

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: United Kingdom

Name of the area: Fair Isle National Scenic Area

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Report year: 2025 Number of years since renewal: 5

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: National Trust for Scotland

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¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. by 2022, review the 2010-2019 management plan, as was foreseen in 2018, and elaborate a new management plan to secure the continuous development and management of the Fair Isle Scenic Area;
2. consider, in the above-mentioned management plan, the conditions and recommendations of the appraisal report and include specific provisions dedicated to climate change and how to address this issue in relation to the long-term conservation of endemic species and species of birds;
3. make more extensive use of the European Diploma logo in all information material and brochures and explain the relevance of the diploma wherever useful;

1.1 Condition 1.1 was formally completed in June 2023 following the adoption of the new Fair Isle management plan 2022-2032 by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Board of Trustees. New actions undertaken in 2025 as part of the management plan include a review and update to the management database and biosecurity plan for Fair Isle.

1.2 As previously noted in Section 1.2 of the 2024 annual report, condition 1.2 was partially completed through the consideration of climate change impacts on local seabird populations and endemic island forms within the 2022-2032 management plan for Fair Isle. The proposed climate vulnerability assessment for Fair Isle has not yet been assigned a firm delivery date, following completion of the first assessment for NTS-managed sites at St Kilda in 2024, but 2027 has been proposed internally as a start date for this project.

1.3 Improvements to the Fair Isle landing page within the NTS website were actioned in early December 2025, with the aim of improving site visibility to the general public and refreshing the information available to those encountering the island via the NTS portal. These updates will include the addition of links relating to the Fair Isle drMPA.

It is further envisaged that developments to the Puffinn hostel in the south of the island, following resumption of the property in late 2026 (in recent years the Puffinn has been utilised as part of the Observatory rebuilding project and will be utilised by pier development workers in 2026), will include a new interpretation area. A site visit was undertaken by the NTS Head of Engagement in summer 2025, with actions to be followed up by the NTS Highlands and Islands Curator in 2025/2026. Interpretation content will be discussed with the drMPA Research Officer and FIMRO and provides an opportunity to highlight the ongoing conservation and research work undertaken on Fair Isle in partnership between NTS and the local community.

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. consider a ban on fishing and catching of lobsters within the marine protected area or at least in a scientifically defined area;
2. consider the inclusion of the marine protected area into the European Diploma site;
3. enhance the housing-related quality of life through appropriate measures, mainly concerning renovation and restoration; take into consideration the peculiar conditions of local businesses and improve working conditions through the installation of appropriate manufacturing locations;
4. give the European Diploma a prominent place at the entrance of or inside the new bird observatory.

2.1 Commercial fishing for brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*) and European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) within the Fair Isle marine protected area boundary has now ceased, with the cessation of fishing by the previous off-Isle commercial licence holder. This licence has not been transferred and Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation, who are responsible for issuing commercial licenses for shellfish within the six-mile limit of Shetland waters, have confirmed that the ban on new licenses will continue for the foreseeable future. SSMO continues to hold Marine Stewardship Council accreditation for the Shetland brown crab fishery. In consequence only limited fishing for brown crab and European lobster for personal consumption is now undertaken within Fair Isle inshore waters by island residents. V-notching of lobster hens has been undertaken through 2025 by one islander, with several dozen hens V-notched in total this year.

With regards to fishing more broadly the aforementioned islander has obtained a Category A commercial license, but this is not a large-scale operation. Some trawl fishing by Scottish vessels, assumed to be primarily for herring (*Clupea harengus*) and mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), continues to take place in late summer/early autumn, associated with the annual movements of these species closer to shore around Shetland at this time. Outwith these periods, Shetland-based vessels do not consider it economically viable to fish within the Fair Isle drMPA boundary.

There has been no change to the challenge of establishing baseline population data noted in the report submitted to the Council of Europe in 2024, with no vessel currently able to undertake sampling. With a research consultant appointed by FIMRO to review research undertaken to date, to identify research gaps and suggest potential management recommendations for consideration, agreement on research priorities for 2026 with the local community and MPA steering committee will be postponed until after report delivery of this project in spring 2026. Fish and shellfish research within the drMPA falls within the scope of this report.

Whilst the designation order for the drMPA provides for research into establishing sustainable local fisheries, any references to no-take zones were explicitly removed from the drMPA proposal prior to approval and any restrictions, if backed by evidence, are subject to voluntary agreements by all steering committee members.

2.2 Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation, who represent the Fair Isle community on the drMPA Steering Committee, remains opposed to the inclusion of the Fair Isle drMPA within the Council of Europe Diploma area. It is noted that no feedback, as requested in the 2024 annual report, has been received with regards to FIMRO's concern that such inclusion could disrupt the successful community-led management model employed by the drMPA.

2.3 The planned programme of repairs to existing housing stock is now underway, with roofing repairs to a number of properties completed in autumn 2025 and further work planned for the remaining properties in 2026. Boiler and chimney repairs were also completed for several properties, with further work again planned in 2026. The manufacturing of doors and windows by a Lerwick-based company, Butler and Mahern, has now commenced, following site visits to properties on Fair Isle in summer 2025. Manufacture follows NTS responsibly sourced materials guidelines and installation within properties is planned from March 2026 onwards.

2.4 The community position remains that the European Diploma certificate should continue to be displayed with the Fair Isle Community Hall. With the Observatory now open, it should prove possible for NTS to discuss the inclusion of Diploma-related material within the Observatory visitor centre with FIBO trustees.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

Angus Murray remains in post as National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Operations Manager for Canna, Fair Isle and Shetland. With the Fair Isle Bird Observatory embarking on a soft opening in spring 2025, Alex Penn, previously Acting Warden, was appointed Head of Ornithology. Jonnie Fisk, initially appointed Hospitality Manager, was replaced by Steve Holgate in June 2025. Katie Cubbon continues in post as the Fair Isle drMPA Research Officer.

In addition to the Research Officer role, Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation (FIMRO) developed a short-term pilot Education Officer post, funded by Fauna and Flora International, which ran from June-September 2025 and have recently appointed a research consultant under a short-term fixed contract running from

November 2025-March 2026. This latter project is supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot.

Fair Isle drMPA projects supported in full by NTS through the People's Postcode Lottery in 2025 include the Fair Isle inshore fish survey and benthic habitat modelling project conducted by the University of Highlands and Islands (Shetland). Expansion of Shorewatch surveys through the DRMPA Education Officer post in 2025 and the ongoing passive acoustic cetacean monitoring project were facilitated by the use of NTS-funded equipment purchased in 2023-2024. Match funding by NTS through the People's Postcode Lottery was also used to support the ongoing drMPA research officer post and a new sandeel survey completed in May 2025.

In other work on Fair Isle NTS commissioned the local building company to commence work on renovation of the airstrip waiting room and fully funded purchase of a community fuel bowser when previous methods of transporting fuel to the Isle became untenable.

Construction work at Fair Isle harbour and ferry noost commenced in March in advance of the new Fair Isle ferry, including harbour dredging and enlargement of the noost. Work is scheduled to recommence in February 2026, alongside works at Grutness Pier on Mainland, Shetland. Construction of the new ferry at a shipyard in Whitby is also underway, as of November 2025.

The presumed successful funding application submitted by Fair Isle Electricity Company (FIEC) in 2024 in partnership with Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT), with the intention of improving system resilience and boosting power generation, was unable to proceed in 2025. Discussions between FIEC and relevant organisations are ongoing to ensure the necessary further development of the system.

Jack Whitwell resigned as Fair Isle Development Manager midway through the year, whilst continuing to provide consultancy services to FIEC. Fair Isle Development Company has commenced the recruitment process for a replacement development manager.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No changes to the boundaries of the Fair Isle Scenic Area have been made.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

No additional information provided

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated

6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes

6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

7.1. Cultural heritage

7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage

7.2. Socio-economic context

7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

8.1. Visitors – Information policy

8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)

8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)

8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

8.2. Scientific research

8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)

8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations

9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)

9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

10.1. Improvements made

10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna

10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)

10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)

10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)

10.1.5. Waste management

10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems

- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas

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