COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

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 2022

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: 2022 Number of years since renewal: 2

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

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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 Review of the 2010-2019 management plan and development of new plan.

As the new management plan has not yet been shared with the Fair Isle community and remains in draft form, a short update for this report has been provided by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) planning team. It is anticipated that the recommendations relating to the management plan will be answered more fully in the 2023 annual report to the Council of Europe.

Progress report on new management plan for Fair Isle (Berwyn Murray, National Trust for Scotland)

During 2022 the National Trust for Scotland (the Trust) has undertaken a review of the 2009 – 2019 Management Plan for Fair Isle and developed a new draft management plan. The plan has been produced internally within the Trust (and has been shaped by plans from other key stakeholders, e.g., the Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation (FIMRO) Research & Project Plan, 2022 for the Fair Isle Demonstration & Research Marine Protected Area (dr MPA), and the Fair Isle Committee & Community Association (FICCA) Development Plan, 2015).

The management plan will be developed and finalised through collaboration with the communities of Fair Isle and other key stakeholders, through engagement early in 2023, with a final draft approved by the Trust's Executive Committee in April 2023.

In managing Fair Isle, the Trust works in partnership with Fair Isle's communities, and other key stakeholders including Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT), Shetland Islands Council, and FIMRO. The management plan sets out a long term, strategic vision for the Trust's role in management of Fair Isle. A management framework and objectives demonstrate how the vision will be delivered over the next 10 years, setting out the role of the Trust, what will be delivered, and how the Trust's role and objectives integrate with those of other stakeholders (including resident communities) to:

- Protect and respond to threats to Fair Isle's cultural and natural heritage, including climate change and biosecurity.
- Engage people with the heritage of Fair Isle.
- Secure the future demographic, economic and social sustainability of the island.

1.2 Provisions in the new management plan with regard to climate change and its implications in relation to the long-term conservation of endemic species and species of birds

As noted in Section 1.1, the new management plan for Fair Isle is currently in draft form, with a final draft likely to be approved in spring 2023. The extent to which the plan addresses the impacts of climate change on Fair Isle's seabird colonies and endemic species and the implications for their conservation will therefore be addressed in this report in 2023.

1.3 Current use of the European Diploma logo and explanations of the relevance of the diploma, and proposed actions to extend its usage across informational material and brochures.

The original diploma certificate hangs on the wall in the Committee Room of the Community Hall on Fair Isle. The Council of Europe diploma logo is also displayed on a National Trust for Scotland sign at North Haven. Further mention of the Diploma and its importance is also made in an internal case study published by Fauna and Flora International in 2021 which details their involvement in the establishment of the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area.

Many of the Fair Isle drMPA Steering Committee member organisations have a good awareness of the relevance of the Diploma and the value placed on the award by the local community, as the recommendations for award renewal played a role in achieving designation. Work is currently underway to develop a communication strategy both for the drMPA and for Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation (FIMRO), including creation of a website. This presents a good opportunity, that is likely to be supported by the MPA Steering Committee to increase awareness of the Diploma to the wider public, through its inclusion in drMPA online publications and social media going forward.

Increased visibility of the Diploma both around the Isle and in promotional materials for National Trust for Scotland remains a pending action.

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 Consideration of a ban on fishing and catching of lobsters within the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area DR MPA or other scientifically defined area.

The Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area Research and Project Plan was finalised in January 2022. This document lays out the agreed research priorities, project outlines and delivery timetables for the MPA for 2022-2025. This document notes that V-notching of lobster and tagging of brown crabs commenced in 2022. Data collected is submitted to the Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation. At present, the primary objective is data collection to allow effective monitoring of stocks and establish trends in population abundance and size distribution.

2.2 Consider the inclusion of the marine protected area into the European Diploma site

The drMPA Project Officer has been notified of this recommendation (by FIMRO trustees) and it is likely that in due course discussion with the drMPA Steering Committee on this matter will take place. The primary objective for the Steering Committee would be to ensure that inclusion within the existing Diploma site does not complicate the implementation of the research plan agreed by committee members or disrupt the governance structure which is a central feature of the drMPA. As the drMPA research and project plan was considered in drafting the NTS management plan conflict between two plans is not anticipated. The question remaining for discussion between the drMPA and NTS would therefore focus on whether inclusion provides added value for managing the MPA. As the drMPA is a bottom-up, community-led initiative, and National Trust for Scotland are already a member of the Steering Committee, it maybe that inclusion could alter the current effective governance structure, by diminishing the central community voice and may not prove as valuable as close co-operation between separate stakeholders.

2.3 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.

Significant progress has been made during 2022 in several housing and enterprise related projects on Fair Isle, with marked quality of life improvements in some instances. Although heavily delayed, with the new headteacher and their family spending close to eight months in temporary accommodation on the Isle, substantial internal renovation to improve weather proofing and damp issues and complete redecoration of the Schoolhouse by Shetland Islands Council has now been successfully completed to a high standard. Work on rooms affected by water ingress in the nurse's accommodation at North Shirva was also carried out by the council, improving living conditions for the new resident nurse who arrived in early 2022.

Targeted investment, both in time and resources, by National Trust for Scotland (NTS) at a local level has removed the backlog of repairs required to occupied properties, with a system for reporting issues, completing repairs, and updating the community on progress working well. In autumn 2022 comprehensive housing condition surveys for all occupied properties were completed by a local architect on behalf of NTS. This work will underpin a new strategy for property maintenance, giving a clear picture of work required and facilitating budget planning by the regional office with responsibility for Fair Isle.

Construction work has begun on the redundant buildings in the South Light compound owned by the Northern Lighthouse Board. The aim of the project is to provide dedicated accommodation for Northern Lighthouse Board workers, which is not always easy to secure on isle, and to provide an additional small-scale self-catering hostel accommodation offering for visitors to the Isle.

Several projects initiated by island residents are also progressing, with a high-quality metal framed barn erected at Upper Stoneybrek croft, which will provide weather-proof storage for heavy plant owned by the island building firm, and a sizeable lambing byre to support croft improvements. Construction of the knitting bothy at Pund has been completed, supporting the development of the owner's knitwear business and a planning application for the construction of a new house on the site of the ruined croft house was submitted in October 2022.

The Kirk development project is also slowly moving forward. Further consultation with Isle residents resulted in majority agreement that the Kirk should remain in community ownership. This has been communicated to the Kirk of Scotland and a working group set up to progress a feasibility study for the development of a small community-owned swimming pool, with the potential for other recreational and leisure opportunities to be offered alongside.

Perhaps of greatest significance for the Isle as a whole is the agreement on funding packages with National Trust for Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to fully support two three-year term posts with Fair Isle Development Company, namely a Development Manager and Administrator. These posts were advertised in December 2022. Although staff may wish to reside on Fair Isle, there is no requirement for them to do so, as it is anticipated that the Development Manager post in particular is likely to be of interest to an individual who works with a number of different communities, and indeed this level of experience would be welcomed.

2.4 Give the European Diploma a prominent place at the entrance of or inside the new Bird Observatory

Fair Isle Bird Observatory (FIBO) continues to experience delays in the construction of the new building. Project completion is now not anticipated until later in 2023. Conversations regarding the placement of Council of Europe Diploma information in the Observatory are unlikely to take place until such a point in 2023 as the building is close to completion.

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.

Responsibility for the Council of Europe Diploma site reverted to the NTS regional office following the appointment of Jeff Waddell (Head of Nature Conservation) to a new position within the organization in the summer of 2022. Annual report submission and management oversight for Fair Isle has now been assigned to Sheona Leonard (Operations Manager – Canna, Fair Isle and Shetland Isles). Data collection for the report in 2022 is being undertaken as in 2021 by Susannah and David Parnaby, who are resident on the island.

Martha Thomson was reappointed as Project Officer for the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area in April 2022, with funding for the position for the next two years provided through a successful application to the Coastal Communities Fund. This provides much valued continuity to the post at a critical time for the MPA as it moves into the implementation of various projects. NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) will continue to provide line management support for this post, but it is expected that Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation (SCIO), who represent the local community on the drMPA Steering Committee, will wholly adopt management of this role when the current contract expires in 2024. Monthly meetings between the project officer and FIMRO trustees, and additionally with an advisory group comprising the NatureScot Shetland staff member responsible for line management of the project officer, a FIMRO trustee and the Fauna and Flora International Marine Community Support Officer for Fair Isle, all help ensure that the Fair Isle community remains central to the development and implementation of the MPA.

In addition, substantial funding of close to £110,000 has been committed by National Trust for Scotland in support of several baseline data collection projects within the Marine Protected Area, many of which are due to begin in 2023. Funding is via the National Trust for Scotland LoveNature project, which is in turn supported by the Peoples Postcode Lottery. Projects supported by this funding include Inshore fish surveys, benthic species distribution modelling, identifying shag (*Gulosus aristotelis*) foraging hotspots and passive acoustic monitoring of cetaceans.

Improvements to the water treatment works on Fair Isle are close to completion, with handover of management responsibility to Scottish Water from the engineering firm engaged to deliver the project likely before the end of the year. During work on the site limited encroachment out with the designated planning consent area onto areas of dry heath vegetation protected under the Special Area of Conservation designation occurred. Restoration and monitoring work in these areas is being implemented through agreement between NatureScot and Scottish Water.

Biosecurity measures have taken on a greater importance on the Isle through 2022, as groundworks for the new Fair Isle Bird Observatory building began in the spring, with modular building pods starting to arrive in late autumn. The Biosecurity for Life Shetland project officer is in the process of completing a terrestrial biosecurity plan for Fair Isle, which will have some input from Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) and National Trust for Scotland going forward. As part of this several wax block stations were deployed across the Isle in 2022 and were checked monthly by the ranger employed by FIBOT from April – October 2022. With no permanent Observatory staff presence on the Isle, a FIMRO trustee had undertaken to carry out monitoring in the winter months. It is not clear whether the biosecurity plan will be implemented in full in 2023, or will rely

simply on wax block deployment again, as this will be highly dependent on the availability of people on the island (either through the Observatory, NTS or Isle residents) to undertake the required tasks. Preparation of a separate biosecurity plan relating to the rebuild was a condition of planning approval for the new Observatory building, particularly with regards to risk mitigation measures at the departure port. It was noted when the planning application was submitted in 2020 that sufficient information on biosecurity had not been provided by the Observatory, but this document was subsequently signed off.

With regards to marine species, Fair Isle falls under the Biosecurity Plan for the Shetland Islands produced by the North Atlantic Fisheries College as part of the Shetland Islands Marine Spatial Plan. In August 2022 the MPA project officer organized a very successful visit by Rebecca Griesler (University of the Highlands and Islands) and Holly Paget-Brown (Biosecurity for Life project officer) to introduce island residents to marine non-native species monitoring and provide a refresher on detecting non-native mammals following a visit in 2021. As part of this a partial survey for non-native species was carried out in the harbour at North Haven and a monitoring plate installed under the pontoon.

As noted in the previous report in 2021, the absence of permanent Observatory staff on the Isle has some impact on the monitoring of marine mammals, particularly with regards to grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) pup counts, but Deryk Shaw, an island resident, provides monthly submissions of bird records to the Observatory from November to April. There have been no other notable changes in terrestrial habitat management at present, although a request from NTS to resume a small parcel of land at the airstrip to develop a new Airstrip Administration office building was approved by the Fair Isle Grazings Committee. An additional request to the committee for use of grazings land adjacent to Fair Isle Bird Observatory to enable the installation of solar panels for the Observatory was also approved.

With the publication of the Fair Isle DR MPA Research and Project Plan 2022-2025, delivery timelines are now in place for a range of projects. Those scheduled to start in 2022 in addition to the seabird monitoring work already undertaken by Fair Isle Bird Observatory staff include: eider monitoring, establishing a cetacean shore-watch site, passive acoustic monitoring of cetaceans, seal counts and haul out sites, monitoring of invasive non-native marine species, lobster v-notching and brown crab tagging, mark-recapture of sharks. The publication of this plan marks an exciting move forward from the planning phase to the delivery phase of the MPA, with new projects due to come on-stream annually.

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 National 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

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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

6.1.1 Fair Isle Water Treatment Works

During construction, a small section of dry heath that bordered the parking and turning area at the entrance to the water treatment works, and a further small section bordering two passing places on the airstrip road that were utilized for storage and turning onto the access track, were overlaid with aggregate chips (see also Section 3). As these areas fell out with the area contained within the planning application and there was the potential for vegetation growth to be inhibited, remedial works to restore vegetation to its original condition were required. Phase one of this process, stripping back of aggregate and hardcore and levelling of ground to soil level, has been completed. Restoration through natural recolonization will be determined through ongoing monitoring.

6.1.2 Fair Isle weather

The main weather event of the year was a new high temperature for the isle recorded on 19th July, with a peak of 22.6 degrees Celsius. This is only the third time the temperature on Fair Isle has risen above 20 degrees and beats the previous record of 20.2 degrees Celsius from August 1975. The autumn remained unseasonably mild well into November and there followed an unusual, prolonged period of east or south-east based winds, often strong, throughout November and into early December.

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

As part of the NatureScot-funded Ranger Service, Fair Isle Bird Observatory staff fenced the oyster plant (*Mertensia maritima)* population at Muckle Uri Geo, and it continues to thrive there as a result. Late-flowering was noted for several wildflower species, as well as domesticated plants in the isle's gardens, either because of the mild autumn, or linked to longer-term climate change.

Although not strictly flora, a fungi species found in 2021 was confirmed as (*Inocybe rimos)*; the first record for Fair Isle (and Shetland).

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

Fair Isle's seabirds have had several problems to face in recent decades, and several of them have shown severe population declines in that time. Unfortunately, to add to these difficulties, Avian Flu was again present on the Isle during the year. First being noted in great skuas (*Stercorarius skua)* and great black-backed gulls (*Larus marinus)* in April (both of which were confirmed by laboratory analysis to have died of the H5N1 strain of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza), it spread rapidly through the breeding seabirds throughout the summer, particularly striking great skua and gannet (*Morus bassanus)* (ironically, two of the species that had bucked the downward trend of most breeding seabirds, and were actually increasing in number in Fair Isle).

By June, a partial count of the Isle had produced a minimum of 229 dead great skuas, with many of these being adult birds from the breeding population. This represents a substantial proportion of the breeding population (which was counted as 535 apparently occupied territories in 2021). There were no counts available for mortality in any other species, but none appeared to be as badly affected as great skuas, whilst some (including Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*) appeared to totally escape the virus.

Restrictions placed on seabird monitoring by NatureScot and the British Trust for Ornithology resulted in a much reduced JNCC seabird monitoring programme carried out by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. Unfortunately, for the monitoring work that did take place, FIBO did not provide any data for this report despite repeated requests, other than to say that kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* had a productive breeding season.

There were a number of notable breeding bird records during the year, with the first Isle breeding record of common rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus)* and second of common redpoll (*Carduelis flammea)* both occurring in the Bird Observatory Garden. The lack of disturbance at the site will presumably have helped these birds breed, whilst the maturation of the planted vegetation in the garden will also have aided their nesting. The same is true of the pair of sedge warblers (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus)* that fledged chicks at a garden in the south of the Isle and was just the second breeding record for the Isle. Other interesting breeding records included cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus)* and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus)*, the latter of which fledged three chicks from a nest on the west coast. Unfortunately, no data was provided by FIBO for the 'Fair Isle wren' *Troglodytes (troglodytes fridariensis)* population.

As usual, several rare migrant birds were observed through the year, although there were no confirmed additions to the Fair Isle list at the time of writing.

Moth trapping also continued to turn up a number of interesting migrants, including the first Manchester treble-bar (*Carsia sororiat) a* for the Isle on 20th August. (*Blastobasis lacticolella)*, a micro moth that was initially introduced to the British Isles from Maderia is increasing in occurrence on Fair Isle and several records this year suggests that the species may be colonising from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Potentially of more interest was several species recording their latest ever dates, possibly an indication of climate change extending their flight season. A micromoth, (*Cadra cautella*) record on 2nd June 2021, was confirmed as a first for the isle, although it was likely to have been brought in with goods to the shop. Another insect that was a first for the Isle, was the lesser dung fly (*Minilimosina Florene)*, which was confirmed from a specimen collected in summer 2009. This presumed migrant from Scandinavia was also a first record for the British Isles.

Scouring of the beaches is regularly undertaken by Fair Isle residents for a variety of reasons and this often results in some interesting records of marine species washed up on the tideline. A notable feature this year was the number of by-the-wind-sailors (*Velella velella)* recorded in the summer during a period of sustained strong westerly winds. Among large numbers of common goose barnacles (*Lepas anatifera),* there were also three records of rough gooseneck barnacles (*Lepas pectinate)*, despite there being only two previous records for the Isle, whilst there were also several records of buoy barnacle (*Dosima fascicularis)*. The latter two species appear to be occurring with increasing frequency on Fair Isle, perhaps as a result of increasing sea temperatures.

Also of note was an adult flapper skate (*Dipturus intermedius)* washed up dead on 10th April. Offshore, there were several records of killer whales *Orcinus orca* and a basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus)* on 19th September that was estimated to be between seven and eight metres in length. Unfortunately, there was no monitoring of grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus)* pupping numbers again in 2022.

Fishing report from Stewart Thomson, Quoy

2022 has been an unusual year for fishing, however there seemed to be a reasonable number of sand-eels and small haddock and whiting fry being caught by the puffins and guillemots.

Cod have improved to the extent that they have been present throughout the whole summer, and while not in large numbers, they were a dependable catch.

Haddock. Reasonable numbers of small to medium haddock East of Buness and the Bight of Hesswalls, with a few medium sized whiting. Also present this season were an increased number of spur dogs and lesser spotted dogfish.

The ling population appears to be stable, with a few caught where targeted, mostly 3-5lbs, with the odd larger one at 8-10lbs.

The coal fish were totally absent from their normal grounds this year, and the very few odd ones caught were small, what we would call a "May Piltock", with no mature fish caught this summer at all. There were some immature "Sillocks" in the North Haven in August and September, but they were much larger than we would expect for that time of year. This would indicate that their breeding cycle has altered significantly, as much as 5 to 6 months judging from the size.

There were several shoals of sand eel in North Haven at the same time and again they were of different sizes ranging between 6 and 16cm which is also extremely unusual.

Mackerel appeared in small numbers in late June and remained present until late September. Good catches could be had on most occasions, and the fish finder indicated very large shoals in most of the normal fishing grounds.

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

7.1. Cultural heritage

7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage

Although not its primary function, the Fair Isle drMPA is proving a useful vehicle for supporting small-scale projects referencing and preserving the cultural history of Fair Isle. In early 2022, project funding was obtained from the Rural Communities Fund to commission a series of six short films narrated by island residents covering various aspects of Fair Isle life, on a variety of themes that included knitting, history and archaeology and art amongst others. These films were released via the MPA Facebook page, and the intention is also to place a series of QR codes around the isle that will allow visitors to download and watch the films whilst exploring Fair Isle. In addition, following the digitization of the Leogh Andrew Fishing Diaries in 2021, this data was then made available to two University of Aberdeen Masters students, who completed research projects in 2022 based on comparisons of historical fishing data with current fishing activity.

The Pund Knitting Bothy project, completed last year, has also started to bear fruit, with textile designer Marie Bruhat offering a successful series of knitting-based holidays on Fair Isle throughout 2022. Though primarily focused on teaching participants to complete a Fair Isle knitwear project during the holiday, these workshops also organize visits to other creative artists on the Isle and where appropriate involve guests in the traditional communal sheep gathers and shearing. Knitwear businesses on the Isle have remained active, despite the challenges of a lack of visitors because of COVID restrictions. Island resident and knitwear designer Mati Ventrillon attended London Craft Fair in 2022 to promote her business and showcase other Shetland artisan producers. The Isle also benefited from a visit by Shetland knitter Helen Robertson in late November, who ran a two-day open workshop for islanders that was well attended. This followed on from a wire knitting workshop run by Helen on the island in late 2021.

Another welcome development has been the number of visitors utilizing the Fair Isle Studio at Lower Leogh this year. The Fair Isle studio provides accommodation and workspace for creative artists for up to a month at a time. Many of those visiting this year spent some time on the island and were keen to get involved with community activities and share their work, which benefits both the island community and those visiting.

The Kirk project has previously been discussed in Section 2.3; with agreement from the community to retain the Kirk building within the community this provides a route for the conservation of items of significance within the Kirk, notably the stained glass and etched windows and other memorial items.

Notification of the George Waterston Memorial Centre and Museum renewal of accreditation process has not yet been provided. It was anticipated that this process would begin in late 2022 but appears to have been delayed until 2023 at the earliest by Museums Galleries Scotland.

7.2. Socio-economic context

7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

There was a slight rise in the number of visitors to the Isle during 2022, as all COVID-related restrictions were removed. In total 11 cruise ships visited Fair Isle, (a few others were unable to land due to poor weather or COVID outbreaks on board), and it was notable that more yachts were visiting Fair Isle than in 2021. The primary limitation on visitors to Fair Isle in 2022 has been a lack of accommodation. With ongoing work on the Water Treatment plant throughout the year and the commencement of works at the Observatory, which have at times involved significant numbers of workmen, much of the available accommodation on the Isle has been full and unavailable for tourists. There have been some daytrip visitors through the summer, but overall visits by tourists have been substantially lower than would be expected. Nevertheless, this has proved a successful season for accommodation providers and the many construction projects underway have provided a steady workstream for the local building services company, which employs a number of islanders on a part-time basis when workloads are high.

It will be interesting to see what impact the completion of the Northern Lighthouse Board self-catering accommodation at South Light has on the number and type of tourists choosing to visit Fair Isle. This project is certainly likely to be completed before the new Observatory and will presumably prove attractive as a lower cost offering, which is likely to appeal to groups of visiting birders. Another significant development for

accommodation providers on the Isle is the introduction of the Short-term Lets Licensing Scheme from October 2022, which will require all business providing short-term accommodation to have registered for a license by 2023. As the majority of accommodation providers on Fair Isle are small businesses, with only one or two rooms to let, usually on a B&B basis, any costs associated with obtaining a license are likely to be significant and may result in some providers withdrawing from the market. At present any assessment of impact can only be speculative, but it is expected that a clearer picture will emerge through 2023.

On a positive note, the arrival of a new headteacher and their family, and a new resident nurse after months of short-term cover, has been a boost to the island community. Work to create a sustainable work pattern for the resident nurse during the recruitment process has borne fruit and appears to be providing a better quality of life for the nurse. Unfortunately, the provision of nursing cover by NHS Shetland in those periods where the nurse is off isle for personal reasons or training, has been much less good, with limited communication when cover arrangements have changed at short notice or not been adequate. With regards to the availability of cover it is understood that NHS Shetland faces significant challenges with regards to staffing, particularly with the added workload created by COVID, but communication could certainly be improved.

The challenging economic climate has impacted Fair Isle, as would be expected, with significant increases in food and energy costs, with an additional impact in comparison with mainland UK because of the greater transport costs to the island. Wind and solar power generation on-isle has certainly limited price rises in electricity, but heating oil, gas, diesel, and petrol have all risen substantially in price. Households are undoubtedly protected to a greater extent than those elsewhere in the UK through the limited rents for housing. The ability of many islanders to produce meat, eggs and vegetables on their crofts has also helped offset rising food costs, but it should be remembered that not all isle residents have access to land. There is therefore certainly variation in the ability of households to cope with rising costs, and not all households reside in NTS properties so face much higher rental costs.

The challenges Fair Isle still faces by virtue of its location were brought into sharp relief in November, with a series of issues that have not yet been fully resolved at the time of writing. Another lengthy boat refit, because of the age of the Fair Isle ferry, was followed by a long period of poor weather in which there were few flights, whilst the ferry remained in Lerwick, making it very difficult to get food and other supplies to the Isle. At the same time Vodafone internet and mobile services, the primary internet and phone provider for many households, went offline, with the connection not restored for a week and a half. This had a significant impact on the ability of several isle businesses and remote workers dependent on internet access to operate. Preparatory work for an undersea fibre-broadband connection for the Isle was completed in spring 2022, but it is not clear when fibre-broadband will be available. This may well provide a more secure connection for the island when the network is fully installed.

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.)

In previous years, many visitors staying on Fair Isle would have been based at the Observatory guesthouse and received a welcome talk on arrival that provided a map of the isle and information on attractions and any local access issues, including staying safe when walking on the clifftops, crossing croft land, and entering ground-nesting seabird colonies. B&B owners do provide some information to guests, but this may not be on a consistent basis and may not include access issues. There were a few incidents involving visiting birders accessing gardens without permission and damaging fences in 2022. These issues can arise in any year but would usually be addressed by Observatory staff if birders were staying at the Observatory guesthouse through the provision of clear access information and responding to any complaints by residents.

The Observatory employs a ranger from April-October through a grant provided by NatureScot, and it is possible to book guided walks with the ranger whilst visiting the Isle. Other sources of visitor information on the Isle include noticeboards at the airstrip and pier and in the local shop, that give some information on the museum, local knitwear businesses and the location of toilets. There is also an interpretative sign located at the bottom of the airstrip road which outlines the history of the click mills at Finniequoy and the remains of the crashed Heinkel aircraft from the Second World War on Gilsetter. As noted in Section 7.1.1, it is hoped that QR codes providing access to the Fair Isle virtual tour films, will be distributed around the isle in 2023 to give tourists a further insight to life on Fair Isle. Another point of interest is the introduction of a Scottish Island Passport point at the Community Hall. This is part of a scheme to promote tourism across the Scottish Islands, with visitors adding a stamp to their island passport in the form of a unique brass rubbing.

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

There is no central collection of visitor numbers on Fair Isle, but it is evident that numbers increased slightly on 2021, following the removal of all remaining COVID-related travel restrictions. The peak tourist season onFair Isle is May-July, reflecting the main seabird breeding season (puffins are a major attraction), good weather and main holiday travel periods, which draw visitors to Shetland. Many visitors to Fair Isle will stay on the isle for a few days as part of a broader Shetland holiday and are largely those who are attracted by the combination of nature, landscape, history, and remoteness that Shetland offers. A significant number of visitors also visit Fair Isle specifically for its knitwear heritage or to trace ancestral roots and these visitors are tied to the summer months; Shetland Wool Week in September always sees an increase in visitors interested in knitwear. There is also a peak in those visiting for birding in September and October.

In 2022 visitor numbers were restricted by the availability of accommodation, so a greater proportion of visitors were day visitors from Shetland, those passing through on a yacht and cruise-ship visitors. Only a small number of birders visited the Isle, primarily in the autumn when more accommodation was available.

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

In April 2022 the school welcomed Shetland folk musician Jenny Sturgeon, who spent several days with the children helping them compose a song drawing on their experience of life on Fair Isle and its wildlife, which was then performed for parents. Writer and travel photographer Dougie Cunningham, on a residency at the Fair Isle Studio in the summer, also visited the school to speak to the children about his work and show some of his images. In August, Holly Paget-Brown and Rachel Giesler ran a biosecurity and invasive species workshop at North Haven for island residents, attended by all the schoolchildren, who were keen to learn about the different native species to be found around the harbour and to search for any evidence of invasive species. A final visitor of note to the school was Professor Masataka Kizuka, from Kyoto University, who was conducting research on small island schools. Whilst a substantial part of his visit was spent gathering information through conversation with the headteacher, he also took time to speak to the children about life in Japan and some of their cultural traditions.

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.)

Although not strictly research, it is important to mention the Fair Isle Wildlife Day that took place in July. This day included a rock-pooling session around Muckle Uri Geo (followed by an examination of finds under the microscope at the Community Hall), which generated several interesting records for the island including a third record for Fair Isle of strawberry anemone (*Actinia fragacea*) and evidence of further range expansion of small cushion star (*Asterina phylactica*). Attendees were also able to explore rock pools with the community-owned GoPro camera, take part in a training session provided by Observatory staff on carrying out shore-based cetacean surveys and in an introduction to the methodology for conducting puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) feedwatches, which are used as an indicator of food availability and quality. In addition, a new isle-based marine WhatsApp group has been set up by the MPA project officer and is open to island residents, visitors and MPA Steering Committee members. Its purpose is to allow islanders or isle visitors to report sightings of marine organisms, cetacean records, and any concerns with fishing activity around the Isle. This not only notifies residents and visitors of interesting sightings, but information will be logged to add to the island marine organism database, provide the Shetland NatureScot staff with direct reports of cetacean activity around Fair Isle and flag any issues of concern to the relevant fisheries organisations on Shetland.

Two University of Aberdeen Masters students completed research projects in 2022 based on data from the digitized Leogh Andrew fishing diaries and presented these to the MPA Steering Committee. A summarized report was provided to the Fair Isle community, and Fair Isle Marine Research was also provided with copies of the research.

The first Inshore Fish Surveys for Fair Isle were undertaken by the University of the Highlands and Islands (Shetland) in July 2022. In addition to the standardized surveys several Baited Remote Underwater Video systems were deployed on the seabed at various locations. The initial survey results were presented at the MPA Steering Committee meeting in November 2022, and there are plans to present the information on the Isle in spring 2023. The initial results provide some much-needed baseline data on the state of fish stocks around the Isle and have provided UHI scientists with information from a more oceanic location out with the usual Shetland inshore waters surveys. Subject to funding it is envisaged that these surveys will be repeated in future years to identify any trends, and a range of further research questions may well be developed to feed into other MPA research projects, particularly with regards to seabirds.

FIMRO directors attended a series of workshops run by the Highlands and Islands Climate Change Community Fund through 2022. The purpose of the fund is to match community groups involved in climate change related projects to academic researchers to deliver small scale research projects. Although it was decided that an application to the fund was not appropriate for FIMRO at this stage, Fund staff were keen for Fair Isle to continue to engage and to understand the process by attending the workshops, with a view to applying in future years.

Restrictions on entering seabird breeding colonies, ringing, and otherwise handling birds imposed by the British Trust for Ornithology in 2022 as Avian Flu took hold on Shetland meant that some projects originally due to go ahead in 2022 have been delayed. Seabird monitoring on Fair Isle in 2023 will depend greatly on whether there is a resurgence in infection when seabirds return in the spring.

8.2.2. Scientific publications

Garret, P., Becher, H., Gusarova, G., dePamphilis, C., Ness, R., Gopalakrishnan, S. and Twyford, A. (2022). Pervasive Phylogenomic Incongruence Underlies Evolutionary Relationships in Eyebrights (Euphrasia, Orobanchaceae). Frontiers in Plant Science 13 https://doi.org/10.3389/fpls.2022.869583

Lindsay, A., (2022). Fishing in the waters around Fair Isle: socio-economic implications and considerations. (Masters thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2022, pp 26).

Rademakers, A., (2022). Spatio-temporal changes in fishing vessel activity around Fair Isle, Scotland, and their implications for marine management. (Masters thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2022, pp 29).

Welch, M.D., Brice, D. and Riddiford, N.J. (2022). Minilimosina floreni Roháček and Marshall (Diptera, Sphaeroceridae) new to Britain from Fair Isle, Scotland. Dipterists Digest 29: 239-244.

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