

Community  
Action Plan

# Nesting, Girlsta And Wadbister

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Community Action Plan

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2024 - 2034



*Skellister Standing Stone*



*Wadbister, looking north to Gletness*



*Boat noost at Vassa*



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Community Led Local Development Fund (CLLD)

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# What is a Community Action Plan?

The Community Development Company of Nesting (CDCN) received a grant through the Scottish Government's Community-Led Local Development Funding (CLLD), administered through Shetland Islands Council (SIC), to develop a ten-year Community Action Plan for Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister.

A Community Action Plan sets out the priorities and initiatives that local people want to see happening in their area. It is the result of a community coming together to identify its needs, understand its ambition and agree positive action to be taken, which will make the area a better place to live, work, play and visit.

Though enabled by CDCN, the delivery of projects within the Community Action Plan is the responsibility of the whole community. CDCN may take up some ideas that fit with their vision and resources, but groups, established and new, are encouraged to take on ideas and help with implementing them.

# About the area

There are four distinct communities within the CDCN remit area, all with discrete needs and different perspectives: South Nesting, North Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister.

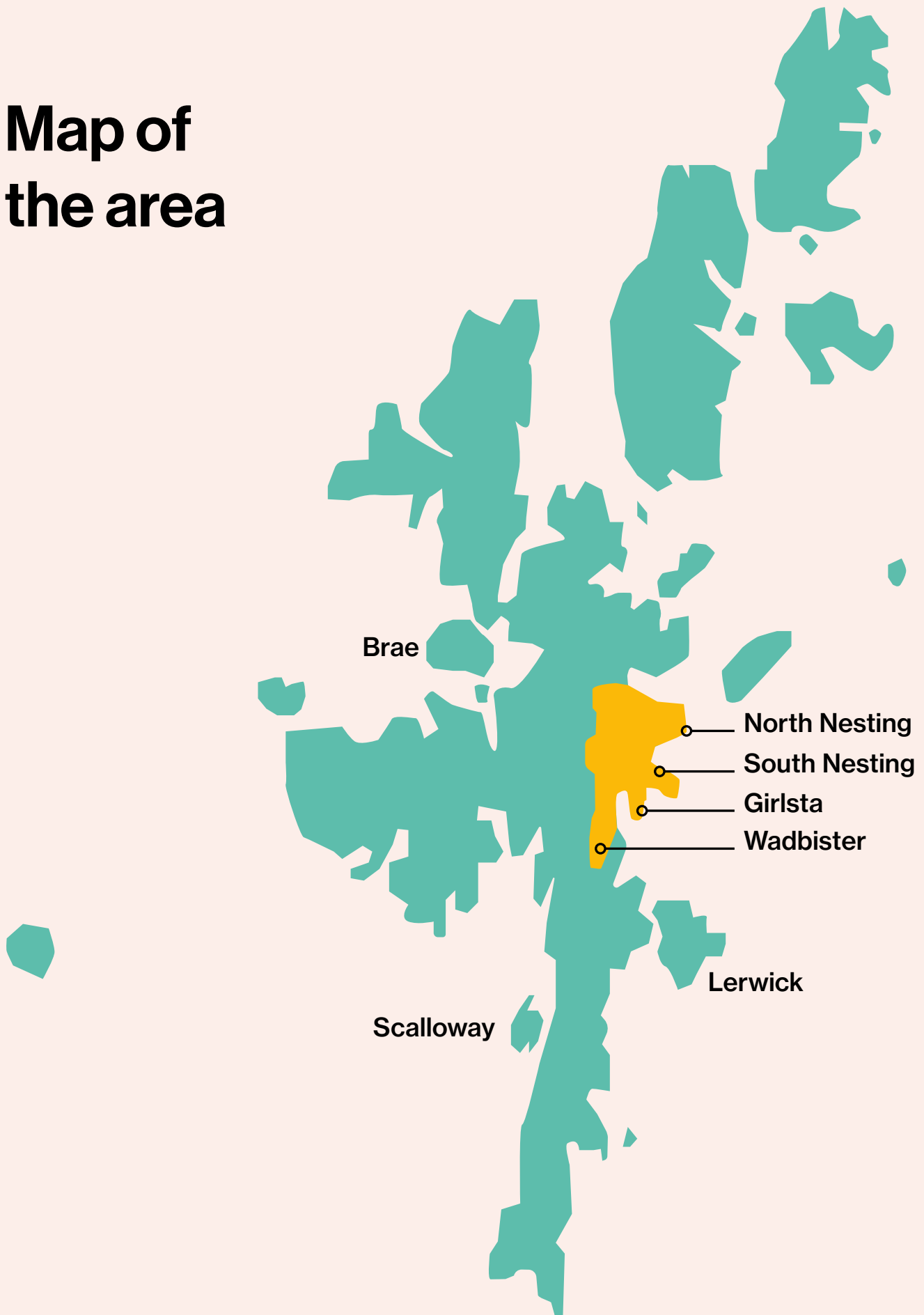
Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister have a relatively rich range of services and community assets, with most of these located in South Nesting. It is important that these community spaces are protected and invested in and upgraded where necessary.

South Nesting Hall and North Nesting Hall are community owned spaces that are well used for community activity as well as family weddings and events. The Aald Skül is a community owned asset with enterprise space, a room let to a therapy business, a busy scrapstore and a gym with plans for new outdoor growing space and further developments. Skellister Stores is a vital community asset and some investment in diversification would likely increase usage.

The largest business is the Girlsta Hatchery which has a meeting room that the community can use.

The community is spoilt for natural green space and areas of beauty. There is a small playpark at the primary school and a multicourt game area.

# Map of the area



# What research was done?

Activity	Description
<b>Demographics and Statistics</b>	Detailed statistical analysis to identify the specific nature of the community using data from a range of sources.
<b>Asset Mapping Exercise</b>	The production of a map of the main assets in Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister to understand the current level of provision.
<b>Community Survey</b>	This was undertaken to gather a broad range of community views about what people like and dislike about the area, and what people would like to see happen in the future. The survey was completed by 73 separate individuals. Some were completed by families, thereby views of family members are represented, meaning the survey represented the views of 198 people. This is approximately 34% of the total population of Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister.
<b>Community Consultation</b>	200 people were engaged in conversation. Methods used were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop-up Event at South Nesting Hall (approximately 100 people),</li> <li>• Community Lunch at North Nesting Hall (24 people - 18 Adults and 6 Children).</li> <li>• Scrapstore Conversations (Approximately 50 people) and Girlsta 'Drop in' at the Hatchery.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder Consultation</b>	Key local stakeholders and partners were interviewed either virtually, one to one, or at a meeting with specific stakeholders in the community; 30 individuals were engaged with.
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Key beneficiary groups were engaged with through focus groups. This included the Nesting Primary School and toddler groups, Shetland Island Council and the Community Council.
<b>Mini feasibility studies</b>	Market analysis, policy fit, funding consideration, risk analysis, financial modelling and feasibility work was done on the key ideas to see what was viable.
<b>Reporting</b>	Reports were fed back to CDCN regularly with on-going debate and comment to help get to an agreed vision.

# What was discovered?

## A. OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister are communities with a healthy, active population, and the population is growing. There is a high proportion of working aged adults who are economically active. The areas also have low crime rates and positive overall 'environment' scores. Additionally, overall rates of deprivation relative to the national average are low.

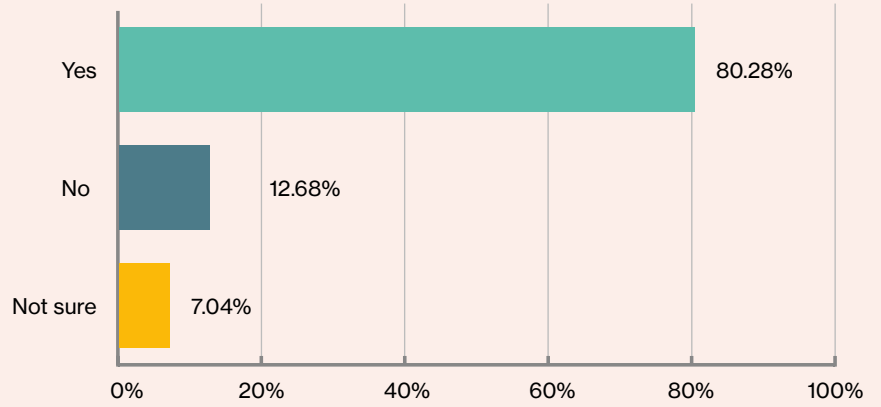
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### In the survey:

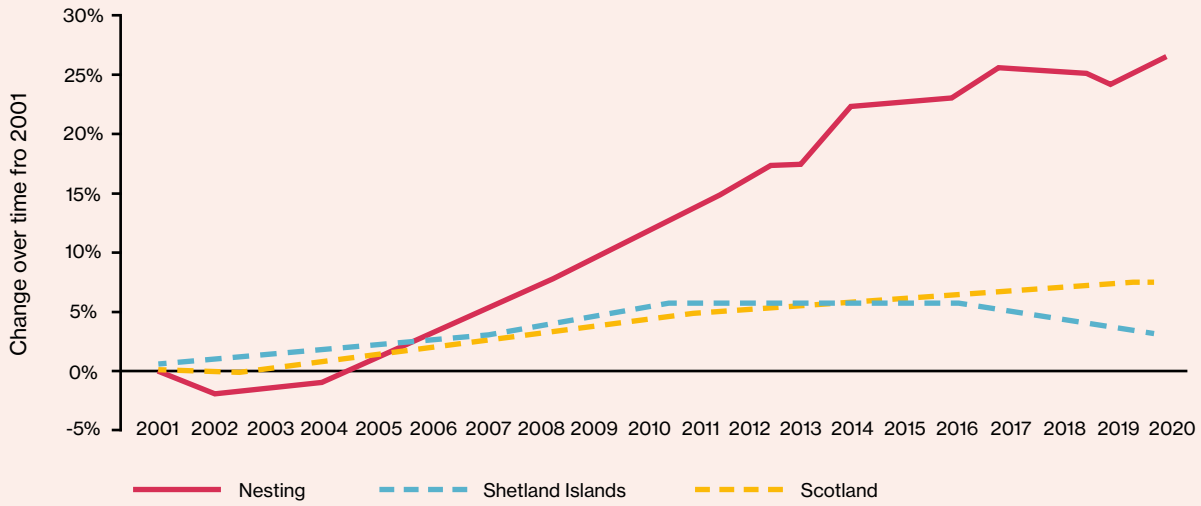
- 92% of people rated the area either a 'great' or a 'good' place to live.
  - The aspects local people value the most about the area are:
    1. Peace & quiet
    2. Scenery & natural environment
    3. Sense of community
    4. Local amenities and services
    5. Safety & security
    6. Family & community activities
  - There was appreciation of the area being 'blessed with nature on the doorstep' throughout the consultation process, and the community want this asset to be protected and maintained. There was also a perceived opportunity to capitalise on the significant potential of the area for tourism – so long as this could be done without any detriment to the environment.
  - Many new residents are attracted to the area due to the rural/ community feel on offer, whilst being within close proximity, and with good connections to, the assets and services available in urban centres such as Lerwick, Brae and Scalloway.
  - There are a number of community buildings and local groups which facilitate important community activity – these were perceived to have the potential to be developed further, and partnerships strengthened.
  - A high proportion of residents see themselves staying in the area long-term, suggesting a stable population. Figure 2 below from the community survey shows that 80% of respondents plan to stay in the community over the long term.
  - The community survey responses indicated that over 80% of people planned to remain in the community for at least 10 years, including older people. This indicates a stable community that is content with where they live. Other research indicated challenges in the community and it is possible these positive statistics are under threat if those challenges increase.
  - Statistics from the Office of National Statistics (Mid year) estimates 2020 indicates that the area has seen significant population growth in comparison to the Shetland and Scottish average.
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**Figure 1: % local residents who plan to stay in the area long term**

SOURCE: Community Survey 2024



**Figure 2: % change in total population from 2001-2020**





## B. COMMUNITY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES


The following section presents five key areas where community challenges and opportunities were identified from the consultations.

# 1. A natural place with a sustainable environment

Natural space was identified as a key asset to support, with feedback highlighting the importance of protecting and improving the appearance of natural spaces, as well as improving access to these spaces for the benefit of community members and visitors to the area. Challenges and opportunities identified in relation to this are protecting and enhancing nature, improving access to nature, developing sustainable tourism, and transitioning to net zero carbon emissions

***“The location is perfect with beautiful quiet surroundings.”***

***“I love the scenery and the health benefit it has, physical and mental.”***



*Looking east to the Ness of Skellister*

## 1.1. Protecting and enhancing nature

Throughout the consultation process, local residents emphasised their appreciation for having 'nature on the doorstep' in beautiful surroundings. There was also a perceived need to protect and maintain the area's nature over the long term by continuing to plant more trees, encouraging more local native biodiversity, minimising littering, and promoting the growing of local produce. Respondents referred to the recent tree planting and community growing projects at the Aald Skül in South Nesting as examples to be followed.

Identified opportunities for ***protecting and enhancing nature*** include:

- Increasing the number of tree planting initiatives.
- Rewilding of native species (flora).
- Promoting seed swaps of traditional plants (e.g. Shetland Kale).
- Promoting community growing and selling of local produce.
- Establishing a community Growers' Group.
- Providing more litter bins.
- Helping to recruit environmental clean-up volunteers (e.g. Voar Redd Up).
- Exploring options to encourage the responsible removal of abandoned vehicles.

## 1.2. Improving access to nature

As well as aiming to enhance and protect the surrounding nature, there was a desire to increase access to the 'great outdoors'. This included 'active travel', which refers to activities such as walking and cycling which can help improve health and wellbeing, reduce emissions, and enhance quality of life. Much of the research responses therefore focussed on the development of infrastructure and facilities to allow for this, as well as the promotion of outdoor activities. It was noted by respondents that ideas for this would also be advantageous for the development of sustainable tourism in the area.

Identified opportunities for **improving access to nature** include:

- Promoting active travel through:
  - Improving the quality of footpaths to encourage walking.
  - Developing existing routes for walking and cycling – and creating new ones.
  - Encouraging Viking Energy to fully open windfarm access paths for recreational use.
  - Linking access paths between communities.
  - Providing information about these routes.
  - Providing access to bicycles (electric bikes, refurbished bikes, etc.).
- Maintaining and improving existing paths and verges for walking and/ or cycling.
- Providing amenities (appropriate for the location) along popular routes and attractions – such as public benches, picnic benches and BBQ facilities.
- Establishing community groups for walking, cycling, etc.





## 1.3. Transitioning to net zero carbon emissions

In acknowledgement of a need for the community to increase local resilience to climate change, and make its contribution to a transition to Net Zero, respondents identified opportunities to link in with local networks and initiatives who have this same aim; even to consider setting up such an initiative within the Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister area. Linked into this is the possibility to promote and support an increase in energy efficiency measures within the community.

Identified opportunities for **transitioning to net zero carbon emissions** include:

- Increasing the number of tree planting initiatives.
- Offer advice to groups and individuals on how to improve
- Energy efficiency in both homes and public buildings.
- Seek funding for the retrofitting of existing houses and buildings with such energy efficiency solutions.
- Explore options to reduce the community's carbon footprint.
- Partner with the Brae Rural Energy Hub to achieve above objectives.



NET  
ZERO

## 1.4. Developing sustainable tourism

Respondents felt the community could benefit economically and socially by developing the area's significant tourism potential. However, it was acknowledged that this must be done sustainably to avoid environmental damage, with consideration to existing infrastructure limitations. While some tourist accommodation exists (self-catering, AirBnB, South Nesting Hall campsite), options are generally limited, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Ideas focused on developing visitor sites and attractions, enhancing tourism infrastructure, and promoting the area by highlighting its unique features, drawing inspiration from other tourist models like the NC500 and SWC300

Identified opportunities for **developing sustainable tourism** include:

- Promoting and supporting new tourism accommodation providers – like new AirBnB units and small bunkhouses.
- Upgrading the caravan park and campsite at South Nesting Hall.
- Providing berthing facilities for boating/yachting tourists, potentially through the South Nesting Boating Club's marina project.
- Creating a tourist trail or loop, focusing on biodiversity and heritage – either standalone or linked to the proposed 'Shetland Way' walking route.
- Promoting existing attractions, facilities, activities, and events with a visitor booklet, as well as making a dedicated tourism website or section.
- Increasing signage and interpretive signs for visitor information.
- Developing more visitor and local facilities, such as a café and public toilets, possibly in the same location.





## 2. A resilient place with sustainable community assets

Whilst the local population in Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister is generally considered to be robust and healthy, the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation indicate that the area is in the 'lowest 10%' bracket for access to vital services. This highlights the importance of the existing community assets such as the Nesting Primary School, Skellister Stores and other local businesses; the two public halls, and facilities such as the Scrapstore, Nesting Gym, multicourt and playpark. Many people expressed the need for these to be protected, and even developed, to avoid losing them in the future. An integrated strategy to implement the opportunities identified below – as well as those highlighted in other sections – should help to ensure that these assets are protected indefinitely.

***“We have some great facilities - school, public halls, and shop”***

***“In the future, this will hopefully still be a quiet and safe place but with more facilities/services”***



North Nesting Hall



South Nesting Hall

## 2.1. Invest in existing assets

One identified way to strengthen key community assets is to directly invest in these assets over the long term to improve income generation, reduce costs and thereby avoid them closing or falling into disrepair.

Identified opportunities for *investment in existing assets* include:

- Upgrading facilities and amenities at both public halls, including extended parking at the North Nesting Hall, extended caravan and campsite facilities at the South Nesting Hall (as detailed in the above section), and installing energy efficiency measures at both halls.
- Upgrading the multicourt at the Nesting Primary School.
- Making improvements to the playpark at the Nesting Primary School.
- Diversifying products and services at Skellister Stores.
- Increasing advertising of the Nesting Gym.





## 2.2. Invest in new infrastructure, facilities and services

A second identified way to strengthen existing community assets was to invest in new infrastructure, facilities and services. Examples provided include new affordable housing, childcare services, and additional services at the Aald Skül Community Hub. It was felt that the sustainable addition, and management of new resources, would encourage residents to stay in the area, former residents to return to the area (such as young graduates), and new people to move to the area. In doing so, this would help ensure that key assets such as the school, shop and halls are well used and maintained, allowing the community to flourish.

### Affordable Housing

Housing was mentioned on a number of occasions and people felt that young people were being priced out of the market, and that the cost of getting on the property ladder was too high. There are currently new housing developments underway in the area but it was felt that more could be required – particularly if the local population increases over the next few years. It was also felt that better access to housing could help improve enrolment in the Nesting Primary School (although this would likely depend on several other factors), thereby building more resilience into the community.

Identified opportunities for **affordable housing** include conducting an in-depth Housing Needs and Demand Analysis which explores options for building:

- Affordable housing for first time buyers.
- Accommodation for the rental market.
- Housing for people looking to downsize to smaller homes.
- Tied housing where employees of certain professions have accommodation provided.





## Childcare

Childcare is a significant issue in the community. The absence of a local nursery forces families to send children to nurseries outside the community, often attached to primary schools. Consequently, children make friends there, leading families to enrol them in those primary schools instead of Nesting Primary School, potentially impacting its enrolment over time. Additionally, the lack of 'wrap-around' childcare affects parents' work schedules, potentially reducing household income. Finding a financially viable childcare model in a small community remains a major barrier.

Identified opportunities for **childcare** include establishing a childcare steering group to explore:

- The feasibility of having one or more types of childcare locally (e.g. nursery, wrap-around care).
- The provision of childcare in an existing facility in the community (e.g. public halls, Nesting Primary School, etc.), compared with a new, purpose-built nursery.
- A professional childminding service – potentially offered as part of a tied housing initiative (see above).
- Parent or volunteer-led childcare.
- Available support from the local authority for the provision of a new childcare service.



## Extension of the Aald Skül community services

Providing additional services at the Aald Skül Community Hub was seen as a key strategy to enhance community offerings, boost local economic activity and facilitate entrepreneurs. Specifically, adding community services within the existing Aald Skül buildings and providing new business units on the same site were identified as effective ways to further develop it into an economic hub. Therefore, this could create job and business opportunities in the area, provide new facilities, which people would otherwise need to travel to urban areas for, and potentially enhance improvements in health and wellbeing.

Identified opportunities for the **extension of Aald Skül community** services includes the provision of:

- Dentistry and other health care services.
- Additional alternative therapy and wellbeing sessions.
- A community outreach social care service.
- 'Hot desk' space.
- A part-time barber/ hairdresser.
- A dedicated space for the Nesting Local History Group.
- Essential resources, such as a defibrillator and associated training on how to use it



*The Aald Skül, South Nesting*

## 3. A connected place

One of the biggest challenges identified through the survey was the issue of ‘connectivity’ – both physically and digitally. A lack of options for public transport and moving around was seen as a critical issue, which was viewed as having fundamentally eroded the connection between the communities, as well as limiting access to other areas of Shetland. Consequently, this has led to a high level of reliance on private vehicles, with some concerns raised about how this impacts on road infrastructure and safety. Finally, the need for better broadband and digital connectivity were brought up a number of times in the consultation. Overall, a lack of these amenities has contributed to a sense of isolation in the community.

***“We need better transport and better broadband in the area”***

***“Getting around without a car is impossible”***





## 3.1. Community transport

Public transport was the lowest scoring aspect of life in Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister. Whilst the number of local residents without access to a car was relatively low at 8.5%, those without access to a car – mainly older people who no longer drive, and younger people – found it a struggle to get around. Therefore, improvements in community transport links were seen as a high priority, with the low frequency of buses and a lack of access to the main bus routes seen as key issues to address.

Identified opportunities for improving **community transport** include:

- Developing existing public transport to meet local needs (e.g. more buses in the evenings and at weekends).
- Increasing promotion of the existing 'Dial-a-Ride' feeder bus options.
- Exploring options for diversifying community transport, such as providing a community bus, on-demand volunteer bus services, shared community cars, and/ or other possibilities.
- Securing funding for young people to get driving lessons.
- Promoting active travel and greener alternatives to cars and buses – such as electric bikes, walking and all-terrain wheelchairs (see Section 1.2.).



## 3.2. Road infrastructure and safety

Road infrastructure and safety emerged as major themes in the consultation, in part due to a high reliance on private vehicles to get around. In particular, concerns over the state of certain roads and a lack of associated road features which inhibit both access and safety were highlighted.

Identified opportunities for **road infrastructure and safety** include:

- Widening roads in certain areas.
- Improving the condition of roads (potholes, etc.).
- Increasing the number of passing places.
- Introducing new speed limits and traffic calming measures at certain road points.
- Extending parking places at the North Nesting Hall and some natural attractions (discreetly implemented where possible).
- Implementing these measures in tandem with active travel improvements.
- Adding more place signs.



## 3.3. Broadband

Better broadband and connectivity were frequently highlighted in consultations. Reported impacts of the slow speed and lack of reliability in some areas – notably North Nesting – precluded some residents' ability to work from home, their overall ability to be productive, and efforts to access information and media. Concerns also included the removal of copper wires and traditional telephone/ communication system potentially causing issues during power outages. This was particularly significant given reports of broadband from landlines being very low quality in some cases. Currently, there is an effort to install and extend fibre optic broadband in the area. However, if the rollout of this higher quality broadband is notably slow and/ or does not cover all areas, some alternative options could be considered.

Identified opportunities for **broadband** include:

- Lobbying for a faster rollout of high-quality broadband across the community.
- Promoting Satellite Internet service(s) to cover remote areas – such as Starlink.
- Enhancing 4G/ 5G network coverage to support reliable internet access.
- Considering radio signal-based internet for areas lacking cable infrastructure.
- Installing VHF radios as emergency hubs – such as at community halls, the Aald Skül community hub, etc.





## 4. A place with things to do

In relation to activities and events within the community, there was appreciation and pride regarding local efforts to provide things to do and places to meet – such as at the local community halls and the facilities available at the Aald Skül community hub. However, partly due to a growing population, it was felt that there is a need to build on these options to provide new social and recreational spaces – especially in Girlsta and Wadbister, where it was identified that there were currently no real community spaces. Additionally, there was a perceived opportunity to create new events and activities at existing spaces which could cater for a range of different groups, notably the older population. Such additions were considered opportunities for everyone to ‘play’ and to socialise safely, leading to a happy and healthy community, an enhanced sense of community, and an overall improvement in the quality of life locally.

***“We need more places to meet up and socialise, with lots of things to do”***

***“I would like a community that provides a range of opportunities and a sense of wellbeing for everyone that lives, works and visits here”***



## 4.1. Social and recreational spaces

'Socialising and recreation' were mentioned regularly within the survey. Overwhelmingly, people wanted new space to socialise and pursue leisure activities locally which catered for specific needs, whilst being accessible, available and inclusive to all.

Identified opportunities **for social and recreational spaces** include:

- A family friendly café which serves the whole community, catering for groups including young families with children, teenagers, and older people
  - with specific community events held here. Additional points were that ideally it would open late and have a bar license.
- A social meeting space for Gairista and Wadbister residents
  - one suggested option being a modified Polycrub.
- A new Galley Shed (as is currently being proposed)
  - possibly with additional opportunities for learning practical skills.
- A Repair Shed/ Men's Shed – suggestions for it to be located at the Aald Skül Community Hub or in the new Galley Shed.
- Utilising space at the proposed Marina in Catfirth for social and recreational activities.
- New playpark(s) in other areas outside of South Nesting.





## 4.2. Events and activities at existing social spaces

Whilst appreciating what is already available within the community, people expressed a desire for more events and activities locally. This included outreach events for groups such as young people, elderly people, who often lack opportunities for social interaction, and working-age parents who often felt they missed out due to the timing of certain events and the lack of local availability of childcare.

Identified opportunities for **events and activities at existing social spaces** include:

- Organising music events at the community halls.
- Providing social nights with bar facilities at the community halls (possibly combined with the music events).
- Increasing outreach activities for the elderly at community halls – including local schemes to connect caregivers with those in need.
- Continuing the ‘Warm Spaces’ programme from previous winters with features including workshops, talks and support services.
- Approaching Scottish Sea Farms to ask if the community room at the Girsta Hatchery could be utilised more within the community.
- Holding more community events in local areas outside of South Nesting (where most events currently take place).
- Holding a Nesting, Girsta and Wadbister ‘Open Day’ to promote and celebrate what is on offer by opening various facilities for public access (i.e. Nesting Primary School, Nesting Gym, etc.) and holding a range of events and activities.



Event at South Nesting Hall



## 5. A Place Where People Can Get Involved And Keep Informed

A sense of community was the third most frequently mentioned positive aspect of living in the area. Residents expressed a strong sense of pride and high satisfaction with their neighbourhood, often highlighting how safe they felt. Key contributing factors included various forms of volunteering (or simply 'helping each other out,') and effective communication within the community. Both of these factors have unique challenges and opportunities.

***“It would be good to have better information about what is happening in the community.”***

***“Better interpretation about our heritage”***



*Voluntary Action Shetland  
with CDCN members*




## 5.1 Volunteering

Volunteering was viewed as a “willingness (of people) to reach out and help each other in various ways”. The area has a strong community with voluntary activity, which provides support in a variety of ways, such as checking in on neighbours, serving on various local committees, forming and organising social groups and events, taking part in Da Voar Redd Up, and helping out with other projects (e.g. planting trees at the Aald Skül). However, it was also highlighted by a number of existing community groups that there can be difficulties in recruiting and retaining local volunteers – and some groups had folded or paused as a result. It was also highlighted that future volunteering in the area would be highly dependent on keeping young people involved.

Identified opportunities for **volunteering** include:

- Introducing a more structured volunteering programme across the community to encourage involvement and volunteering – possibly including a ‘volunteer time bank’.
- Holding community group networking events, such as open days at community spaces, and drop in ‘taster sessions’ for groups.
- Creating a forum for voluntary groups, and holding regular networking events to showcase local groups and venues.
- Increasing partnerships between community groups and with similar groups outside the community, for mutual support on events and projects.
- Encouraging more engagement, collaboration, and harnessing of local talent, including young people. Ideas for this included involvement in local volunteer opportunities, the setting up of a youth forum to give a voice to young people, linking in with the Shetland Youth Forum, and even exploring links to the Rural Youth Parliament.



*Volunteers planting trees at the Aald Skül, South Nesting*

## 5.2. Communication

People reported using several ways to find out information about what is going on in the community – word of mouth, online sources (Facebook, media websites), posters at places like the shop and halls, and other provisions such as the CDCN newsletter. Whilst people generally felt they were kept up-to-date on local events, projects, etc., there were some suggestions as to how to improve this.

Identified opportunities for **communication** include:

- Creating an online events platform.
- Introducing a network of local noticeboards.
- Producing a welcome pack for new residents.
- Evolving the current CDCN newsletter to be a broader community newsletter – possibly with contributions from younger residents.



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## The Vision

*“Nesting, Girlsta and Wadbister will be a connected, resilient and proud community, where people are able to grow up, live, work and grow old in a beautiful environment where people feel valued.”*

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## Values And Principles

Whilst this Plan identifies key development opportunities for the area, new ideas will inevitably emerge over time as circumstances change. Therefore, this Plan may be reviewed in light of significant changes.

At this point in time, there is a clear direction of travel, largely defined by a set of the following key principles, which underpin this Action Plan:

- **Partnership** – collaboration between all sections of the community, the private sector and statutory partners will be a key element in projects.
- **Inclusion** – a diverse community will include and welcome people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
- **Sustainability** – projects will be outward-looking, flexible and innovative. They will provide continuing benefits to the community, while having an eye on financial viability.
- **Respect** – for the special environment and rural landscape. Enjoying it and using it to generate an income is important, but remembering that the current residents are its custodians for future generations is crucial.



*Billister Pier, North Nesting*

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## Making It Happen:

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential requirement of any Community Action Plan to ensure it is being implemented and to achieve its aims. The purpose of monitoring and review will be to check on progress and take stock of where things are on a regular basis, stimulating and resourcing ideas as required.

CDCN, which commissioned this Action Plan, will play a light co-ordinating role, but community ownership of these processes is key for successful delivery.

One approach would be to form a steering group in the community, which would be responsible for monitoring and review. There may be a role for a wider community action forum, meeting twice a year to review progress on the Plan. These meetings will be open to other representative bodies and community groups.

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## Get Involved:

For more information contact [developmentofficer@cdcn.co.uk](mailto:developmentofficer@cdcn.co.uk) or call **01595 890 770**.

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## Thank You:

Community Enterprise and The Community Development Company of Nesting, who commissioned the work, extend thanks to everyone in the communities who took part in the research and contributed ideas.

This is our Plan.

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