



Shetland Charitable Trust 2025-30 Strategy



Welcome

Welcome to our strategy for 2025-30

As a community-based funder, we exist to improve quality of life in Shetland and our strategy sets out our approach for the coming years.

About us

For 50 years we have been providing exceptional community organisations with funds to improve quality of life in Shetland. Our fund is used to maintain extensive community facilities which enrich lives through culture, music, arts, and sport, and bring Shetlanders together. But not everyone enjoys the same quality of life, so our fund supports local charities who help people experiencing difficult times or disadvantage.

Without our funding, many services and facilities in Shetland would be diminished or may not exist. We want to ensure the quality of life we support today is also available to future generations, so it is vital we manage a sustainable fund. Providing repeat funding to several organisations creates stability and opportunities for organisations and communities but does limit our flexibility. In our strategy you will hear how our long-term perspective informs our approach.

Thank you

We're proud of our work and our community, but at SCT we're most proud of the organisations we support and the positive impact they have on people's lives. We thank them for their input to our strategy and look forward to working with them over the next five years to do our collective best for Shetland.

Our strategy

A vision for Shetland

We want Shetland to be a place to live a happy and confident life, surrounded by a community that encourages and supports everyone.

Our purpose

Our purpose is to improve quality of life in Shetland. We support community-based voluntary and charitable organisations to provide services and associated facilities that help individuals and our community to thrive.

Our approach to success

[Our goals](#)

Success is described in our quality of life goals. We aim to improve individual and community wellbeing, reduce disadvantage, and improve generational fairness.

We know strong and resilient charitable and voluntary organisations are vital if we are to achieve these goals.

[Our principles](#)

Our guiding principles describe how we want to achieve success, because the route we choose also creates impact.

[Our activity](#)

We manage our fund to enable local charitable and voluntary organisations to enhance quality of life in Shetland, while also encouraging innovation that can lead to improvements.

Improving quality of life

Community wellbeing

Our goal is to foster a community enriched by social, cultural, and leisure experiences and a healthy environment.

Why? Because social opportunities, participation, and a positive environment shape vibrant and resilient communities and a sense of belonging.

Individual wellbeing

Our goal is to open doors to physical activity and mental wellbeing so that individuals can actively pursue wellness in all its forms.

Why? Because physical and mental wellbeing underpin individual resilience and vitality, and when individuals thrive, our community thrives.

Everyone matters

Our goal is for individuals facing crisis or enduring long-term disadvantage to be able to access compassionate support, practical help, and empowering solutions.

Why? Because wellness, dignity, and participation are vital for individual wellbeing, and community wellbeing is built on how we treat our most vulnerable.

Generational fairness

Our goal is for Shetland to be a place where the young and elderly are respected, can thrive, and prepare for the future on their own terms.

Why? Young people and our more senior residents face challenges which affect wellbeing and participation. Improving life for our young and elderly benefits us all.

Enabling strong and resilient organisations

Our goal is to enable strong and resilient charitable and voluntary organisations which enhance quality of life, respond to need, and adapt to changing conditions.

Why? Because efficient, adaptable, and impactful charitable and voluntary organisations are vital if we are to achieve our quality of life goals.

Our principles

Our guiding principles

Our decision-making and activity are guided by the following principles:

Equality, Inclusion, and Accessibility: Our goals are better achieved when different voices and needs are heard and responded to, and impact is experienced across our islands.

Sustainability: We are focused on meaningful change for residents and helping to ensure Shetland is looked after for future generations.

Outcome-led: A strong focus on outcomes helps us and our supported organisations make good decisions, adapt to changing conditions, and maximise impact.

Collaboration: We believe working effectively together will lead to better solutions and create more impact.

Our activity

Activity one: Sustainable SCT

We are managing our investments so that we can continue to use earnings from our fund to support individuals and communities now and long into the future.

Activity two: Impactful community organisations

We are providing three unique support programmes that enable charitable and voluntary organisations to meet the needs of individuals and communities in Shetland.

Programme one: Community services and infrastructure. Grant funding which supports the provision of services and associated facilities.

Programme two: Community-led innovation. Modest sums of grant funding to allow groups and communities to try innovative ideas and experiment in response to need and opportunities.

Programme three: Bridging loan scheme. A scheme which provides short-term 0% loan finance to organisations awaiting third party funding for capital works on community assets.

Activity three: Learning and development

We are convening conversations with our supported organisations to seek improved or innovative ways to meet community needs and pursue our goals.



Background to our strategy

Context

Our strategy is informed and guided by our role in Shetland and our custodian model for the Shetland Charitable Trust fund.

Our role in Shetland

Shetland faces the economic, social, and environmental challenges that all communities face, but Shetland is also permanently disadvantaged by its peripherality and size.

As a community-based funder, we exist to improve quality of life in Shetland. We often commit long-term to ensure activities and community facilities that could not otherwise exist in the islands operate with some stability and become embedded in the community. This helps ensure sustainable value to Shetland's residents. Our long-term perspective improves stability but also places some restrictions on our flexibility.

Our custodian model

In the period of our 2025-30 strategy our fund will turn 50. We believe we are the custodians of a resource that must be available to future generations. Those living in Shetland 50 years from now should also have access to a fund that can help them combat challenges and support a good quality of life.

Our custodian model means we spend earnings from the fund and avoid use of the principal fund. We also aim to maintain the value of the principal fund relative to inflation. This does set limitations on what we spend year-on-year, but our approach is designed to optimise the value of the fund to Shetland now and in the future.

We're excited to present our new strategy, which is designed to help us improve further and increase the benefit to Shetland from our fund.

Developing the 2025-30 strategy

After our significant transformation in recent years to become a fully independent charitable trust, we know it is vitally important to use our newfound strength to continue our improvement journey.

To help us develop the right strategy for 2025-30, a third-party organisation was commissioned to support us. This provided staff, trustees, and grantees with an opportunity to provide feedback and ideas about the future of the Trust openly and honestly. Whilst it is always nice to hear praise, inevitably we also heard suggestions for change, which we have listened to as we've built our new strategy.

During the strategy development process, we also met with other funders in Shetland to better map our role within the wider landscape. This helps optimise the benefit of our fund to Shetland and avoid duplication and confusion.

What's changing?

We are taking the next steps in our development as an independent charitable trust. Of greatest note is our strategic shift to becoming a more relational funder, which involves us:

- actively acknowledging that our success is intertwined with the achievements and outcomes of the organisations and groups we support;
- engaging more directly with grantees to build trust and strengthen two-way communication;
- ensuring flexibility in our funding approach and procedures;
- using our profile to amplify the great work of grantees; and
- convening learning and development opportunities to foster innovation and improvement that helps achieve our goals.

We will continue to provide long-term funding to organisations. In addition, a review of the funding landscape has led us to create a fund targeting potentially higher-risk, harder to fund, one-off initiatives that align with our desired outcomes.