

Annual Review

2022/23

In January 2023, Shetland Amenity Trust celebrated 40 years since the Trust was established. Those founding principles of protecting and celebrating Shetland's unique natural and cultural heritage has guided the Trust as it transitions to respond to today's challenges.

It was a considerable achievement to get all our facilities and services back to full strength and fully accessible to the public after the pandemic. We made a particular effort to see the return of the physical Shetland Wool Week and we extended the opening times to all our sites during Up Helly Aa.

During the year, Trustees and staff had conversations with many individuals and groups who share our passion for Shetland's heritage. We held three conferences, where we enjoyed people coming together to share their skills and knowledge, exchange ideas, highlight areas we could work on together – and have fun. We have listened carefully to the concerns some people have about how we work and what we do and will learn from that and understand where we can improve.

We are pleased to report an improving financial situation. Whilst we face the same financial challenges as elsewhere, the Trust was able to record a small in year surplus and we formally record our thanks to the continued financial support of our main funders, Shetland Charitable Trust and Shetland Islands Council.

Our staff have worked hard to deliver excellent services, when finances are tight, and it is lovely to see that rewarded through an increased number of visitors to our facilities, exhibitions, tours and educational workshops.

This short summary celebrates the achievements of two of our newer members of staff.

Alison Moncrieff
Chair of Board of Trustees



Our Staff

Support into Work Schemes for Long Term Unemployment

Shetland Islands Council provided grant assistance to enable Shetland Amenity Trust to employ people to gain experience which would help them secure permanent employment, either with the Trust or elsewhere. In two cases, the programme was so successful that the Trust was able to offer permanent employment opportunities.



Georgia Smith joined the Woodlands Team and, with her passion and inherent knowledge for Shetland's natural heritage, she has immediately become an invaluable member of staff. Georgia has proved to be a real asset, developing her skills and knowledge and going above and beyond her role proving her worth with our events, grant funding schemes and more. Her drive and enthusiasm inspires others to get involved. In the woodlands team she found a role where she feels motivated and fits in and we are proud to have supported her back into work and to watch her thrive.

Georgia said: *"The support of the Employability Pathway gave me the opportunity to get into the workplace in an area of work that is of real interest to me and which gave me structured support to succeed. As a result of the placement, I got my driving licence and have now been offered a full time job. The impact on my mental health has been life changing, it has reduced my stress and gives me some certainty and confidence about my future that I didn't have before."*

George Gen was struggling to find employment due to a long term occupational injury. He joined the Trust as a Visitor Experience Assistant at the Museum, having spent most of his life at the fishing. During his time with us we have seen George grow in confidence and wellbeing, but the real benefit has been to our team and how we work. His customer service skills and the way he engages with people is exemplary and has inspired other staff members to follow his lead. With a background in the Shetland fishing industry, George has also brought unique insight into this field and passionately shares his knowledge of this with his colleagues and the public. "We are proud to be recognised as an employer which is genuinely willing to help those most in need, to remove barriers to employment" (Daniel Lafferty, Shetland Islands Council support worker).



George said: *"This is one of the best work experiences I have had, and that is saying something seeing as I love the fishing so much! Meeting visitors from around the world has been really interesting as has learning as much as I can about the Museum and the collections it holds. What takes my work from exceptional to extraordinary though is the colleagues I work with - they are so welcoming, supportive and just such a lovely team."*

Our Highlights

Two heritage projects, funded by the Endowment Fund Heritage Grant Scheme, were completed – reinterpreting Old Scatness, Mousa and Jarlshof using 3D digital imaging, and adding Shetland stories to the online Icelandic folklore database, Sagnagrunnur.

We welcomed a team of academics as part of a collaborative project between the German Maritime Museum and UHI to research ceramics from our collection and enhance the Hanseatic story.



'Casting On' Shetland Wool Week saw the physical return of Shetland's popular festival since the disruption of the pandemic. Over 500 people attended - and there were 306 exhibitions, talks, tours and classes held with a mix of in-person, online, paid for and free events for a range of abilities - all celebrating Shetland's textile heritage.



2022 was the start of an ambitious and ongoing programme of temporary exhibitions in the museum's Gadderie space that explore and interpret Shetland's unique cultural heritage and identity, and the wider world. Exhibitions covered diverse topics and were supported by a series of talks and workshops.



Peatland restoration projects were delivered at Girlsta and Aywick in partnership with Peatland ACTION. Demand for peatland projects continues to grow as has our support and advice to local landowners.

The Natural Heritage team attended agricultural shows with support from Peatland ACTION and Woodlands Trust Scotland with very positive engagement. We also contributed to Climate Week events and Biodiversity Day events organised by SIC Climate Change Team.

We delivered a number of summer nature events in collaboration with Shetland Community Wildlife Group (*see cover image*).

These community activities were designed to raise awareness and engagement in the natural environment, practical conservation action and the Shetland UNESCO Global Geopark.





Outreach Partnership - during the summer our cultural and natural heritage teams worked together to deliver an outreach project to pupils from Dunrossness Primary School at the 19th century Crofthouse Museum. Over a number of weeks they shared the history of the traditional thatched building and carried out projects in the garden, explaining the significance of biodiversity and how all the community can support it. Trees and flowers were planted together with wildlife refuges for bees, birds, butterflies and bugs.

Endangered crafts - we ran a series of straw craft workshops during the winter evenings at the museum in collaboration with local carpenter Eve Eunson. This was a meaningful way to share an endangered heritage skill and provide a warm and sociable space for the community.

The workshops were free of charge and oversubscribed. We were fully booked for the 6 week period and additional sessions were held in order to meet demand.



Sumburgh Head Lighthouse and foghorn were given a lick of paint - this essential maintenance was completed thanks to Historic Environment Scotland's Covid recovery fund. We also hosted our first Winter Weekend, which brought in the crowds whilst raising funds for the on site defibrillator.



Thank you to our funding partners

