



Fair Isle Harbour Improvement Works

Fair Isle Design Statement

On behalf of **Shetland Isle Council (SIC)**



Project Ref: 11168 | Rev: Version 1.0 | Date: April 2023

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Document Control Sheet

Project Name: Fair Isle
Project Ref: 332511168
Report Title: Fair Isle Design Statement
Doc Ref: Final Draft
Date: June 2023

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Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Design Statement has been prepared by Stantec UK Ltd on behalf of Shetland Islands Council to accompany a planning application for the planning elements associated at North Haven, Fair Isle in relation to the proposed Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project. This statement relates to the application for the elements of work proposed at Fair Isle Harbour only and should be read in conjunction with the wider application submission.
- 1.1.2 The planning application is a local development and within the Shetland National Scenic Area and the site of a scheduled monument. A design statement is therefore required in accordance with section 13, paragraph 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, which requires a design statement to accompany planning applications where the land to which the application relates is situated within a National Scenic Area (NSA) or the site of a scheduled monument.
- 1.1.3 This design statement will provide an overview of the site context and proposed development. It will then discuss the key design principles and considerations for assessment of the design. The proposed development will then be discussed with regard to its potential impact on the national scenic area, built heritage and meeting the six qualities of a successful place.

1.2 Site Context

- 1.2.1 Fair Isle (Figure 1) is the most geographically remote inhabited island in the United Kingdom. It lies 24 miles from the Shetland Mainland and 27 miles from North Ronaldsay, the most northerly of the Orkney islands. It is administratively part of Shetland. The island has been owned by the National Trust for Scotland since 1954. There is a permanent population of around 60 people, who mostly live at the south end of the island. There are no dwellings present within the site, with the nearest being located approximately 1.5km to the southwest.

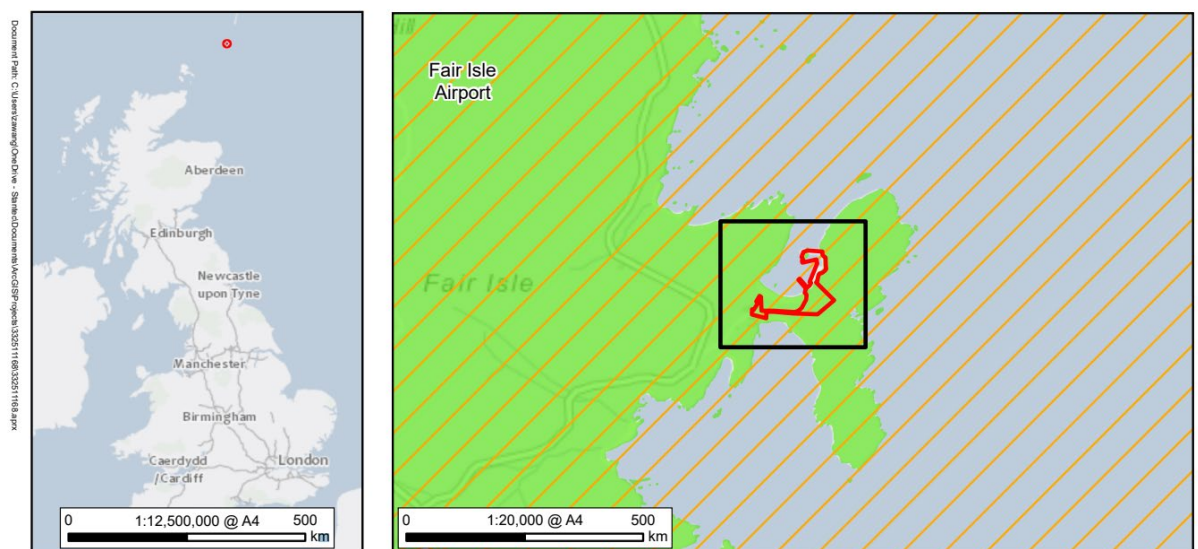


Figure 1 - Fair Isle Location Plan

- 1.2.2 The Fair Isle ferry berth is located within the harbour at North Haven, on the north-east of the island (Figure 2). The existing pier is approximately 40m in length, to allow the ferry to moor alongside. The pier is connected to hardstanding and a berth to the north which is approximately 60m in length. The harbour is sheltered from the east and the west by high

rocky cliffs, to the north by a rock armoured breakwater and notionally to the south by a narrow strip of land. There are seven buildings within 250m of the site which are all uninhabited and used for storage. Existing harbour facilities comprise of the following:

- 60m long berthage with 3.6m water depth
- 14m wide general cargo apron and storage building behind;
- Single track access road with limited space for parking;
- Finger pier aligning structure, slipway, cradle, noust, winch house; and
- Fresh water and waste disposal at facilities behind the pier.



Figure 2 - Fair Isle Harbour Location Plan with Designations

1.2.3 There is one category C-listed building approximately 150m west of the site and a scheduled monument within the site boundary. The scheduled monument (North Haven Crane) was

removed from the site within the last few years, however the surface of the pier into which the crane was set remains and therefore forms part of the existing scheduling.

- 1.2.4 The Shetland NSA is comprised of seven individual areas, one of which is the Fair Isle in its entirety and surrounding sea. The outer limit of the NSA extends to approximately 2km seaward from the edge of the mainland around the island. Special qualities associated with the NSA include:
- The stunning variety of extensive coastline;
 - Coastal views both close and distant;
 - Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast;
 - The hidden coasts;
 - The effects and co-existence of wind and shelter;
 - A sense of remoteness, solitude, tranquillity;
 - The notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs
 - The distinctive cultural landmarks; and
 - Northern light
- 1.2.5 Fair Isle specifically is noted for its combination of green fields, moors and sandstone cliffs, remoteness from mainland Shetland and diversity of natural landforms.

1.3 Proposed development

- 1.3.1 In order for a new, larger ferry to access the harbour and be safely stowed away when not in use, the existing facilities need to be improved. A proposed site plan is shown in Figure 3 , with the red line showing the boundary of terrestrial works.
- 1.3.2 A variety of works are proposed to facilitate the new vessel at Fair Isle Harbour, which is split between the marine areas (which require a marine license determined by Marine Scotland) and the terrestrial area requiring planning consent which is determined by Shetland Islands Council.
- 1.3.3 The planning elements associated with the development are considered to be:
- Enlargement of the existing noust
 - Construction of a new winch house
 - Replacement of the existing slipway and cradle
 - Repairs and re-fendering of the existing finger pier
 - Increase in size and height of the existing breakwater

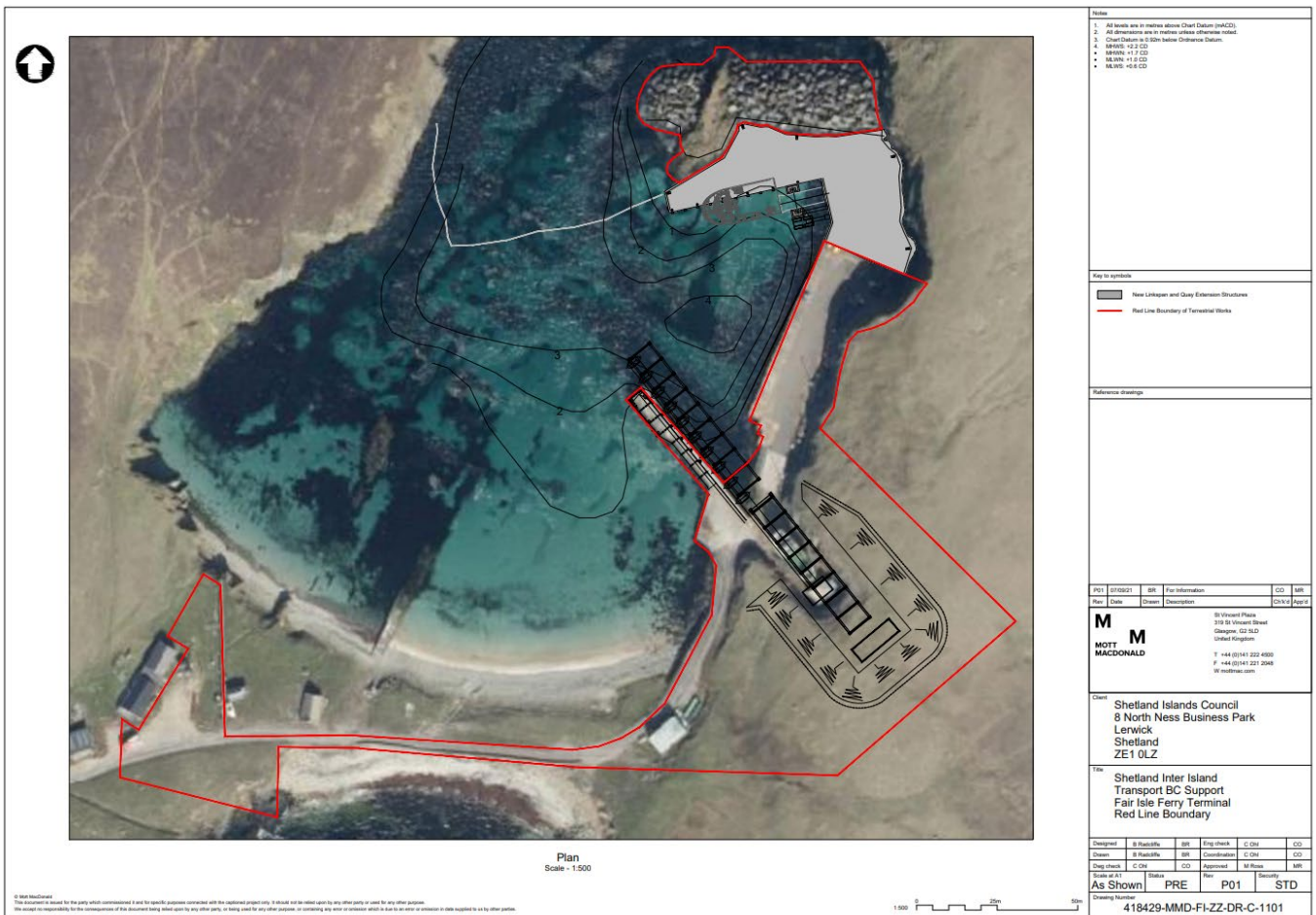


Figure 3 – Proposed Fair Isle Harbour Site Plan

1.3.4 The other aspects of the proposal which do not fall within the terrestrial planning area but form part of the overall harbour improvement works are:

- The formation of a new quay structure between the northern end of the existing quay and existing breakwater
- New lighting along the rear of the extended quay
- The formation of a new linkspan and associated control room
- Dredging to provide sufficient water depth for the new vessel

2 Design Principles

2.1 National Planning Framework 4

2.1.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the national spatial strategy for Scotland and sets out the spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. The key policies relevant to the design of this proposal are as follows:

2.1.2 **Policy 14 – Design, quality and place** aims to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed development that make successful places by taking a design-led approach and applying the Place Principle. Specifically, development proposals will be designed to improve the quality of an area regardless of location and scale. Development proposals will be supported where they are consistent with the six qualities of successful places:

- *Healthy: Supporting the prioritisation of women’s safety and improving physical and mental health.*
- *Pleasant: Supporting attractive natural and built spaces.*
- *Connected: Supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency.*
- *Distinctive: Supporting attention to detail of local architectural styles and natural landscapes to be interpreted, literally or creatively, into designs to reinforce identity.*
- *Sustainable: Supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play, work and stay in their area, ensuring climate resilience, and integrating nature positive, biodiversity solutions.*
- *Adaptable: Supporting commitment to investing in the long-term value of buildings, streets and spaces by allowing for flexibility so that they can be changed quickly to accommodate different uses as well as maintained over time.*

2.1.3 **Policy 4 – Natural Places** is an important policy to consider given the remote setting of Fair Isle and the surrounding natural landscape. This policy aims to protect natural assets on land and along coasts. Development proposals affecting National Scenic Area only be supported where the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised or any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

2.1.4 **Policy 7 – Historic Assets** aims to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, including avoidance of direct impacts on scheduled monuments and the integrity of its setting.

2.2 Shetland Local Development Plan

2.2.1 Alongside NPF4, the Shetland Local Development Plan (SLDP 2014) is a key consideration for the design of the proposal.

2.2.2 The general design policy contained within the SLDP 2014 is policy **GP3 All Development: Layout and Design**. This policy requires new development to be sited and designed to respect the character and local distinctiveness of the site and its surroundings. This policy also outlines six criteria in terms of design which are broadly aligned with the same criteria of NPF4 Policy 14.

- 2.2.3 **Policy GP2 General Requirements for All Development** states that developments should not adversely affect the integrity of the landscape character.
- 2.2.4 **Policy NH1 International and National Designations** states that development affecting a National Scenic Area will only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or the qualities or protected features for which it has been designated, or any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social environmental or economic benefits of national importance.
- 2.2.5 **Policy HE4 Archaeology** does not support development that would have an adverse effect on scheduled monuments or the integrity of their settings, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3 Design Analysis and Solution

3.1 Project Objective and detail

- 3.1.1 The key objective of the proposed works is to accommodate a larger, faster vessel built to modern standards. The vessel design will be focused on providing improved passenger comfort and seakeeping, therefore improved reliability. The proposed development at Fair Isle is therefore an essential component to facilitate the new vessel and deliver the project objectives. The choice of design for the harbour improvement works is therefore largely shaped by the likely physical and practical requirements of the new vessel.
- 3.1.2 The linkspan will be constructed to the north of the existing solid quay, in an east-west orientation. An extension to the north and west of the existing solid quay will provide the vehicular approach to the linkspan and Ro-Ro berth, ensuring appropriate space for vehicle manoeuvring. Due to the proximity of the linkspan to the existing breakwater and the lack of core material within it, the new solid quay structure may further improve conditions on the linkspan berth.
- 3.1.3 In ensuring the operation safety of a linkspan/vessel interface, there is a requirement to ensure suitable wave climate on the linkspan berth. The height of the existing breakwater will be increased and an additional layer of rock armour provided on the north face to improve shelter at the new linkspan berth.
- 3.1.4 The noust which is currently used to house the vessel overnight will be enlarged and accompanied by the provision of a new winch, winch house and cradle. This is so the new, larger vessel can be safely stowed away when not in use.

3.2 Successful Place Assessment

- 3.2.1 The proposal has been assessed against and is considered to meet the six qualities of a successful place:
- **Healthy** - whilst not a direct outcome of the development, the improved harbour at Fair Isle will provide a more reliable and comfortable ferry service which would improve the wellbeing of residents and visitors during travel and as a long-term amenity/service.
 - **Pleasant** – the development is an expansion to an existing harbour and therefore would not reduce the overall attractiveness of the area. The development would not introduce any adverse amenity effects such as noise, air and light pollution, or any other undesirable features.
 - **Connected** – This project will provide an improved public transport link between Shetland Mainland and Fair Isle due to greater reliability and better user experience. The new vessel will also be better equipped to carry sustainable forms of transport such as bicycles.
 - **Distinctive**: The development has primarily been designed for its practical function and will be in keeping with the appearance of the existing harbour. The development is not intended to be distinctive or overly prominent in its own right, to preserve the existing setting and landscape within the harbour area and overall character of Fair Isle.
 - **Sustainable** – The development is sustainable from a variety of perspectives. At the local level, the development is essential for supporting a sustainable future for the island as it will provide an improved supply-chain and passenger transport links between Fair Isle and Shetland Mainland. This development will also support the local economy as the boat will be crewed from Fair Isle. The proposed development will facilitate the aim of

operating a new vessel which will have the option of a 'green' propulsion system which would help reduce the emissions associated with the vessel operation.

- **Adaptable** – at present, the design of the harbour upgrade is to accommodate a new, modern vessel. The harbour will be fit for purpose for a significant length of the time and is likely to be adaptable for any other necessary marine uses that present itself in the future.

3.3 Existing Visual Context

3.3.1 As part of the EIA process, a Landscape, Seascape and Visual Impact Assessment (LSVIA) was carried out to identify and assess the negative and positive effects and significant of change arising from the development on the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

3.3.2 The project is not yet at the detailed designed stage and therefore visualisations of the proposed development are not available. The photographs below however (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7) from the LSVIA appendix provides context for the existing site and features as well as the wider landscape:



Figure 4 - View of Fair Isle Harbour Facing North



Figure 5 – View of Fair Isle Harbour Facing East

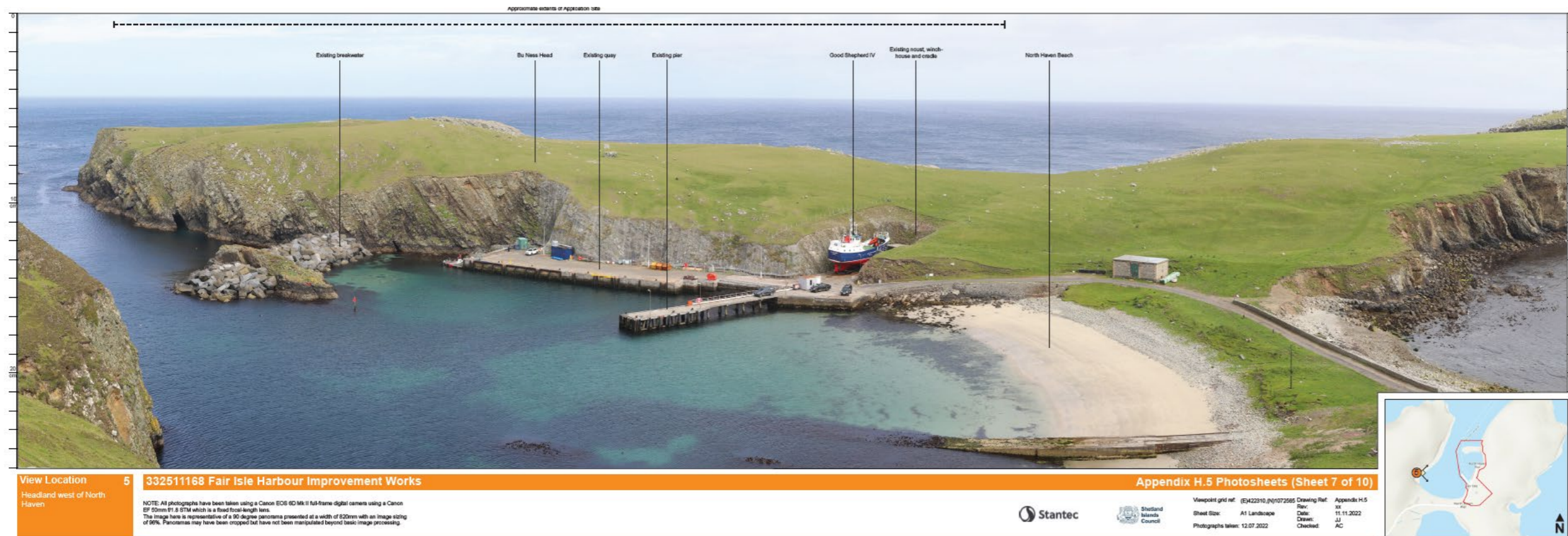


Figure 6 - Aerial View of Fair Isle Harbour Facing North East



Figure 7 - View of Fair Isle Harbour Facing North from the Access Road

3.4 National Scenic Area

- 3.4.1 The NSA landscape designation is entrusted by the Scottish Government and protects the island and surrounding areas from development which would endanger the qualities and features for which it was designated. This makes the island itself especially sensitive to inappropriate development.
- 3.4.2 The proposed development will not result in any significant change to the wider landscape character of the island, including the NSA. There will be a noticeable significant impact on the character of the area within the harbour and immediate surrounding area during the construction phase, but this will be medium-term as they would only occur during the construction period which is set to take place over two summers.
- 3.4.3 Once construction is complete, the visual impact will be similar to existing conditions and the improved ferry service and upgraded features within the harbour will provide substantial benefits to visitors, workers and residents across the island.
- 3.4.4 Overall, the development would not materially change the character of the harbour as it is primarily expansion of existing facilities and structures and is contained within the same harbour area, with the most significant visual impacts occurring during a temporary phase. Further detail on this matter can also be read within the Landscape, Seascape and Visual chapter of the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

3.5 Built Heritage

- 3.5.1 In terms of built heritage considerations, the North Haven Crane scheduled monument has been removed from the site, however the surface of the pier into which it is set forms part of the scheduling, which includes a notional circle of 5m from the centre of the Scheduled Monument. There is also a category C-listed building approximately 150m west of the site.
- 3.5.2 The proposed development is likely to have a negligible impact on the character of the C-listed building, due to the distance from the site to listed building.
- 3.5.3 In terms of the North Haven Crane, the legibility of the historic structure has already been compromised by its removal. Following development, there will be a permanent impact on the setting of the monument due to the enlarge of the breakwater, noust and alterations to the quayside. The overall impact on the monument following development is moderate but not considered to be unacceptable, give that any tangible physical connection between the remains of the crane and the harbour itself has already been lost. Further detail on this matter can be read within the Archaeology and Heritage chapter of the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

3.6 Consultation Amendments

- 3.6.1 Following pre-application consultation with members of the public, changes have been incorporated into the design. The main points of concern raised with respect to the design is the narrow width of the access road to the pier and the danger of falling from the edge of the roadside. Taking these comments into consideration, the small section of cliff which juts out creating a pinch point on the road at the harbour will be removed to improve access. The unprotected drop will also be reviewed and a barrier will be recommended as required.

3.7 Accessibility

- 3.7.1 An access statement is not a statutory requirement of this report as it not a national or major development, however it is important to emphasise that the proposed harbour upgrades will improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

- 3.7.2 The current vessel *MV Good Shepherd IV* is 36-years old and entirely deficient in meeting disabled access requirements. The new vessel and infrastructure will be fully accessible, with step-free access from the shore to the passenger lounge. Improved accessibility was a key aspiration expressed by island residents in relation to the project. The new vessel will comply with all modern standards in terms of passenger accessibility. Furthermore, the conversion to roll on-roll off will level-access boarding by passengers at all states of the tide, which will be of particular benefit to the elderly population and those with reduced mobility.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1.1 The proposed development at North Haven, Fair Isle is the expansion and upgrading of existing harbour facilities to facilitate a new vessel and the long-term sustainability of Fair Isle. A design statement was required due to the development taking place within a National Scenic Area (Shetland).
- 4.1.2 The proposal has been assessed from a design perspective and is not considered to compromise the designation of the National Scenic Area or have a significant adverse impact on the North Haven Crane Scheduled Monument and other built heritage assets. The proposal has been assessed against the six qualities of a successful place as outlined in NPF4 and is considered to meet the six criteria of being healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable. Furthermore, the new vessel and infrastructure will be fully accessible, complying with all modern standards in terms of passenger accessibility.