age profiles of respondents - 49% were aged under 18 in 2025, compared with 8% aged under 24 in 2016 – should be considered when comparing findings of the two surveys.

The latest indicators present a mixed picture. Of the 20 Partnership indicators, 7 show a negative trend, 7 fluctuate, 2 show improvement and 4 have an unknown status. There are some encouraging signs, including high participation rates among young people and a reduction in Primary 1 children who are not a healthy weight. However, significant pressures remain across several areas.

The Shetland Partnership will continue to monitor these indicators and update the website as new data become available. The evidence will help inform the new Partnership Plan and its delivery, ensuring that activity remains focused on the issues and opportunities that matter most for Shetland.

Data Sources:

Shetland Foodbank 2025/26; UK Government Department for Work and Pensions - Children in low income families: local area statistics 2024/25; Scottish House Condition Survey, Local Authority Analysis 2022/24; CACI Paycheck data 2021, Highlands and Islands Enterprise - Minimum Income Standard 2016; Improvement Service 2024; Shetland Employment Survey, Shetland Islands Council 2017; National Records Scotland (NRS) Population estimates 2024; UK Government Department for Energy Security and Net Zero 2024; Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2023 and 2024; Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2024); Public Health Scotland 2024-25; Community Council Elections, Shetland Islands Council 2025; Public Health Scotland 2021-24; Skills Development Scotland 2025.

Table of Indicators

The table below provides a summary of Shetland Partnership Plan indicators, with the following key used to illustrate current status:

-  Negative trend, highly unlikely to meet target
-  Fluctuating trend / slight Improvement in trend, unlikely to meet target
-  Positive trend, likely to meet target
-  Unknown

Where data is not currently available or up-to-date, local knowledge and understanding has been used to determine the Status.

Indicator	Baseline (2018)	Latest Value	Status
Fragility Index	Ratio of 106.9	Ratio of 113.2 in 2023/24 New indicator from 2023/24, no target set	
Population aged 16-29	15.5% of the population is aged 16-29	14.0% in 2025	
Foodbank usage	45 parcels on average distributed per month	85 per month in 2025/26, and signs of greater increase	
Children living in low-income families	5.7% of children live in low-income households	7.7% in 2024/25	
Number of employees	13,600 employees in Shetland	12,700 in 2024	
People who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area	24% of people feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area	21% in 2024	
Fuel poverty	53% of Shetland households in fuel poverty	40% for three-year average 2022/24, increase from 31% in 2017/2019. No longer comparable data from baseline.	
People who feel they want to be more involved in decision-making	41% of people want to be more involved in decision making about their area	30% in 2024	
Number of Community Council seats contested	None of the Community Council seats are contested	0 in 2025, with 84% of seats filled	

Indicator	Baseline (2018)	Latest Value	Status
Drinking at harmful levels	20% of people are drinking at harmful levels	18% in three-year period 2021/24	
Place Standard – how people in Shetland rate ‘Our Place’	Public Transport: 3.6 Work & Local Economy: 4 Housing: 4 Natural Spaces: 5.6	Public Transport: 3.5 Work & Local Economy: 4.2 Housing: 3.8 Natural Spaces: 5.4	
Carbon emissions in Council area	75% higher than Scottish average	13.4 tonnes per capita compared to 4.3 for Scotland in 2024.	
Children who are not a healthy weight in Primary 1	17.4% of children are not a healthy weight	14.7% in 2024/25	
People in Shetland who feel part of their community	88% of people feel that they are part of their community	87% in 2024	
Participation rate	96.1% participation	97.5% in 2025	
People engaged in some form of sport and physical activity	77% of people engage in some form of sport and physical activity	82% in 2023 – not updated this year as updates are now biennial	
No data available for the following indicators			
Businesses struggling to recruit labour	20% of businesses struggle to fill vacancies due to a lack of local labour	No up-to-date value Likely to be high	
Under-employment	21.3% under-employment	6.5% in 2020 – no up to date value due to low sample	
Satisfied with public services	59% of people are satisfied with local services	53% in 2023 – data is no longer gathered for this indicator and therefore there will be no further updates	
Community Participation Activity and Impact	No indicator developed		



Children living in low income families (2025)



Percentage of 16-19 year olds in education, employment, training and personal development (2025)



Employees in Shetland (2024)

14.0%



Percentage of the population aged 16-19 (2025)



Percentage of households in Shetland who do not earn enough to live well (2021)



Community Council seats contested (2025)



Percentage of people who feel satisfied with public services (2023)

Percentage of people drinking at harmful levels (2024)

18%



113.2

Shetland's Fragility Index Score (2024)

Food parcels distributed per month (2025/26)



13.4



Tonnes of carbon emissions per capita (2024)

Percentage of children in Primary 1 not a healthy weight (2024/25)



Percentage of people engaging in physical activity (2023)

Percentage of businesses struggling to recruit labour (2017)

20%



Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area (2024)



Percentage of people who feel they want to be more involved in decision making (2024)



Place Standard (2025)

Public Transport: 3.5
Work & Local Economy: 4.2
Housing & Community: 3.8
Natural Space: 5.4



Percentage of people who feel part of their community (2024)

Case Studies

The case studies gathered to illustrate collaborative improvement activity are available on the Partnership website. A summary of this year's case studies, the relevant Priority Areas and partners involved are provided below, with a hyperlink to completed case studies.

Case Study	Summary	Partner Involvement	Priority Area
<u>The Low Road</u>	A free film screening and community Q&A created a safe space to discuss suicide, grief and hope while connecting people with local support.	UHI Shetland, NHS Shetland, Police Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Mind Your Head, Shetland Arts Development Agency, RSPB and Samaritans Shetland.	
<u>Wellness Bingo</u>	A freely available bingo card turned the NHS's Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing into simple activities people could complete privately and at their own pace.	NHS Shetland, Ability Shetland, Shetland Islands Council, sportscotland, ZetTrans and Shetland Recreational Trust.	
<u>Saltire Awards 2025</u>	A record 185 young people received 335 certificates after contributing more than 22,500 volunteering hours across 70 organisations.	Voluntary Action Shetland, Shetland Islands Council Youth Services, Active Schools, sportscotland, Shetland Recreational Trust and volunteer-involving organisations.	
<u>Community Council Elections 2025</u>	A coordinated publicity campaign helped re-establish all 18 Community Councils, attract 114 nominees and encourage new members and co-options.	Shetland Islands Council, Association of Shetland Community Councils and individual Community Councils.	
<u>YouthBank</u>	Trained young people assessed applications and allocated a £10,000 fund to youth-led projects across Shetland, gaining accredited skills and real decision-making experience.	Shetland Youth Voice, Shetland Islands Council Youth and Employability Service and Economic Development, Community Led Local Development Partnership, YouthLink Scotland and youth groups.	

Case Study	Summary	Partner Involvement	Priority Area
<u>Mid Yell Family Learning</u>	Five free family-learning sessions combined food, science and games, strengthening relationships, confidence and learning at home while responding to parents' feedback.	Shetland Islands Council Community Work and Adult Learning, Mid Yell Junior High School, parents and families.	
<u>Teatime Tuesdays</u>	Family sessions combining cooking, crafts, physical activity and a shared meal have reduced isolation, strengthened relationships and helped families connect with services.	Shetland Islands Council Community Learning and Development, Active Schools, school staff and the Library Service.	
<u>Working Together to Improve Stroke Care in Shetland</u>	Ambulance and hospital teams jointly mapped, simulated and refreshed the acute stroke pathway to reduce delays, strengthen communication and improve patient outcomes.	Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS Shetland.	
<u>O Da Bog</u>	Artists and environmental specialists transformed peatland science into an accessible multi-sensory installation, fieldwork and community events exploring Shetland's blanket bogs.	Shetland Arts Development Agency, Shetland Amenity Trust, Bigton Collective, RSPB Shetland, University of Glasgow, Peatland ACTION and local creative practitioners.	
<u>Junior Rangers</u>	Monthly activities and school weeks give 13-18-year-olds hands-on experience of wildlife, peatland and historic-site conservation, building skills and stewardship.	Shetland Amenity Trust, Shetland Islands Council, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, RSPB, Species on the Edge, schools and youth services.	
<u>Growing Wild</u>	New wildflower sites in Lerwick and at two schools are creating pollinator habitat, involving volunteers and pupils, and testing lower-intensity grass management.	Shetland Islands Council, Shetland Amenity Trust, RSPB Shetland and Species on the Edge.	

Case Study	Summary	Partner Involvement	Priority Area
<u>Sandwick Local Place Plan</u>	Residents shaped a Local Place Plan through meetings, surveys, focus groups, drop-ins and a Place Standard workshop, turning local experience into priorities for Sandwick's future.	Sandwick Local Place Plan Group, Sandwick Community Council, Sandwick Social and Economic Development Company, Shetland Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Climate Hub, community groups and local residents.	
<u>Shaping Better Transitions Together</u>	Young people, families and professionals directly shaped an approved Transitions Policy and operational guidance aimed at earlier information and better-coordinated support into adulthood.	Shetland Islands Council, Fairer Futures Partnership, young people, parents, carers and multi-agency professionals.	
<u>Improving Health and Social Care Together</u>	Feedback, Easy Read reporting and climate-conscious working are making joined-up health and social care more participative, accessible, efficient and resilient.	NHS Shetland, Shetland Islands Council, Shetland Integration Joint Board, people who use services, carers and communities.	
<u>Warmer Homes Through Partnership</u>	Local funding closes gaps in national energy-efficiency support, enabling insulation, heating, solar and window or door improvements for households in fuel poverty.	Shetland Community Benefit Fund, Warmworks and Shetland Islands Council.	
<u>Brae Rural Energy Hub</u>	Refurbishing Brae Youth and Community Centre created an energy-efficient hub offering low-carbon transport, charging, advice, workspaces and community facilities, alongside two jobs.	Brae Rural Energy Hub CIC, Brae Youth and Community Centre Committee, Shetland Islands Council, Orkney Islands Council, Aquatera, European Marine Energy Centre and Community Energy Scotland.	

Delivery Plan Implementation and Next Steps

The current Delivery Plan (2023 to 2028) focuses on developing and delivering on Shetland's Place-Based Approach: collaborative working between partners and communities at a local level to identify and deliver solutions that improve outcomes.

This work is taken forward through four Improvement Projects, each contributing across the Shetland Partnership's priority areas of **Participation**, **People**, **Place**, and **Money**:

- **Person-Centred Shetland** – focusing on services that work for people, built around their needs and circumstances.
- **Compassionate Shetland** – supporting communities to be more connected, caring and resilient.
- **Climate Conscious Shetland** – helping Shetland adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- **EmPowering Shetland** – enabling inclusive opportunities for people and communities to participate and thrive.

The Management and Leadership Team (MLT) provides strategic direction for the projects, while the Shetland Partnership Network provides critical input and support. A place-based approach underpins this work, helping to ensure decisions are made holistically and with communities at the heart.

Shetland's Place-Based Approach

During 2025/26:

- The Shetland Place-Based Approach Implementation Plan was developed and approved by the Shetland Partnership's Management and Leadership Team. Building on the previously agreed framework, the Plan sets out a practical and proportionate approach to embedding place-based working across the Shetland Partnership and its partners.
- The Implementation Plan aligns place-based working with the development of the next Shetland Partnership Plan, Locality Planning, Local Place Plans and wider community planning activity. This approach is intended to strengthen existing work rather than create additional structures or reporting requirements.

- Work has increasingly focused on applying place-based principles through community planning activity. This has included supporting Locality Planning processes, Islands with Small Populations work, and discussions with communities and partners around local priorities and opportunities.
- Updated locality-level evidence was considered by the Management and Leadership Team in January 2026. This identified consistently poorer outcomes across a number of indicators in Lerwick & Bressay and led to agreement to explore these issues further with community bodies and partners through the wider Place-Based Approach.
- Community Plans, Locality Plans and other place-based activity have continued to be reviewed and mapped to improve understanding of existing priorities, identify opportunities for collaboration, and reduce duplication across services and communities.

Next steps will include continuing implementation of the approved Plan, developing practical tools and supporting guidance, building knowledge and confidence amongst partners, and ensuring that the development of the next Shetland Partnership Plan and Locality Plans continues to be informed by local evidence, lived experience and community priorities.

Related case study: *Sandwick Local Place Plan.*

Person-Centred Shetland

Person-Centred Shetland is being delivered by the local Fairer Futures Partnership and aims to embed lasting change in leadership, culture and practice, so that services work more collaboratively, intervene earlier and provide more joined-up support.

Related case studies: *Mid Yell Family Learning, Teatime Tuesdays, Improving Health and Social Care Together, and Working Together to Improve Stroke Care in Shetland.*

The work builds on learning from earlier activity, including the Anchor Project, and aligns with national priorities on Whole Family Support and place-based reform, while reflecting Shetland's distinct context. The Board brings together senior leaders from health, the local authority, the third sector and Police Scotland to provide strategic oversight, alignment and challenge.

Progress during 2025/26 included:

- Establishing the Fairer Futures Partnership and a regular meeting cycle, creating a dedicated space for strategic oversight, alignment and challenge across partner organisations.
- Developing a shared understanding across partners of current system pressures and priorities, and of the role of Fairer Futures in supporting the delivery of Person-Centred Shetland as part of a wider, integrated approach rather than as a standalone programme.
- Strategic leadership development support focused on strengthening a shared purpose, joint accountability and the removal of systemic barriers to person-centred, preventative working across all people-facing services.
- Developing and agreeing a Practitioner Learning Network proposal, with connected workstreams to support practitioner learning, distributed leadership and wider system learning. An initial joint practitioner session, delivered with the Local Employability Partnership, demonstrated strong interest in cross-sector learning and highlighted common challenges around the coordination and consistency of support.

Related case study: Shaping Better Transitions Together.

- Securing Child Poverty Accelerator Funding to refresh GIRFEC practice across Shetland during 2026/27, building on the early Fairer Futures work.

Compassionate Shetland

Alongside this systems-focused work, Compassionate Shetland aims to reduce stigma and support people to fulfil their potential. It seeks to build a culture of empathy, compassion and understanding; raise awareness of how stigma affects people's lives and access to support; and help staff recognise their own prejudices and judgements, listen effectively and connect people with appropriate support.

During 2025/26, activity focused on strengthening awareness across the Partnership and the wider community. Key developments included:

- Supporting the Shetland Employability Partnership to address stigma experienced by people seeking work. "Untapped Workforce" workshops were held in Employability Week, attended by 19 local employers, showing positive feedback and interest in creating change.

- Delivering a keynote address on stigma at the Shetland Community Justice Conference and contributing to preparations for the Second Chancers Exhibition at Mareel.
- Awareness sessions for Elected Members on stigma in Shetland, including how it can affect decisions and Elected Members themselves. Similar sessions were delivered through the Shetland Partnership Network and the Public Protection Committee Development Day.
- Developing community campaign resources, including a short film, social media and poster imagery, educational resources for schools and workplaces, and material to support online participation. These resources are in post-production and will be launched during 2026/27.

Next steps for both workstreams, under the direction of the Fairer Futures Partnership, will include:

- Delivery of strategic leadership workshops to support shared purpose, joint ownership of system priorities and agreed ways of working across organisations, helping to translate learning into practical action.
- Implementing and expanding the Practitioner Learning Network, creating structured opportunities for practitioners to learn from real practice, surface shared system challenges and test small changes.
- Strategic use of Scottish Government Fairer Futures funding (£62,750 confirmed for 2026/27) to remove practical barriers to participation, support partnership planning and deliver small tests of change.
- Launching the Compassionate Shetland resources and messaging.

Related case studies: *The Low Road and Wellness Bingo.*

Climate Conscious Shetland

Climate Conscious Shetland brings partners together to support coordinated action on climate change, helping Shetland reduce emissions and build resilience to current and future climate impacts. During 2025/26, the initiative moved from strategy development towards implementation, with partners approving the Climate Conscious Shetland Strategy and Implementation Plan. This provides a shared framework through which organisations can align activity, identify common priorities and collaborate in areas of mutual interest.

Progress during 2025/26 included:

- Completing the Rural Energy Hub in Brae following a full refurbishment of the Youth Centre. The development includes an electric vehicle charging point and has created associated employment opportunities, supporting local capacity for low-carbon activity.
- Making climate emergency training available to all Shetland Partnership organisations, helping to build understanding of climate risks and organisations' capacity to take action.
- Initiating rewilding projects across Shetland to support biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of local ecosystems.
- Securing funding to map Shetland's coastline, strengthening the evidence available to plan for storms, flooding and coastal erosion.
- Continuing quarterly Shetland Partnership Climate Change Forum meetings, enabling partners to share progress, identify common priorities and coordinate activity.
- Delivering the Shetland Climate Festival 2025, bringing together partners and communities to showcase climate action, share learning and encourage wider engagement with climate resilience initiatives.

Next steps will focus on embedding the Strategy and Implementation Plan across partner organisations, strengthening coordinated climate communications and maintaining opportunities to share information, evidence and learning. The Partnership will continue to support organisations to translate their climate commitments into practical activity and identify opportunities for collaborative work that reduces emissions, strengthens resilience and protects Shetland's environment. As delivery progresses, there will also be a greater focus on demonstrating the outcomes and wider benefits of the work.

Related case studies: Brae Rural Energy Hub, Growing Wild, and Junior Rangers.

EmPowering Shetland

EmPowering Shetland brings partners together to ensure that major economic developments, particularly in energy and the net zero transition, deliver tangible benefits for Shetland's people and communities.

Progress during 2025/26 included:

- Drafting the Shetland Development Charter and associated Supply Chain Commitments, setting clear expectations for local benefit and participation.

- Ongoing engagement with developers, to encourage early alignment around community benefit, infrastructure needs and supply chain opportunities.
- Strengthening understanding of the local supply chain through mapping activity and engagement with local businesses.
- Progressing coordinated delivery through key forums, including the Shetland Power Systems Working Group that coordinates discussion on the operation and future development of Shetland's electricity system.
- Establishing the Future Legacy Housing Forum, which brings together housing, public sector and industry partners to maximise the long-term housing benefits arising from major infrastructure and energy projects in Shetland.
- Strengthening collaboration across partners to align energy developments with supply chain, housing, skills and wider enabling infrastructure.

Next steps will focus on progressing the Shetland Development Charter, building on engagement with developers, and progressing a more strategic approach to workforce accommodation and legacy housing. This includes exploring opportunities to link project related accommodation to longer term housing outcomes, and potential to support a future property development legacy, ensuring that investment associated with major developments contributes to sustainable long-term benefits. Delivery will continue to operate in a context of project uncertainty, infrastructure constraints, and community sentiment, with a focus on ensuring that opportunities for inclusive growth are maximised for Shetland.

Supporting Projects

The Delivery Plan and wider community planning processes are supported by a number of work-streams and projects. This section provides an update on progress and next steps.

Evidence Base

Detailed work has been undertaken to understand Shetland's population and future projections. This highlights the rapidly ageing population, the decline in working age population and the limited number of people of child-bearing age.

The Council, on behalf of national, regional and local partners, commissioned the [Minimum Income Standard](#) (MIS) for Argyll & Bute, Orkney, Outer Hebrides and Shetland. This will provide information about the different needs and additional costs for household types in these areas, compared to UK urban households, in order to have an acceptable standard of living. This follows on from the [MIS for Remote Rural Scotland of 2013 and 2016](#).

Locality Profiles will be published in the next financial year, to incorporate data updates for population data, local health survey data and the cost of living.

The collection of data, consultation findings and research to inform the next Shetland Partnership Plan began. This will lead to a Strategic Evidence Report on Shetland's key strategic issues, challenges and opportunities.

Demonstrating Impact: Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks

Work continues to ensure case studies are clearly able to demonstrate the impact of community planning, with focus shifting to the effective use of monitoring and evaluation to measure and scrutinise the effectiveness of the next Partnership Plan.

Community Participation

The [Participation Hub and Toolkit](#) for the Shetland Partnership was launched. This includes resources on why and how to involve communities, national standards, methods of engagement, and examples of good practice. It also provides a link to each partner's individual consultation webpages.

Discussions were held with some community representatives, alongside partners, to shape the process for developing the next Shetland Partnership Plan. As a result, the design will

enable community representatives and partners to develop this scale of policy together, for the first time.

Strong, Honest & Trusted Relationships

The Shetland Partnership Network met five times in 2025-26. The Network brings together representatives of all [community planning partners in Shetland](#), and provides opportunities for information sharing, developing ideas and building relationships. It helps partners create a sense of shared ownership of community planning and to create a safe environment for open and honest conversations around the challenges and opportunities facing Shetland.

The following events took place over the last year:

- April 2025: Historic Environment Scotland and Shetland Amenity Trust hosted the event, providing an introduction to the Your Historic Place Lens, highlighting the role of heritage in community planning, and sharing updates on local heritage and cultural activity.
- August 2025: Members explored two of the Shetland Partnership's Improvement Projects: Person-Centred Shetland and Compassionate Shetland. The session focused on improving collaboration across services, supporting what matters to people and communities, and updating partners on work to tackle stigma and strengthen compassionate communities.
- October 2025: The focus was on EmPowering Shetland. Partners considered economic opportunities arising from major projects, the energy transition, workforce and supply chain development, and how Shetland can maximise long-term community benefit from future investment.
- December 2025: Members reviewed the latest population data for Shetland, including demographic change, migration patterns, births and deaths, and discussed the implications for future community planning. The session also provided an opportunity to reflect on the Network's activity during 2025 and identify priorities for future development.
- February 2026: The Network considered proposals for the development of the next Shetland Partnership Plan, providing partners with an opportunity to discuss and help shape the approach to community planning beyond 2028.

Feedback from these events highlighted the value of bringing partners together to share learning, strengthen relationships, and explore collaborative approaches to addressing Shetland's opportunities and challenges.

In addition to the planned Network Events, partners meet regularly on shared areas of interest, whether informally or through Strategic Partnerships.

Understanding and Sharing Resources

The Management and Leadership Team and the Shetland Partnership Network continued to provide opportunities for partners to discuss resource challenges. The establishment of the Fairer Futures Partnership created a further opportunity to strengthen trust between partners, explore how resources could be shared more effectively and support a shift towards earlier intervention.

Effective Partnerships and Partnership Agreements

Scoping work to take forward the Strategic Alignment workstream designed to streamline Shetland's strategic plans, reporting processes and partnership groups, began. This is informing conversations about combining strategic plans, reporting and accountability. Some of this will be achieved through the new Shetland Partnership Plan.

Impact Assessments

Statutory partners have legal duties around impact assessments. For example, the Council has in place templates, guidance and other resources, for individual impact assessments.

The Council has implemented its new Impact Assessment policy.

Risk Register

The Management and Leadership Team continued to maintain and review risk registers for both the Partnership and Shetland overall, with reviews taking place on a four-monthly cycle.

Regional & National Understanding

Partners make use of opportunities to strengthen external bodies' awareness of Shetland's unique characteristics and opportunities. As detailed above, an example includes working

with Argyll and Bute, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides to commission updated Minimum Income Standard research, strengthening national understanding of the additional costs faced by households in island and remote rural communities.

NHS Shetland worked alongside NHS Orkney and NHS Western Isles to evidence that historic Scottish Government funding for the Distant Islands Allowance had not kept pace with the contractual cost of the allowance. The Scottish Government accepted the case and provided recurring funding to meet the identified gaps, including £1.291 million a year for NHS Shetland. This better reflects the additional costs faced by island public services and continued to support NHS Shetland's financial position during 2025/26, following its contribution to a break-even position in 2024/25.

In April 2025, senior representatives from GB Energy, the National Wealth Fund, the Scottish National Investment Bank and the UK Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero visited Shetland to explore energy-transition and investment opportunities. The visits involved engagement with the Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Lerwick Port Authority. The Council's Chief Executive presented *Shetland's Future* and provided copies to both delegations, helping to strengthen understanding within the UK and Scottish Governments of Shetland's energy-transition opportunities.

Effective Communication

A Shetland Partnership Communications Strategy 2025-28 and Communications Plan for 2025-26 were delivered. These outline how the Shetland Partnership will engage with and inform stakeholders over the period 2025 to 2028, aiming to build awareness of community planning, the Partnership's role, Shetland's strategic direction, and the resources available.

The primary action was monthly information sharing with staff across Partner organisations. A monthly alert, linking to recent case studies, updates on Improvement Projects, or local data on the website, was created and shared with partners. Partners have used this resource to inform staff and their networks, encouraging traffic to the website.

Support to Embed Outcomes within Organisations & Partnerships

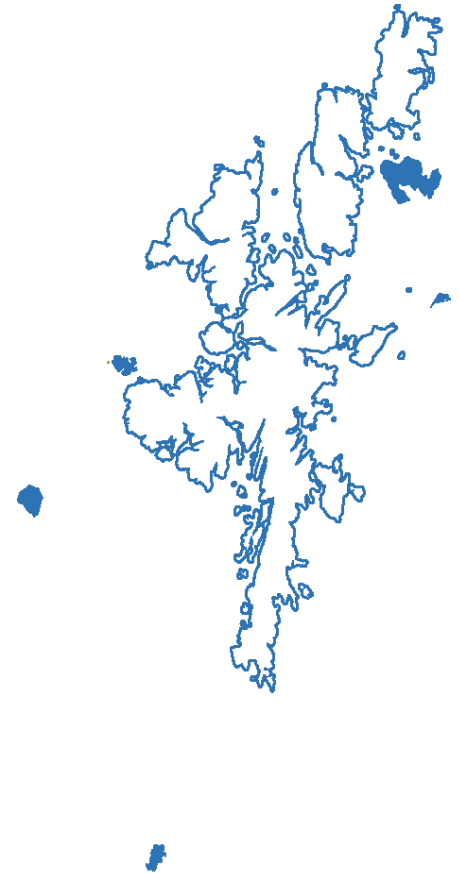
During 2025/26, work continued to support partner organisations to connect their own planning and delivery more clearly to the Shetland Partnership Plan outcomes. This included encouraging partners to identify how their existing activity contributes across the four priority areas and where partnership working is helping to deliver shared outcomes.

As part of this work, Police Scotland mapped its activity across Participation, People, Place and Money. This included engagement with Community Councils and community safety initiatives, prevention and safeguarding work with schools and partner agencies, emergency planning and community resilience, visible policing, road safety and environmental enforcement, and action to protect local businesses, tourism and critical infrastructure. This provided a clearer picture of how operational activity contributes to shared outcomes and highlighted the breadth of joint working with the Council, NHS Shetland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership and third-sector organisations.

Shetland's Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan

Locality Planning

In addition to producing the Shetland Partnership Plan for the whole of Shetland, the Partnership is required to plan at a more local level for communities experiencing poorer socio-economic outcomes. Locality Plans provide a framework for communities and partners to identify priorities and develop locally appropriate responses. The first Shetland's Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan ran from 2020 to 2023. Following a review of socio-economic evidence and engagement with the communities, a second plan for Fair Isle, Fetlar, Foula, Papa Stour and Skerries was agreed in March 2024. It runs to March 2027 and is supported by island representatives, island-specific Issues Logs and regular engagement with service providers and senior managers.



Our Activity

During 2025/26, delivery focused on sustained partnership working around the priorities and service issues identified by the five island communities.

The annual senior managers' meeting in August 2025 reviewed the latest Locality Plan update and island Issues Logs, maintaining oversight of matters requiring coordination across services and partners.

On 19th September 2025, the Islands with Small Populations Annual Event at Islesburgh brought together island representatives, elected members, senior managers and partner organisations. Under the theme 'Adaptive Capacity', participants shared examples of what had worked, discussed current priorities and challenges, and considered the resilience and future opportunities of the islands.

Regular contact between island representatives, Community Planning and Development staff and service providers continued throughout the year. An online Community Conversations session in January 2026 provided a further opportunity for residents and partners to exchange information and discuss shared concerns. Island Issues Logs remained the main tool for recording matters requiring further work, current progress, and completed actions.

Work has also begun to consider a proportionate approach to supporting the five communities beyond the end of the current plan in March 2027.

Monitoring our Progress

The Locality Plan includes indicators covering population and age balance, incomes, employment, volunteering, community morale and people's experience of services. Some align with indicators in the Shetland Partnership Plan, but data at island level can be difficult to obtain and interpret because the populations are very small. Work with island representatives to refresh the Island Profiles is currently underway to provide additional local context alongside the annual survey findings.

The community survey, first introduced in 2020/21, was repeated in July 2026 to gather residents' reflections on their experiences during 2025/26. It received 30 complete responses across all five islands, compared with 48 responses in 2025 and 87 in 2024. Although the overall number of responses was low, it represents a reasonable proportion of the islands' combined population and was considered sufficient for the findings to be reported. Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted with caution because the number and distribution of responses varied between islands, and combined figures may mask important local differences.

2026 survey findings

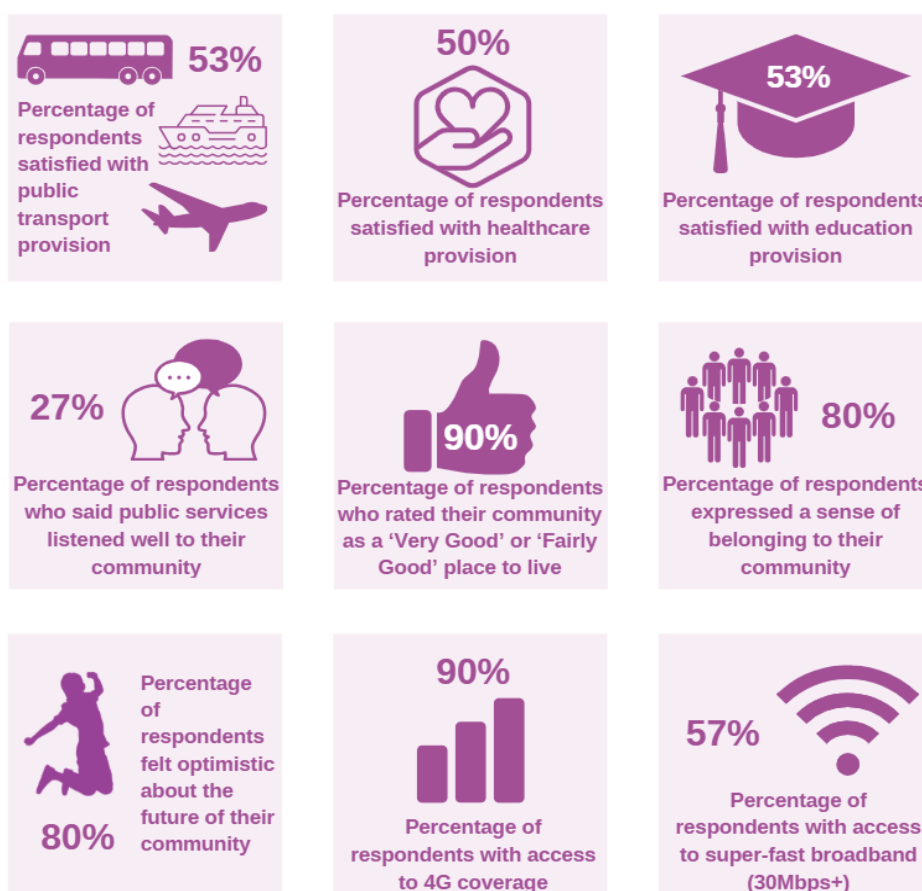
- **Community sentiment:** 83% rated their community as a 'Very Good' or 'Fairly Good' place to live, compared with 69% in 2025. A further 7% selected 'Good', meaning 90% gave a positive rating overall. The proportions agreeing that they have a sense of belonging and feel optimistic about the future of their community were both 80%, increases of 17 and 30 percentage points respectively.
- **Public services:** 50% were satisfied with healthcare provision, 53% with schools and education, and 53% with public transport. Compared with 2025, satisfaction with

healthcare increased by 4% and satisfaction with education by 24%, while satisfaction with public transport decreased by 12%.

- **Connectivity:** 90% reported access to 4G coverage and 57% to superfast broadband of 30Mbps or more, increases of 13 and 15 percentage points respectively. Some 57% rated their broadband as adequate or very adequate, broadly unchanged from 56% in 2025, while 40% rated it inadequate or very inadequate.

Overall, the 2026 returns indicate stronger positive sentiment about place, belonging and optimism, alongside improved satisfaction with education and reported connectivity. However, satisfaction with public transport fell and perceptions of service providers listening remain low. The findings, together with the updated Islands Profiles and Issues Logs, will inform conversations between island communities, senior managers and partners and help to prioritise follow-up action.

2026 survey at a glance



Contact



Shetland Partnership, c/o Community Planning & Development,
Solarhus, 3 North Ness Business Park, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0LZ



ShetlandPartnership@shetland.gov.uk



01595 744537

www.shetlandpartnership.org

Published September 2026

For more information, please see our website or call 01595 744537