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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity
(CO-DBP)**

Group of specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas

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Room 11, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**THE FAIR ISLE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
(United Kingdom)**

RENEWAL

Expert report by
Mr Joe Sultana (Malta)

*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

The European Diploma for protected areas was awarded to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area (United Kingdom) for the first time in 1985 and has been regularly renewed.

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the reserve.

Appendix I reproduces Resolution (2000) 4 concerning the renewal of the Diploma. In Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for possible renewal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

Fair Isle is one of the small islands of the Shetland group, United Kingdom. It is owned by the National Trust for Scotland, and is held in Trust for the Nation. The island presents a magnificent natural landscape hugged by a coastline, which is enhanced by dramatic geological features. It supports a small community with a long history of culture and traditions mainly linked to the marine resources. Fair Isle is also famed for its seabird colonies, which are of significant national and international importance, and which depend on the richness of Fair Isle's surrounding seas.

Fair Isle's small community, being committed to maintain and enhance the island's environment, and concerned at the steady and remitting damage to its marine environment, set up "The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) in 1995. FIMETI is a partnership between Fair Isle community, Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust and the National Trust for Scotland, with the community taking the lead. It provides a catalyst for urgent progress towards proper, sustainable management of the Fair Isle marine resource.

Fair Isle was awarded the Council of Europe's European Diploma, category C, in 1985. This was subsequently renewed in 1990 (at the 442nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies), and again in 1995 (at the 543rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

The Diploma was again renewed on 21 June 2000 until 21 September 2005 by the Committee of Ministers at the 715th meeting of the Ministers Deputies, after taking in consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma on Protected Areas on 21 and 22 February 2000. Six recommendations were attached to the renewal of 2000, dealing with:

- the establishment of a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters,
- the maintaining and extension of a ban on sandeel *Ammodytes marinus* fishing,
- the prohibition of ships carrying polluting cargoes within at least 16 km of Fair Isle,
- the traditional use by the islanders within 5 km of Fair Isle waters,
- the management plan,
- the maintenance of improvements to housing and infrastructures.

1.2 Terms of reference

The period of validity of the European Diploma awarded to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area is due to expire in the year 2005. It was therefore necessary to consider renewing it for a further period of five years. For this purpose, and in accordance with the regulations in force, an on-the-spot appraisal had to be carried out to judge whether the conditions of the site are the same as when the Diploma was awarded, or whether they have improved or deteriorated, as well as to assess whether the recommendations attached to the renewal were taken up.

The Secretariat of the Council of Europe informed the undersigned that he was entrusted with this task in a letter dated 27 May 2004.

1.3 Details of visit

The visit took place from 22 to 25 June 2004. I arrived on the island by boat (Good Shepherd IV), an excellent, regular ferry service, on 22nd and was met by Mr Nick Riddiford, at present Chairman of the Fair Isle Committee and Community Association. Mr Riddiford is an ecologist, an islander who was formerly the warden of the bird observatory. He is also the Project Co-ordinator of The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative.

I stayed at the Fair Isle Bird Observatory and returned back to Tingwall on mainland Shetland on 25th with an 8-seater Loganair plane. The latter and the Good Shepherd IV, provide a commendable, but relatively cheap, service. The Fair Isle Bird Observatory is run admirably by Mr Deryk Shaw, the warden, and his wife Hollie, who, together with a small staff, provide a pleasant, comfortable full board service. The bird observatory is indeed a great asset to the island and its community. It has an important role to play, not only in terms of research, but also in attracting visitors to Fair Isle.

I discussed various matters with Nick Riddiford, who also presented me with a detailed report, with Deryk Shaw, the bird observatory's warden, and with Ms Fiona Mitchell, a former Chairperson of the Fair Isle Committee and Community Association. During a tour of the island I met various islanders who were very cordial and friendly, and responded generously when I asked several questions about the community and the island's infrastructure.

I also had the opportunity to attend a social evening (a Fair Isle Thursday – see 4.1.1 below), which was held at the bird observatory, when we enjoyed Dave Wheeler's array of images of Fair Isle and its hospitable community, and were highly entertained by excellent local music and songs with relevance to Fair Isle or Shetland life by the Fair Isle family group Fridarey.

1.4 Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the persons mentioned above, particularly Mr Nick Riddiford, from whose report I lifted most of the information. I am also indebted to Mr Deryk Shaw and Ms Fiona Mitchell, for all the information they shared with me. I would like to thank Mr Alexander M Bennett, Conservation Manager (Highlands and Islands) of the National Trust for Scotland, who made available to me the annual report for the years 2002-2003, and I would also like to put on record my thanks to the members of the community on Fair Isle for their hospitality.

The compilers of the web sites of Fair Isle <http://www.fairisle.org.uk/>, and Fair Isle's Bird Observatory <http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/> should be congratulated for all the information therein, aptly entitled respectively:

- *"In reality virtually unforgettable! Welcome to Britain's most remote inhabited island! Fair Isle, an adventure getting here, sometimes hard to leave, but always an individual welcome!"*
- *"Escape to the tranquillity of Fair Isle- a unique holiday experience for the birder and non-birder alike"*

2. CONSERVATION SITUATION

2.1 Environment in general

The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) together with organisations and communities from north Norway and Swedish Lapland set up a network (*The SafeinHerit Network-SHN*) to undertake the environmental and cultural project *Saveguarding Our Heritage* under the auspices of the European Regional Development Fund with the FIMETI taking the project lead. The principal objective of the project was *Community development through sustainable resource management*.

When funding ended in 2001 the network retained its integrity and activities and amongst other things, continued with joint activities such as exchange of news and views by the schoolchildren via the internet.

The community development aspect of the SOH project was undoubtedly beneficial to the isle at a number of levels, including increased community cohesion, confidence and in enhancing awareness of the isle's cultural and environmental riches. On the other hand very little time remained available for FIMETI to move the isle's aspirations for sustainable management of the marine zone forward.

2.2 The Marine Environment

2.2.1 Implementing integrated coastal zone management

When the European Union adopted a recommendation in 2002 on implementing integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) in Europe, member states were asked to undertake "*an overall stocktaking to analyse which major actors, laws and institutions influence the management of their coastal zone*", which would enable them to develop national strategies for the implementation of ICZM. FIMETI responded to this exercise by completing questionnaires related to the stocktaking, was an active member of the Scottish Coastal Forum, and responded to a number of consultation exercises initiated by the Scottish Executive and other bodies in relation to the marine resource.

2.2.2 Oban Meeting

FIMETI also participated at a meeting in Oban (Argyll and Bute, Scotland) in August 2003, organised by Eleanor Scott, Green MSP (Highlands and Islands), to discuss, *inter alia*, the interests and aspirations of local initiatives and the way ahead towards marine national parks. The outcome of the meeting was discussed by the Fair Isle Committee (FIC) who unanimously endorsed the initiatives of petitioning for a Marine National Park status; and involvement in the Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment project.

This all goes to show how strong the ideals of the community of Fair Isle are towards the conservation of their Island's marine environment

2.2.3 Shellfish Management

A lobster stock pilot study in 2000-01 confirmed the concern expressed by the islanders over low levels of lobster stocks. But the idea to develop a protocol which would form the basis of a management plan for sustainable utilisation of the resource had to be put on hold due to lack of funding. Fortunately, there were no visits by lobster boats from outside the isle during 2002 or 2003, and there are indications that, under the sustainable take measures undertaken a small stock recovery of Fair Isle lobsters is beginning. However, a regulation issued in 2003 by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding the granting of future licences and the minimum levels of annual catches may disqualify the Fair Isle boat, thus threatening the retainment of a resource for the isle, as well as the maintenance of a traditional cultural activity

2.3 Flora and Vegetation

2.3.1 Vegetation surveys

Two surveys of the Fair Isle SSSI area were carried out in summer 2002 using the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) system. The study was extremely thorough, and extended to bryophytes and lichens, as well as higher plants. The study reported 29 NVC communities encompassing 50 different NVC sub-communities or variants thereof.

2.3.2 New plantations

Small areas on the island have been fenced with rabbit-proof fencing by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, with the permission of individual crofters, in order to plant shrubs and bushes as new habitat for birds.

2.3.3 New species

At least 3 new species for Fair Isle (a lichen, a speedwell and a sedge) have been discovered on the island. Population growth and range extensions have also been noted for some of the Island's rare plants. Fencing to afford protection to the Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* against sheep grazing was maintained.

2.4 Fauna

2.4.1 Birds general

Fair Isle excels in recording rare vagrants and the past years were no exception. In 2002 there was a breeding attempt by the Corncrake *Crex crex* a globally endangered species, apart from recording 214 species in all during the whole year. 2003 was a record year for sightings, with 215 species reported, including Scops Owl *Otus scops* and Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, both new for the island.

The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust publishes its excellent annual report regularly; giving a full account of the birds recorded during the year, while carrying also other interesting contributions.

2.4.2 Seabirds

The fortunes and misfortunes of Fair Isle's seabirds are entwined with the sandeels' saga. A lack of sandeels *Ammodytes* in Fair Isle waters generally results in a catastrophic breeding season. The 2002 breeding season, although not as disastrous as the previous year, was still far below average due to a dearth of sandeels. On the other hand the breeding season in 2003 was the worst on record, once again due to an almost complete absence of (suitably sized) sandeels. Species most affected are normally Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns but in 2003 every species apart from Gannet had its lowest or near-lowest productivity since monitoring began. The dearth of sandeels, and its effect on breeding seabirds, is not restricted to Fair Isle. The same situation has been recorded throughout Shetland.

The following table presents an outline of the breeding success, or otherwise, of Fair Isle seabirds in the years 2002 and 2003. Acronyms used: LTMP = long-term mean productivity; AON = apparently occupied nest; AOT = apparently occupied territory; AIA = apparently incubating adult. For further details one should see Fair Isle Bird Observatory's annual reports.

Species	2002	2003
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	fairly good year - best since 1995	Productivity 0.37 (LTMP = 0.42)
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	expanding breeding population	1,866 AON-17.7% incr. from 2002. Productivity 0.70 (LTMP = 0.70)
Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> ..	Lowest number of occupied nests but highest productivity	732 AON - 10.4% incr. from 2001. Productivity 1.33 (LTMP = 1.54)
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Lowest productivity - 0.16 chicks per nest (many pairs did not nest)	145 AOT - 2 nd highest but poorest productivity for 2 nd cons. year. Productivity 0.05 (LTMP = 0.85)
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Another poor year - 60 territories down 23% on 2001	55 AOT lowest since 1950s. Productivity 0.09 (LTMP = 0.56)
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Lowest AON + poor productivity but vast improvement on 2001. 0.48 chicks per nest. 0.06 in 2001	Breeding - 2 weeks late. 75% of pairs failed to reach hatching stage. Productivity 0.00 (LTMP = 0.86)
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	114 AIA (2836 in 2001). No chicks fledged in either season	80 AIA - lowest since 1985. complete failure for 3 rd cons. year. Productivity 0.00 (LTMP = 0.34)
Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	Consistently successful but fledging wt. of chicks suggest poor post-fledging survival	Lowest since 1990. 2 weeks late in laying and lowest productivity. Large chicks grossly underweight. Productivity 0.48 (LTMP = 0.74)
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	as per Guillemot above	Lowest productivity. Large chicks grossly underweight. Productivity 0.43 (LTMP = 0.62)
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Fledging successful at 0.74 chicks per monitored nest	Feeding rates lowest - 14.8% small sandeels, & 66.5% sprats; but Productivity 0.65 (LTMP = 0.69)
Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>	124 birds in breeding plumage. Decreasing. Favoured sites deserted (prob. due to feral cats)	157 birds in breeding plumage; but overall trend - a gradual decline

2.4.3 *Invertebrates*

New records and rare occurrences of invertebrates for the Island are discovered every year. In the two-year period (2002-03) at least 10 insect species (including 7 moths and 2 beetles) were firsts for the Island. In 2003 the island experienced some substantial, and impressive, influxes of moths and butterflies during the summer, including an influx of Magpie moths *Araxas grossulariata* for the third year running.

3. CULTURAL HERITAGE & SOCIO ECONOMICS CONTEXT

3.1 Environmental education

3.1.1 *Fair Isle Primary School*

A booklet entitled *Fair Isle – Our Island* was compiled by the Fair Isle Primary School children and Fair Isle Bird Observatory staff and published in 2003 with funding assistance from Shetland Wildlife. In the first part the children describe themselves, the island, how to get there, people's occupations, island activities, the bird observatory and Fair Isle's "green" credentials. The second part comprises individual children's descriptions of the isle's flora and fauna, attractively illustrated with their own artwork.

The school has been at the forefront of environmental initiatives, including recycling, running an environmental garden in the school grounds, recycling paper into brickettes and investigating alternative energy resources. In recognition of these efforts, the school received a Green Flag award under a national "eco-schools" programme, promoted in Shetland by the Shetland Islands Council's Environmental Services department. The school was awarded a Royal Society grant of £1050, to be used on equipment to undertake a scientific study of the freshwater invertebrates of the island. The school, which now has video conferencing facilities, has also forged links with schools in Norway and Iraq.

3.1.2 *Spring cleaning*

The Shetland Amenity Trust organises an annual spring cleaning in Shetland, and Fair Isle takes an active part drawing the participation of the schoolchildren and most of the adult population to give a spring cleaning to their island.

3.2 Social and cultural activities

The community organises a number of social and cultural events every year. In the past two years the island hosted its own three-day folk festival and organised an outstanding musical performance and a music-based festival. This year it is celebrating with the National Trust for Scotland 50 years of partnership and shared stewardship, a successful event with plenty of publicity for the Island.

3.3 Agriculture and Environment

3.3.1 *Agricultural baling plastic recycling*

The islanders saved their baling plastic from the winter and participated in the agricultural baling plastic recycling scheme organised by the Shetland Amenity Trust for the past three years.

3.3.2 *ESA scheme*

The Fair Isle Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme was the subject of an investigation in summer 2002 on Fair Isle to find out whether it was achieving its objectives. The study demonstrated conclusively that it was. The results of this investigation proved to be significant not just for the Island but for the future of agri-environmental schemes in Scotland generally.

3.3.3 *Arable crops scheme*

The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, in collaboration with Fair Islanders, the Crofters Commission, the National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, launched a project to address the problem of a marked reduction in area and number of arable crops in recent years. Crops

of oats, turnips and potatoes provide valuable wildlife habitat. The project is to encourage planting of traditional crops as a biodiversity measure to provide cover and food for tired migrants and resident birds and to create additional habitats of bird-watching value. Traditional crops are also important for their arable plant communities.

3.4 Fair Isle Electricity Company Limited

The Fair Isle Electricity Company has gained full local autonomy from the National Trust for Scotland. The Trust has transferred the physical assets, i.e. the infrastructure and equipment to the FIECo, as well as the remainder of the Fair Isle Electricity Fund. The FIECo is now truly an autonomous, island led initiative and a clear demonstration of the Trust's wish to see a greater degree of empowerment transferred to the island.

3.5 Housing Programme:

The main housing programme is nearing completion. The housing maintenance programme is underway and the National Trust of Scotland is trying to formalise its Planned Preventive Maintenance Programme to ensure that the islands housing stock remains in good maintenance order. During the expert's visit works on the restoration on the last remaining derelict house were being carried out.

4. EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

4.1 Informing visitors

4.1.1 Ranger Service

The Fair Isle Ranger Service is available for all visitors offering information, guided walks, regular slide shows and, jointly with the Fair Isle primary school, a programme of environmental activities. Other activities include receiving passengers from the frequent cruises, and special summer activities (e.g. night-time storm petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* ringing sessions). The Ranger Service enhances safe access round the isle through the maintenance of stiles and the provision of a few new ones. A large notice board in the bird observatory foyer gives local tourist information – including latest Island events and activities. The Ranger Service also produced a new series of fact sheets on birds.

Other activities include the 'Island Insights', a regular event in which visitors can participate and learn about a range of island activities, environmental and cultural, and 'Fair Isle Thursdays', an evening of entertainment based around a slide show and live music, hosted by the bird observatory with the main players being the islanders.

4.1.2 The John Harrison Memorial Fund

This fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to young birdwatchers between the ages of 16 and 21 to enable them to visit Fair Isle and to take part in the daily work schedule of the Bird Observatory.

4.1.3. Special Visits

In recent years there has been a marked growth in the number of cruise ships calling at Fair Isle, and in both 2002 and 2003 more than 10 ships unloaded passengers for short visits normally lasting about two hours. They are warmly welcomed by islanders and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory staff, and taken to see a range of Fair Isle's wildlife and cultural highlights. These visits are beneficial to the community through publicity for the isle and from sale of crafts and other goods.

4.2 Exporting skills and knowledge

It is amazing that such a small community on a 'faraway' island has the capacity to export knowledge, skills and expertise to faraway countries. Islanders have taken part in *Folklife Festival 2003* at the Smithsonian Institute, participated in a BirdLife International mission at a newly discovered site of the Bald Ibis in Syria; and were involved with international bodies and institutions in scientific field studies, training and management planning, and in environmental and cultural/community development projects in various countries in Africa and the Mediterranean.

4.3 Scientific Research Data Gathering

There have been various research projects, which have been completed, while others are still ongoing. These include, amongst others, a study on migrating Northern Wheatears and the collection of data on Arctic Skuas.

4.4 Scientific Publications

Following is a list of recent publications 2002-2003 (compilation by Nick Riddiford). Many of these were either based on seabird research or on the daily migration census studies.

- BULL, A. 2003a. The Siberian Rubythroat on Fair Isle. *Birding World* 16: 427-428.
- BULL, A. 2003b. Siberian Rubythroat, Fair Isle, October 17. *Birdwatching* Dec. 2003: 88.
- BULL, A. 2003c. Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle. *FIBO Rep.* 55: 123-130.
- CLARK, H. & SELLERS, R. M. 2001. Biometrics of the Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*. *Ringling & Migration* 20, 328-337.
- DELINGAT, J. 2003. Fair Isle, one of the last restaurants for Northern Wheatears (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) heading towards Iceland and Greenland. *Fair Isle BO Rep.* 55: 25-30.
- FAIR ISLE PRIMARY SCHOOL & FIBO. 2003. *Fair Isle – Our Island*. FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003a. *Arctic Tern*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003b. *Atlantic Puffins*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003c. *Gannet*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003d. *Migration and Migrants*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003e. *Northern Fulmar*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003f. *Storm Petrel*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003g. *The Auks*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- FAIR ISLE RANGER SERVICE. 2003h. *The Skuas*. Fact Sheet, FIBO, Fair Isle.
- HEUBECK, M. 2003. *SOTEAG Ornithological Monitoring Programme 2002 Summary Report*. SOTEAG Aberdeen.
- LINDLEY, J.A. & BATTEN, S.D. 2002. Long-term variability in the diversity of North Sea zooplankton. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the UK* 82: 31-40.
- MAVOR, R.A., PICKERELL, G., HEUBECK, M. & MITCHELL, P.I. 2002. *Seabird numbers and breeding success in Britain and Ireland, 2001*. JNCC, ESPB, SOTEAG; JNCC Peterborough.
- MAVOR, R.A., PARSONS, P., HEUBECK, M. PICKERELL, G. & SCHMITT, S. 2003. *Seabird numbers and breeding success in Britain and Ireland, 2002*. JNCC, ESPB, SOTEAG; JNCC Peterborough.
- O'HANRAHAN, B. 2003. *The vegetation of Fair Isle SSSI: An NVC Survey*. Final Report, Ecological Research Associates.
- RIDDIFORD, N.G. 2002. *The Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme in Fair Isle: an evaluation of its achievement of environmental objectives*. BSc. undergraduate thesis (unpublished), University of Aberdeen.
- RIDDIFORD, N.J. 2003. *Dolichopeza albipes* Stroem (Diptera, Tipulidae) on Fair Isle, Shetland. *Dipterists Forum* 10: 3-4.
- ROTHERY, P., HARRIS, M.P., WANLESS, S. & SHAW, D.N. 2002. Colony size, adult survival rates, productivity and population projections of Black-legged Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* on Fair Isle. *Atlantic Seabirds* 4: 17-28.
- SCOTT, W., HARVEY, P., RIDDINGTON, R. & FISHER, M. 2002. *Rare Plants of Shetland*. Shetland Amenity Trust, Lerwick.
- SHAW, D.N., HOLT, C.A., MAGGS, H.E. & DE PALACIO, D. 2002. *Fair Isle Seabird Studies 2000*. JNCC Report 332; JNCC Peterborough.
- SHAW, D. 2003a. Fair Isle Breeding Season 2002. Seabird Group Newsletter 93 (February 2003): 7-10.
- SHAW, D. 2003b. The Thick-billed Warbler on Fair Isle. *Birding World* 16: 206-208.
- SHAW, D. 2003c. The Savannah Sparrow on Fair Isle. *Birding World* 16: 423-426.
- SHAW, D. 2003d. Fair Isle reassumes control. *Birdwatch* 138: 49-50.
- SHAW, D. 2003e. Eurasian Scops Owl on Fair Isle, Shetland. *Birding Scotland* 6: 135-136.
- TYLER, G. 2003. Moths on Fair Isle 2002. *Fair Isle BO Rep.* 55: 116-120.
- WAINE, J. 2003. Update on survey of diseases and causes of death in wild birds on Fair Isle. *Fair Isle BO Rep.* 55: 19-21.

5. LEGISLATION/REGULATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 Changes in Legislation or Regulations:

The Scottish Law Commission published a *Review of the Law of the Foreshore and Seabed* in March 2003. It is not currently clear to what extent the recommendations of the report, if adopted, will impact on the management of Fair Isle's coastal and offshore zones. However, they signal a further move towards extending the planning law beyond the low water mark.

5.2 Site Management

5.2.1 Fire Services

The Fair Isle Fire Service, run by Highlands & Islands Fire Brigade and based in Inverness, and the Fair Isle Aerodrome Fire Service, run by the National Trust for Scotland and island based, have merged and now run as one operation. This has the benefit of utilising one fire appliance and allows for shared training of the firemen.

5.2.2 The Aerodrome

A new perimeter fence has been installed around the aerodrome in order to avoid sheep intruding onto the airstrip during flight operations. New mobile landing lights for use during emergency flights and in low level light or evening/night operations have been supplied to the site

5.2.3 The Roads

These continue to be owned and maintained by the Shetland Islands Council. Local people are employed to maintain the network. The National Trust for Scotland has recently installed a new cattle grid at the Scadden and upgraded the road to the South Lighthouse, which has now been adopted by the Shetland Islands Council into their island network.

5.2.4 Administration

Alexander Bennett, formerly Factor for the Fair Isle, has been appointed as Conservation Manager for the Region with a responsibility to manage the National Trust for Scotland's interests on the Island.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Protection of the Island's Marine Environment

One of the greatest assets of Fair Isle is its active and innovative community. The Islanders take every opportunity to develop new ideas for management and promotion of the island, most of which are linked to the natural and cultural heritage. It is a remote community, dependent on the natural resources of the Isle and the surrounding seas. The community strongly supports the protection of the Island's rich marine environment. It is therefore most unfortunate that the community's repeated calls to the authorities in this respect very often fall on deaf ears. The Community would like the Scottish Executive:

- To establish a pilot study, potentially under the 'Sustainable Scotland Marine Environment Initiative', which would evaluate the benefits to the community and other stakeholders of implementing a suite of management measures aimed at protecting the biodiversity, fisheries resources, maritime cultural heritage and socio economic values of Fair Isle's coasts and adjacent waters;
- To meet the aspirations of the Fair Isle Community that the waters around the Isle are managed sustainably by and on behalf of the Fair Isle Community and other stakeholders through the establishment of a Marine National Park or other appropriate mechanism.

The blame of failing to establish a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters, this being one of the recommendations of my previous report, surely does not lie with Fair Isle's community or the National Trust for Scotland.

6.2 Sandeels

One of the recommendations attached to the renewal of the European Diploma dealt with sandeels *Ammodytes marinus* fishing. It is worth noting that there is currently a complete ban on fishing for sandeels south of 60 degrees 10 minutes north (which is basically from Bressay in Shetland southwards). This came about through a voluntary agreement between the Scottish Natural Heritage and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Shetland Fishermen's Association but was then ratified and regulated under a licensing scheme by the Scottish Executive. The ban had to be reviewed this autumn (2004) but, based on the current situation, is likely to remain for 2005.

6.3 Ships carrying polluting cargoes

After the Braer oil spill in Shetland, the government had agreed to station a tug during the winter in the northern isles. An outcry from the Fair Isle's community when some four years ago, an oil tanker lost power and was very close to the Island in July, the tug, now aptly named "Fair Isle Emergency Towing Vessel", is now stationed on a permanent stand-by, leading an itinerant existence within and between the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

Ships with polluting cargoes passing through the Fair Isle Channel are asked to keep beyond 12 miles from shore. However this is not mandatory, only a recommendation. Recently an Automated Identification System has just been introduced. This is a transponder carried by all boats with such cargoes and provides information automatically to the Coastguard on course, speed and identification of the vessel, and also the cargo it is carrying. The Coastguard is therefore able to track the passage of every AIS vessel through the Fair Isle Channel. There is no mechanism, however, to force vessels to adhere to the 12 miles from shore recommendation or to take action against those that do not.

6.4 Fair Isle Traditions and Culture

A pilot study by the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative demonstrated that a comprehensive and binding management scheme is required to safeguard Fair Isle stocks of lobsters and other shellfish. The Fair Isle community accepts that tough measures need to be implemented and is prepared to make sacrifices through adjustment of islanders' own activities so that the Island retains this resource for future generations. Despite its efforts to maintain its lobster fishery, a new threat arose in 2003. A new regulation announced by Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs indicates that in future licences will only be granted to those demonstrating an annual catch record, which far outweighs the amount caught annually by the Fair Isle boat. Very often regulations although introduced for good reasons and applicable nationally, are unsustainable for areas such as Fair Isle waters. When this happens the traditions and culture of the island population are being totally ignored.

6.5 Fair Isle Management Plan

Fair Isle has a management plan, which is reviewed every 5 years. The new edition, which was due some time after my previous visit, seems to have been delayed. Prior to approval by the Management Group of the National Trust for Scotland, there is a process of consultation, starting with the local community, and including public authorities and the Trust's own specialists. The plan then becomes the basis of management of the island. I have been informed that the management plan had not been forgotten and a draft was expected in autumn (2004).

6.6 Housing and Infrastructures

Housing and infrastructures have improved. This improvement should continue to be maintained taking in consideration the developing needs of the community.

7. RENEWAL OF THE DIPLOMA AWARD

I have no hesitation in recommending the renewal of the European Diploma. Fair Isle's community deserves it. The authorities should match the community's enthusiasm and innovative ideas for the management and protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the Islands by fulfilling the community's aspirations and take in consideration the following recommendations:

- The establishment of a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters in consultation with the Fair Isle's Community representatives.
- The complete ban on sandeel *Ammodytes marinus* fishing should be maintained as long as the current disastrous situation of sandeels does not greatly improve.
- The setting up of a legal mechanism prohibiting ships carrying polluting cargoes within at least 16 km of Fair Isle.
- The traditions and culture of the island population should be taken into consideration when issuing regulations, which although they may be applicable nationally, are inappropriate if applied to Fair Isle waters.
- The management plan should continue to be revised every 5 years and all efforts should be made to implement all the items.
- Improvements to housing and infrastructures should be maintained.

APPENDIX I**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS****Resolution Dip (2000) 4
on the renewal of the European Diploma
awarded to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area
(United Kingdom)**
*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 June 2000
at the 715th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,
Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the regulations for the European Diploma of protected areas;

Having regard to Resolution (85) 14 on the award of the European Diploma to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area;

Taking into consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma on Protected Areas on 21 and 22 February 2000;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews until 21 September 2005 the European Diploma, awarded to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. A time-scale for action should be set providing for the establishment of a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters and within five years at the latest.
2. The ban on sandeel *Ammodytes marinus* fishing should not only be maintained in June-July but it should be extended to start from mid-April to end of August.
3. Voluntary or compulsory provisions prohibiting ships carrying polluting cargoes within at least 16 km of Fair Isle should be implemented.
4. The traditions and culture of the island population should be recognised and the premise of sustainable resource management should be promoted by returning Fair Isle waters within 5 km to traditional use by the islanders.
5. The management plan should continue to be revised every 5 years and all efforts should be made to implement all the items.
6. Improvements to housing and infrastructures should be maintained.

APPENDIX II

Draft resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Fair Isle national scenic area (United Kingdom)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (85) 14 on the award of the European Diploma to the Fair Isle national scenic area;

Taking into consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas on 28 February and 1 March 2005;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews until 21 September 2010 the European Diploma of Protected Areas awarded to the Fair Isle national scenic area;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. The establishment of a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters in consultation with the Fair Isle's Community representatives;
2. The complete ban on sandeel *Ammodytes marinus* fishing should be maintained as long as the current disastrous situation of sandeels does not greatly improve;
3. The setting up of a legal mechanism prohibiting ships carrying polluting cargoes within at least 16 kilometres of Fair Isle;
4. The traditions and culture of the island population should be taken into consideration when issuing regulations, which although they may be applicable nationally, are inappropriate if applied to Fair Isle waters;
5. The management plan should continue to be revised every five years and all efforts should be made to implement all the items;
6. Improvements to housing and infrastructures should be maintained.