



TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A Development Plan for Stronsay

July 2007



**“Looking West” by
John Fairbrother**

The Island

Stronsay, set in the Outer North Isles of Orkney, is seven miles long and six miles across, with most of the houses widely distributed across the island. Off shore is the small island of Papa Stronsay, home to a community of Transalpine Redemptorist monks since 1999. The centre of Stronsay’s population is in Whitehall Village: it is there that the ferries arrive and depart, and the safe harbour provides shelter for both fishing boats and visiting sailors. The island is green and fertile, and is surrounded by beautiful – and often empty - beaches and fascinating rock formations.

During the spring and summer, its roadsides and tracks are a carpet of wild flowers, and the island is known as one of the best places in the country for seeing large flocks of the more common migratory birds and, indeed, numerous uncommon and rare species. Seals haul up on the beaches and rocks, and dolphins, porpoises and whales are all sighted in the surrounding waters. Stronsay is a place of natural beauty and tranquillity, treasured by those who live here and the envy of people from more stressful environments.

The island is home to a community of about 350 people who have had to adapt to the changing world. Since the heady days of the 19th and 20th century herring fishing industry, during which the population of over 1000 could swell to more than 5000 with seasonal workers, Stronsay has had to weather many storms, both literally and figuratively.

- In the 1940's the herring fishing industry had completely died out and now there are only 6 licensed fishing boats, employing 7 fishermen, working out of Stronsay.
- By the 1960's the population was decreasing rapidly as young people left to find employment.
- Employment in farming has decreased with the rationalisation of farms, the use of ever more sophisticated machinery and changes in farming practices. Over the past 25 years, the number of farms has halved and, whereas those farms employed 60 full-time and 10 part-time workers, now the industry supports 31 full-time and 6 part-time workers.
- A demographic study has highlighted statistics on the island's age profile: while the number of people aged 19 or under was higher than average, those aged 20-44 was very much lower in comparison with both Orkney and the whole of Scotland. The same study showed that, of the 31 people working full-time on the island for an employer, only 4 will reach retirement age in the next 10 years. In that same 10 years, there will be over 70 of the island's young folk entering the job market.

These statistics reinforce the current situation, where the island has to address the realities of building on its strengths while recognising its potential fragility, in terms of challenging the danger of further depopulation and sustaining its economic viability.



Stronsay Development Trust

The community of Stronsay had achieved much to sustain a larger population in the years before the Trust was established in 2004. For example, in Whitehall Village, an interpretation centre had been established with displays on the island's history, a café and hostel. A community centre had been built to provide a focus for events and recreational activities, allied to a swimming pool at the school for public use. A Bird Reserve had been established to encourage visitors to take advantage of the island's rich bird life and, as well as footpaths and parking/picnic areas around the island, a Seal Hide had been constructed at Holland Farm so that people can watch the colonies of grey and common seals without disturbing them. Information boards had been installed at viewpoints, such as St John's Hill, and sites of other interest like the dramatic seascape of the Vat of Kirbuster.

The Stronsay Development Trust is currently a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, with membership open to all permanent residents over the age of 18 who are eligible to vote in a local election. The Trust was established (Stronsay having been granted Initiative-at-the-Edge status) to focus on the further regeneration of our island community, improve the quality of life and provide greater opportunities for the people of Stronsay. In April 2005, after extensive consultation with the community, the first Development Plan – "Harvesting the Wind" – was published, setting out initial ideas to secure a healthy and sustainable future for the island.

After an island survey conducted in 2006 and sent to every resident over the age of 16, and an analysis of Stronsay's population age profile, employment and housing, the Trust believes it is time to assess its progress and agree priorities for the future. Since the Trust was established, we have been supported both financially and practically by our partners, and have much appreciated the various roles played by members of the community and its support of projects being pursued. We intend to build on these partnerships and to continue to encourage involvement in all our projects by those most interested and most closely affected.

In the year since April 2006, members have both supported the Trust in its intention to seek charitable status and have adopted a new constitution in preparation for our application to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.



**"Sunrise" by
John Fairbrother**

A Vision for Stronsay

"Some men see things as they are and say "Why"? I dream of things that never were and say "Why not?" (George Bernard Shaw)

Why not a sustainable future for Stronsay?

Why not:

- **have a population that increases because**

- § Stronsay is a place where people want to live and work

- § young people stay on, or return to, the island

- § the difficulties of housing and jobs are challenged and overcome

- § the island can provide the education and training opportunities needed by its population – the young and the not so young – for growth and development

- **have economic development – sensitive and sensible - that**

- § encourages new business ideas from residents and others

- § provides the support to get new businesses off the ground and supports existing ones

- § looks for innovative ways to provide better transport, particularly the all-important ferry links

- § welcomes visitors who can add to the viability of the economy while we protect the beauty they come to see

- § addresses the burning issues of making the island a better place for residents and visitors alike

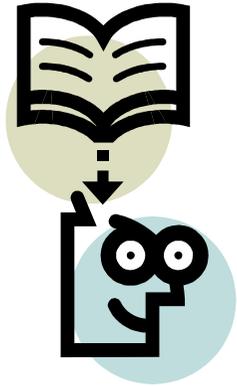
- **develop and support community initiatives that**

- § provide a safer and more comfortable environment for our young and our elderly

- § offer and support opportunities for social interaction between our young people

- § explore the benefits to all of renewable energy production

- § search for ways in which the island's waste can be dealt with more efficiently



The Community's Views

Through the Stronsay Survey 2006, the people who live here gave us their views on what we should rate as their priorities

The Community said its priorities are:

Economic Development & Employment

- § support for the growth of existing businesses
- § attracting new businesses to the island
- § the provision of business units
- § the sensitive development of tourism to provide income
- § improved transport links with the Orkney Mainland and other islands
- § the creation of employment opportunities for our young people
- § priority to be given to training/education to assist young people to remain and work on Stronsay
- § community involvement in renewable energy initiatives to provide income for other community projects

The Environment

- § the recording of Stronsay's heritage
- § more readily available information
- § an Island Ranger
- § exploration of archaeological sites
- § an urgent approach to the problem of sewage disposal in Whitehall
- § a reduction in waste through more recycling

Housing

- § affordable housing for first time buyers or renters
- § improvements to old and derelict buildings to provide business and private accommodation

Health & Welfare

- § the retention of the island's resident GP and nurse
- § solutions to the problem of lack of social interaction for young people

In addition, in "Harvesting the Wind":

The Community said its priorities were:

- § a renovated Stronsay harbour, benefiting local fishermen and sailors as well as visitors
- § a stable population
- § protection of the natural environment



The Trust's Progress

Back in 2004, the Trust acknowledged that it did not expect to deliver everything contained in “Harvesting the Wind”. It promised to take a proactive role and work with our partners to make things happen. In 2007, the Trust must continue to be honest in its approach to meeting the expectations and aspirations of everyone on the island: all cannot be met and some will take longer to meet than others. But its commitment to working towards its goals will not diminish and, with the support of the community, it can make many things realities instead of dreams.

Realities.....

- > the creation of a children's recreation area in Whitehall, which is due to be completed in 2007
- > an application for funding for the development of a wind-powered hydrogen production facility – sadly, unsuccessful but forming the basis for further exploration of this area
- > the production of a free monthly newsletter for every household on Stronsay, giving residents news and information about their island
- > work on the restoration of an historic lifeboat from SS Athenia for display on the island
- > grants to the Youth and Swimming Clubs for equipment
- > part funding for a ground source heat pump for the Fishmart Interpretation Centre
- > the Stronsay Survey 2006
- > demographic analysis to identify priority areas
- > the creation of a post of Clerk to the Trust
- > organisation of courses on drystone dyking, food hygiene and computer skills
- > re-appointment of a Local Development Officer

And Projects in the Pipeline.....

- > the installation of a community-owned wind turbine to provide income for Stronsay, and a turbine for the Community Centre
- > lobbying for a solution to the problem of sewage disposal in Whitehall
- > the creation of business units for the use of residents
- > the building of a slipway in the harbour
- > working with other community groups to create, and find funding for, a sports hall
- > investigating the need for island transport accessible to all
- > researching further recycling machinery/opportunities
- > investigating the possibility of affordable accommodation for rent/purchase
- > researching the possibility of acquiring a stone-crusher (or sharing one with other islands) to provide aggregate for roads and other projects
- > the creation of a post of Youth Worker (possibly shared with another island)
- > working with OIC/OHA to conduct a housing needs survey

Key Short term project

Medium term project

Long term project

The following is a visual representation of the linkages between the Trust’s constitutional objects (what it is set up to do), the community’s priorities, and the progress which the Trust has made towards being true to its constitution and to the wishes of islanders. Any activity yet to be consulted with the community (e.g. where a feasibility study is in progress or where it is still in its early stages) appears in bold. A full version of the Trust’s objects can be accessed on the website (in its Memorandum & Articles of Association) or by requesting the Secretary to send a paper copy.

KEY



What the Community Wants (Stronsay Survey 2006 & “Harvesting the Wind”)



Trust’s Objects (Purposes)



Trust’s Achievements/Work in Progress



No progress to date

Sensitive development of tourism
Island Ranger
More information on the island
Improve old/derelict buildings
Business units
New businesses
Renovated harbour

Managing community land
& associated assets for
sustainable development

Lifeboat restoration & museum
Community-owned turbine
Island brochure revision
Sewage disposal
Business units
Slipway
Redesign of website
Turbine for Community Centre
Inter-isles boat link

Provide facilities for recreation

Provide facilities for
recreation

Recreation ground
Part funding for Sports Hall
Equipment for clubs
**Island transport accessible to
all**

Retain island GP & nurse

Promote & protect well-
being & physical health

No action yet taken

Training & education

Promote learning/ training for all including the young and the carers of the young

Programme of short courses
Youth Worker

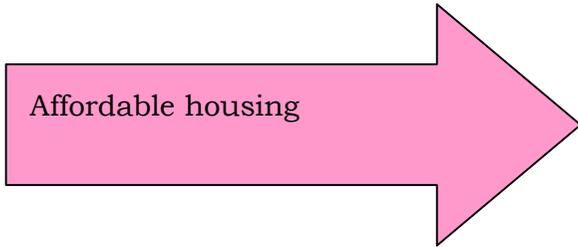
Promote the arts

Recitals at the Kirk

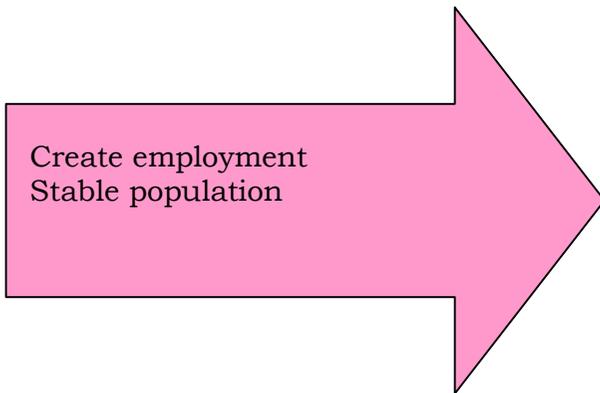
Protect the environment
Preserve Stronsay's heritage

Preserve, restore & improve the environment

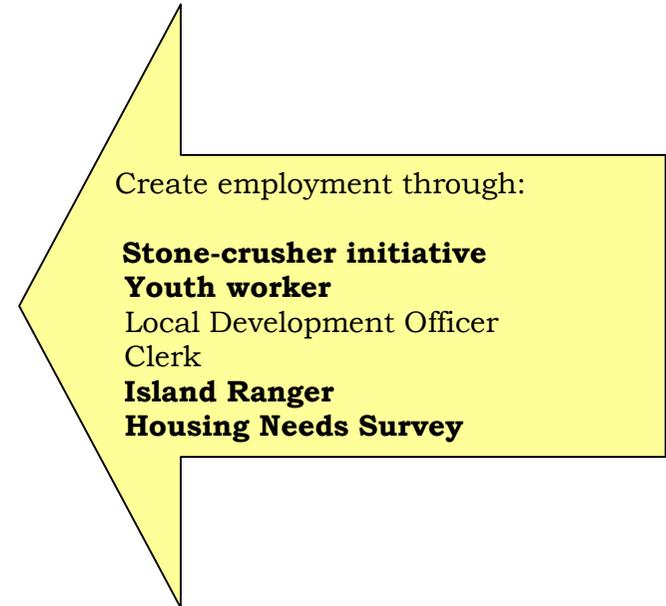
Support archaeological survey
Lifeboat restoration & museum
Recycling initiative
Planting on verges
Donation to ground source heat pump – Fishmart



Provide/assist in the provision of housing



Relieve poverty



Encourage, stimulate & support volunteering

Regular communication with community
Encouraging community involvement in sub-groups
Encouraging community to join Board
Co-operation with community groups/Church
Limpet - free island newsletter

Improve old/derelict buildings

Preserve historical, architectural & constructional heritage

No action yet taken

Structure of the Board and Accountabilities

The Board works through six sub-groups, each having specific responsibility for areas of work and with Directors accountable for activities. Although it is inevitable that there will be movement within the Board from time to time, the following are the sub-groups, their purpose, and those Directors currently accountable:

Amenities

Julia Crocker

To develop Stronsay as an interesting place to live in and to visit, whether on foot, by bicycle or by car; to promote the wide range of arts and crafts; and to sustain and enhance the environment

Economic Development

Ian Cooper
Juliet Durrant

To develop a sound base for the growth of the economy of Stronsay to ensure a sustainable future for the island

Heritage

Brian Crowe
Mike Erdman

To promote the historical, cultural and archaeological heritage of Stronsay

Housing, Transport and Services

Colin McAlpine
Eoin Stevenson

To ensure that Stronsay's housing needs are met and that the existing and future transport facilities, as well as the services provided by both local and national bodies, are maintained

Our Community

**Malcolm Addison
Jennifer George
Damian Stout**

To address the more personal issues facing the community and, through doing this, enhance the quality of life for the island’s residents

Renewables and Recycling

**William Caithness (LDO)
Eoin Stevenson**

To look at renewable energy devices, both to reduce carbon emissions and, hopefully, to provide the island with a revenue stream; and to reduce waste both before and after use

If you would like further information, or wish to become more involved in helping to deliver the Development Plan, please contact any of the Directors. More information on the Trust can be found on our website: www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/SDT.

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Our Partners:	HIE Orkney	Orkney Islands Council
OCP	The Crofters’ Commission	Communities Scotland

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