

The background features large, flowing, organic shapes in teal, green, and pink. The teal shapes are primarily in the upper right and middle right areas, while green shapes are in the lower right and bottom areas. Pink shapes are scattered, including a large one on the left and several smaller ones on the right and bottom left.

# HARRAY & SANDWICK LOCAL PLACE PLAN

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## Introduction

This document serves as the Supporting Statement for the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan. The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan outlines the vision and aspirations of the local communities for the future development and land use within the area.

The preparation of this Local Place Plan was undertaken in collaboration with local residents, stakeholders, and community groups, including the young people of the parishes. This collaborative approach ensured broad input and representation from across the community.

The Local Place Plan and Supporting Statement are being submitted to Orkney Islands Council on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026, with this document version being version 1.

## Contact Details

The designated contact for the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan is:  
Harray and Sandwick Community Council  
[harraysandwickclerk@gmail.com](mailto:harraysandwickclerk@gmail.com)

This email address will be used for correspondence from the Council and will be recorded on the Local Place Plan register for public reference.

## Regard Given to the Local Development Plan

The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan has been prepared with full regard to the current Local Development Plan. The Harray and Sandwick Place Plan team reviewed the relevant policies, guidance, and designations affecting the Harray and Sandwick areas and incorporated these into the development of the plan. This ensures alignment with existing planning policies while reflecting the aspirations of the local communities.

## Regard Given to the National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF4) has been considered in preparing this Local Place Plan. The key themes of sustainable development, climate resilience, and local empowerment have been incorporated into the plan, ensuring that it aligns with national objectives while addressing local priorities.

## Regard Given to the National Islands Plan

The National Islands Plan 2026 has been taken into account in preparing this Local Place Plan. In particular, its overarching objective of population retention and attraction is reflected in the Plan's focus on supporting sustainable housing growth, strengthening local services, and enhancing connectivity within and beyond Harray and Sandwick. The emphasis on community wealth building, resilient transport links, and access to affordable homes aligns closely with local priorities around sustaining the school roll, supporting farming and small

businesses, and improving safe movement through Dounby and along key routes. By embedding these national island objectives within a locally driven framework, the Plan contributes to the wider ambition of sustaining vibrant, balanced rural communities while responding to the distinct character and needs of Harray and Sandwick.

## Cognisance and Incorporation of Community Aspirations into the Emerging Local Development Plan

The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan comprises a suite of spatial aspirations that the community would like to see delivered; some of these are tangible in terms of infrastructure or asset improvements; others concern capacity building within the community or establishing dialogue and relationships with relevant organisations and bodies for the benefit of the community.

To summarise the ask is that the emerging Local Development Plan will be cognisant of these aspirations, incorporating specific elements where relevant and making reference to other elements where possible.

The Vision Statement for the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan is:

*We want Harray and Sandwick to be places where families can stay, children can walk safely to school, businesses can thrive, and the landscape that defines us is protected for generations to come.*

*This Vision reflects the balance the community is seeking. It recognises that change is part of rural life and that growth is needed to sustain schools, services and businesses. It also recognises that change must feel proportionate, carefully located and rooted in local identity.*

*For families, this means housing that is accessible and achievable. For young people, it means opportunities to build or remain locally. For older residents, it means safe streets and services that are within reach. For businesses and farms, it means infrastructure and policy that support viability. For everyone, it means a village centre that feels welcoming and a rural environment that continues to feel open and cared for.*

*This Vision is grounded in daily experience — school runs, shop visits, community events, farm work, walks along familiar routes. It reflects a shared desire to strengthen Dounby as a vibrant hub while safeguarding the wider parish landscape that gives Harray and Sandwick their identity and economic basis.*

Four broad priorities were identified through the process of developing the Place Plan:

### **Movement and Safety:**

Traffic through Dounby, particularly around the school and centre, emerged as a key concern. Residents support 20mph enforcement, ongoing monitoring and evidence-led interventions to ensure safer crossings and pedestrian routes. On rural roads, damaged verges and vehicle speeds affect walking safety and comfort. The ongoing Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust “Getting Around Dounby” project provides a strong foundation for embedding

active travel, improved crossings and clearer walking routes within the village centre. Safe movement is closely linked to independence. Calmer roads and reliable transport enable children to travel confidently, support older residents to remain active locally, and reduce daily stress for families.

### ***Housing and Retention***

Housing is central to sustaining the parishes. Residents expressed concern about limited access to social housing beyond Dounby and Quoyloo and challenges faced by young people seeking house building plots. The community supports modest, locally-needed housing growth that strengthens the school roll and reinforces existing centres of activity. Expansion near the school and community facilities is viewed as practical and sustainable. Smaller clusters, including the concept of a “Hall hamlet,” reflect an ambition to reinforce community anchors. There is interest in exploring community-led serviced plots to support long-term affordability. Growth should remain proportionate, well-designed and respectful of agricultural land, landscape setting and rural identity.

### ***Public transport and digital connectivity***

Current bus provision does not fully reflect dispersed rural travel patterns. Residents support exploration of more flexible, demand responsive models capable of linking effectively with established corridors such as the X1. Improved connectivity is essential to employment access, social participation and independence. Digital connectivity emerged as essential enabling infrastructure. Patchy mobile signal and inconsistent broadband reliability affect businesses, home working and access to services. As communication systems become increasingly digital, resilient connectivity and power supply are critical to long-term sustainability.

### ***Vitality and Community Infrastructure***

Dounby plays a critical role as a shared hub. Residents want it to function as a welcoming, safe and connected centre. There is particular opportunity around the Smithfield Hotel, which is currently on the market. Community discussions identified this as a pivotal site within a wider cluster including the school, shop, bus stop, green space and walking routes. There is a clear desire to examine whether community acquisition of Smithfield could secure long-term influence over its future role. Any progression would require detailed feasibility work, appropriate governance and sustainable financial planning. The experience of community ownership elsewhere in Orkney demonstrates that such ambitions can be realised where robust preparation and capacity underpins delivery. The surrounding area offers scope to integrate movement improvements, green space enhancement, multi-generational outdoor areas and well-designed recycling provision into a strengthened village heart. The parish’s - Harray, Sandwick and the Old School at Quoyloo - remain vital anchors. Investment in energy efficiency, adaptable space and improved outdoor provision will support their long-term sustainability. The site of the former Corrigan Museum was identified as a heritage opportunity. Residents support exploring how parish heritage, farming traditions and local stories could be made more visible and accessible, strengthening identity and intergenerational connection.

A key theme running throughout the plan is to keep families in the communities and attract them back. Housing, transport, safety and services are tied together throughout the plan,

bringing one overall outcome – **a sustainable population with strong school rolls and active community life. There is a strong feeling to keeping the parishes alive and intergenerational.**

## Incorporation of the Existing Dounby Place Plan

During the preparation of the Harray & Sandwick Local Place Plan, the Steering Group and wider community agreed that the existing **Dounby Place Plan should be incorporated into this wider parish-level framework so that there is one coherent direction for the area.** The Dounby Place Plan already identifies priorities around village vitality, movement, safety and the role of Dounby as a shared hub. These themes were reviewed, updated where necessary, and embedded within the parish-wide Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan to ensure continuity, avoid duplication, and strengthen the strategic alignment of community aspirations across both parishes.

“There was agreement that the existing Dounby Place Plan should be brought into this wider parish-level framework so that there is one coherent direction for the area.”

This approach ensures that the emerging Harray and Stenness Local Development Plan can consider the combined evidence base for Harray, Sandwick and Dounby as a single, integrated geography.

## Community Support for the Local Place Plan

The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan has been shaped by extensive community engagement, including:

- Regular meetings with the **Steering Group** made up of community representatives, who shaped and directed the content of the Local Place Plan.
- **Questionnaire** – Feedback gathered from 138 respondents.
- **Meetings with Community Groups:**
  - Rainbows.
  - Guides.
  - Yoga.
  - Bowling Club.
  - Sandwick Young Farmers.
  - West Mainland Agricultural Society.
  - Harray SWRI.
- **Consultation with Local businesses and organisations** from a range of sectors including visitor attractions, agricultural, retail and accommodation to ensure comprehensive representation. Thirty-one businesses were identified.
- **Consultation with key stakeholder organisations** – Meetings with key stakeholders covering a range of key aspects such as economic development, tourism, heritage, housing, planning, health and care, education and transport.
- Use of **Social Media** to engage with the community during the development phase.
- Session with pupils at **Dounby School** as part of the World Heritage Site Programme Movement Study.
- **Statutory consultation** - formal engagement with Elected Members and the Community Council.

The feedback received highlighted strong community support for the Plan, with ongoing feedback, particularly from the Steering Group used to refine and finalise the Local Place Plan.

## Evidence of Compliance with Regulation 4

To comply with Regulation 4, the following steps were taken:

- **Councillors Consulted:**
  - Cllr Rachel King: [rachael.king@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:rachael.king@orkney.gov.uk)
  - Cllr Jean Stevenson: [jean.stevenson@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:jean.stevenson@orkney.gov.uk)
  - Cllr Owen Tierney: [owen.tierney@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:owen.tierney@orkney.gov.uk)
  - Cllr Duncan Tullock: [duncan.tullock@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:duncan.tullock@orkney.gov.uk)
- **Community Council Consulted:** Harray and Sandwick Community Council.
- **Information Notices Issued:** Copies of notices sent to Councillors and Community Councils.
- **Proposed Local Place Plan:** The version shared with consultees before finalisation.

These steps ensure that the Local Place Plan meets the statutory requirements and is ready for validation and registration by Orkney Islands Council.

# Appendix A: Local Place Plan

# HARRAY & SANDWICK LOCAL PLACE PLAN

**Two Rural Parishes. One Shared Future.**

A community-led plan for the future of two rural parishes and their shared hub



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harray and Sandwick are two distinct rural parishes in the West Mainland of Orkney, each with its own landscape, history and community networks. They are connected through Dounby, which functions as a shared hub at the centre of a tri-parish area, linking Harray, Sandwick and Birsay, and serving a wider West Mainland catchment.

This Local Place Plan sets out how the community would like to see the area evolve over the next 10–15 years. It reflects what residents value, where pressures are emerging, and how change can be managed positively.

Dounby plays a critical role in supporting daily life across the West Mainland, providing access to shops, services, healthcare, education and community facilities. Maintaining and strengthening this role is central to the long-term sustainability of the area.

The Plan identifies a number of key challenges, including road safety and movement, housing availability, loss of local services, and constraints relating to transport and digital connectivity. These challenges are particularly visible in Dounby, where infrastructure does not always match the level of activity and demand placed upon it.

Across all engagement, residents emphasised the importance of balance – supporting growth while protecting agricultural land, open views, heritage settings and rural character.

## Community Priorities

Engagement – including a detailed survey, Steering Group meetings, community and business discussions and youth input – identified five consistent priorities:

- Movement and everyday safety.
- Housing supply and community retention.
- Village vitality and community infrastructure.
- Public transport provision.
- Digital connectivity and economic resilience.

## Movement and Safety

Traffic through Dounby, particularly around the school and centre, emerged as a key concern. Residents support 20mph enforcement, ongoing monitoring and evidence-led interventions to ensure safer crossings and pedestrian routes. On rural roads, damaged verges and vehicle speeds affect walking safety and comfort.

The ongoing Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust “Getting Around Dounby” project provides a strong foundation for embedding active travel, improved crossings and clearer walking routes within the village centre.

Safe movement is closely linked to independence. Calmer roads and reliable transport enable children to travel confidently, support older residents to remain active locally, and reduce daily stress for families.

## Housing and Retention

Housing is central to sustaining the parishes. Residents expressed concern about limited access to social housing beyond Dounby and Quoyloo and challenges faced by young people seeking house building plots. The community supports modest, locally-needed housing growth that strengthens the school roll and reinforces existing centres of activity.

Expansion near the school and community facilities is viewed as practical and sustainable. Smaller clusters, including the concept of a “Hall hamlet,” reflect an ambition to reinforce community anchors. There is interest in exploring community-led serviced plots to support long-term affordability.

Growth should remain proportionate, well-designed and respectful of agricultural land, landscape setting and rural identity.

## Public transport and digital connectivity

Current bus provision does not fully reflect dispersed rural travel patterns. Residents support exploration of more flexible, demand-responsive models capable of linking effectively with established corridors such as the X1. Improved connectivity is essential to

employment access, social participation and independence. Digital connectivity emerged as essential enabling infrastructure. Patchy mobile signal and inconsistent broadband reliability affect businesses, home working and access to services. As communication systems become increasingly digital, resilient connectivity and power supply are critical to long-term sustainability.

## Vitality and Community Infrastructure

Dounby plays a critical role as a shared hub. Residents want it to function as a welcoming, safe and connected centre. There is particular opportunity around the Smithfield Hotel, which is currently on the market. Community discussions identified this as a pivotal site within a wider cluster including the school, shops, bus stop, green space and walking routes.

There is a clear desire to examine whether community acquisition of Smithfield could secure long-term influence over its future role. Any progression would require detailed feasibility work, appropriate governance and sustainable financial planning. The experience of community ownership elsewhere in Orkney demonstrates that such ambitions can be realised where robust preparation and capacity underpins delivery.

The surrounding area offers scope to integrate movement improvements, green space enhancement, multi-generational outdoor areas and well-designed recycling provision into a strengthened village heart.

The halls in the parishes, at Harray, Sandwick, and the Old School at Quoyloo remain vital anchors.

The site of the former Corrigall Museum was identified as a heritage opportunity. Residents support exploring how parish heritage, farming traditions and local stories could be made more visible and accessible, strengthening identity and intergenerational connection.

## A Spatial Framework for the Future

The Plan identifies a coherent spatial framework:

- Dounby as a strengthened shared hub.
- Smithfield Hotel as a strategic village site.
- The Community Halls as local anchors.
- Corrigall Museum site and coastal heritage assets as heritage and community nodes.
- Housing clusters supporting infrastructure.
- Safe routes linking homes, services and facilities.

By thinking spatially and planning proactively, Harray and Sandwick can support housing growth, strengthen independence and sustain the rural character that defines both parishes.

## Delivery and Review

Delivery will require partnership between the Community Council, local groups, Orkney Islands Council and external agencies. Some elements can be progressed locally; others will depend on planning decisions and infrastructure investment programmes.

Annual review by the Community Council will ensure it remains responsive and up to date.

This Local Place Plan reflects the commitment and practical insight of the community. It provides a clear, community-led direction for managing change with purpose.

# INTRODUCTION

Harray and Sandwick are two distinct rural parishes in West Mainland Orkney. Each has its own character, history and geography. Each has its own networks, and community groups. Dounby sits within a tri-parish setting, connecting Harray, Sandwick and Birsay, and functions as a key service centre for the wider West Mainland..

This Local Place Plan sets out how the community would like to see the area evolve over the next 10–15 years. It reflects what people value, where pressures are emerging, and how change can be shaped positively. It provides clear direction so that future decisions about land use, infrastructure and investment are informed by the people who live here. This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Place Plans) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 and has regard to the Orkney Local Development Plan, National Planning Framework 4 and the Orkney Community Plan 2025–2030. It is intended to form part of the evidence base for future planning, land-use and infrastructure investment decisions.

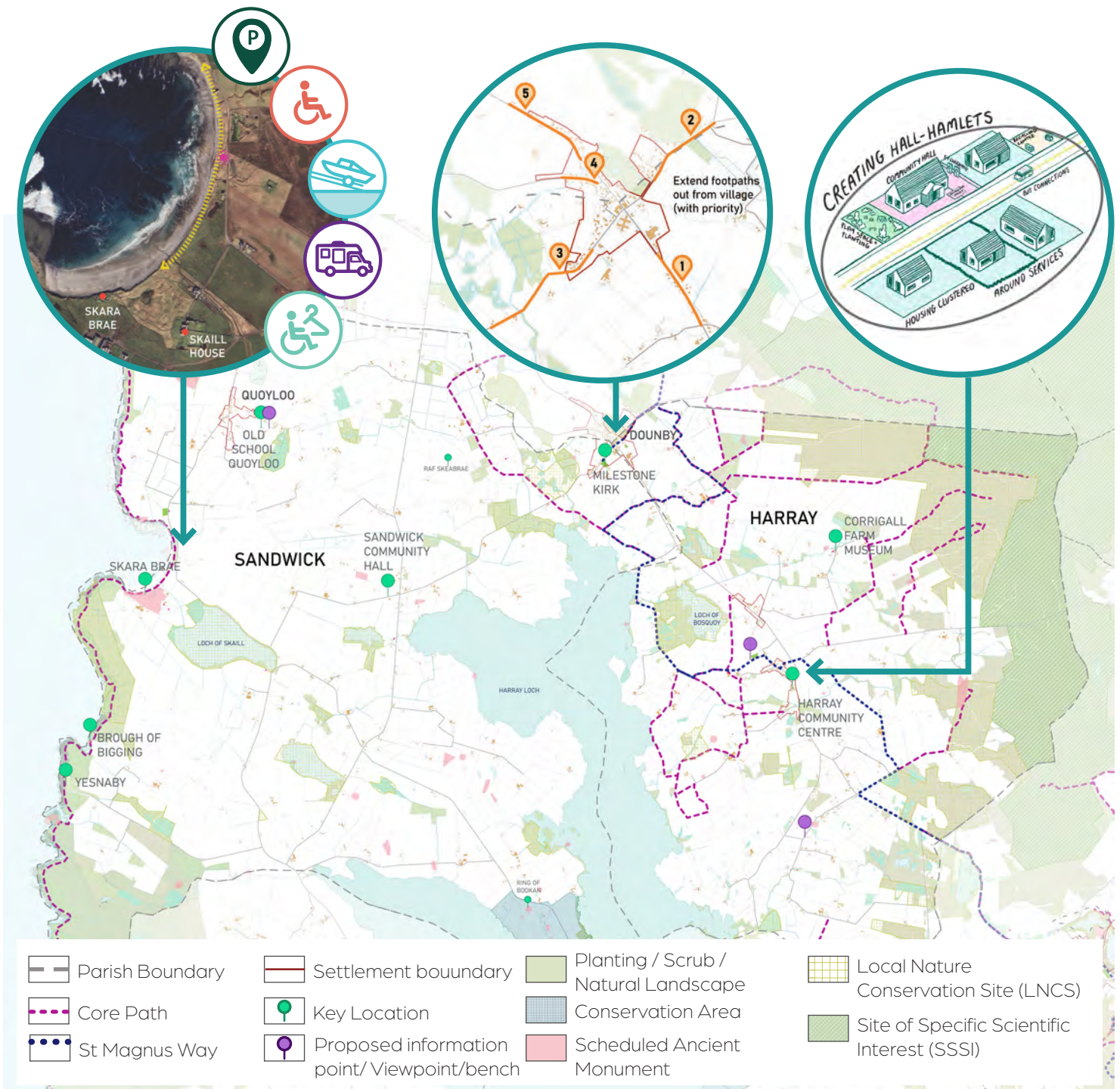


Figure 1: Map of Harray & Sandwick showing constraints and locations with inset maps for Dounby, Harray Hall and Skail Beach.

# ABOUT HARRAY AND SANDWICK

Harray and Sandwick are rural parishes defined by working land, freshwater lochs, long views and dispersed homes. Farming remains central to daily life and to the stewardship of the landscape. The fields, loch shores and open skylines are both productive and deeply valued. Informal walking routes, historic paths, heritage sites and strong social traditions contribute to a sense of belonging that was repeatedly expressed during engagement. Community life centres on parish halls, churches, sporting activity and seasonal gatherings, reinforcing connection across generations.

Quoyloo forms an important part of this wider geography. While smaller in scale, it has a distinct identity and its own patterns of movement and daily life. Residents there spoke about road safety, connectivity and the relationship between local roads and visitor traffic. Quoyloo illustrates the dispersed nature of settlement across the parishes and the importance of ensuring that planning decisions reflect the needs of smaller clusters as well as shared hubs.

Dounby sits at the heart of this geography. It is where children attend school, where people shop, where buses pass through, where sport

and activities take place, and where churches meet. It is also where movement, housing and service pressures are most visible. As the functional centre for both parishes, its vitality and safety are central to the sustainability of the wider area.

The wider Orkney context is equally important. The Orkney Community Plan highlights slowing population growth, an ageing demographic profile, workforce pressures, housing challenges and transport constraints. These island-wide trends are evident locally. Residents spoke about retaining young people, recruiting staff, sustaining volunteers and enabling practical housing growth that supports the school roll and local businesses. This Local Place Plan translates those wider demographic and economic pressures into locally grounded priorities for Harray and Sandwick. Dounby functions as more than a shared centre. It operates as an interconnected local ecosystem, where the surgery, care home, pharmacy, shops and community facilities collectively support daily life across a wide rural area. Its vitality is therefore critical not only to Harray and Sandwick, but to the wider West Mainland.



1. Skail Beach
2. View over Harray Loch
3. Corrigall Farm Museum
4. Yesnaby
5. Skail House

# HOW THE COMMUNITY SHAPED THIS PLAN

This Plan has been shaped through a detailed community survey, Community Steering Group meetings, open discussions, stakeholder engagement, activities with young folk and business conversations. The survey provided the quantitative foundation. Meetings and workshops with the Steering Group and others added depth, lived experience and practical insight.

Survey analysis showed variation in emphasis across age groups. Younger respondents placed greater priority on housing availability, digital connectivity and transport flexibility, reflecting the importance of work to support retaining young families and supporting employment. Older respondents emphasised road safety, accessible local services and the importance of maintaining independence within the parishes. Across all age categories, however, there was consistent support for strengthening Dounby as a shared hub and protecting the rural landscape that defines Harray and Sandwick. This intergenerational perspective has informed the balance of priorities within this Plan.

There was agreement that the existing Dounby Place Plan should be brought into this wider parish-level framework so that there is one coherent direction for the area. At steering group meetings, residents explored key local priorities including village vitality, traffic and safety concerns, housing opportunities and the future of transport provision. These discussions were constructive and detailed. Questions were asked about liability, staffing, licensing, governance structures and long-term sustainability. The approach was practical and measured.

Across all engagement activity, five consistent and evidence-based themes emerged: movement and safety, housing supply, village vitality, public transport and economic resilience.

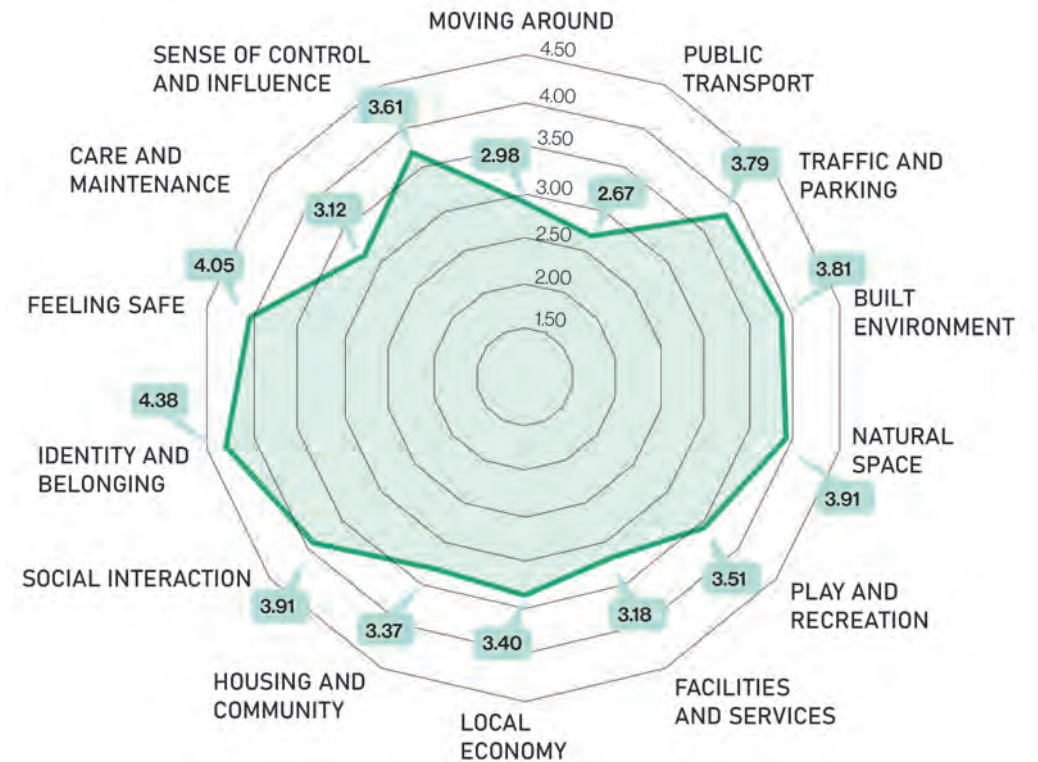


Figure 2: Spider Diagram from engagement analysis

# WHAT THE COMMUNITY VALUES

Residents spoke with pride about the strength of community life across both parishes. Active halls and community centres, well-attended events and long-standing traditions create a strong sense of belonging. From seasonal gatherings and sporting activities to informal social events, there is a clear commitment to coming together. People value knowing their neighbours, supporting one another and feeling part of something rooted and enduring.

Farming remains central, as an economic activity, and as part of identity and stewardship of the land. The fields, lochs and open views are working landscapes as well as places of beauty. There is a shared understanding that agriculture shapes both the economy and the character of Harray and Sandwick.

Residents also value the feeling of safety that comes from living in smaller rural communities. Children playing outside, familiar faces in local shops and informal conversations at the hall all contribute to wellbeing. Informal walking routes, historic paths and heritage sites form part of daily life and connect people to the landscape and to the past.

What emerged strongly from engagement is that Harray and Sandwick are not communities seeking reinvention. They are communities seeking to protect what works well and strengthen it for the future. The focus of this Plan is to build on that foundation and address the practical pressures that risk weakening it over time.

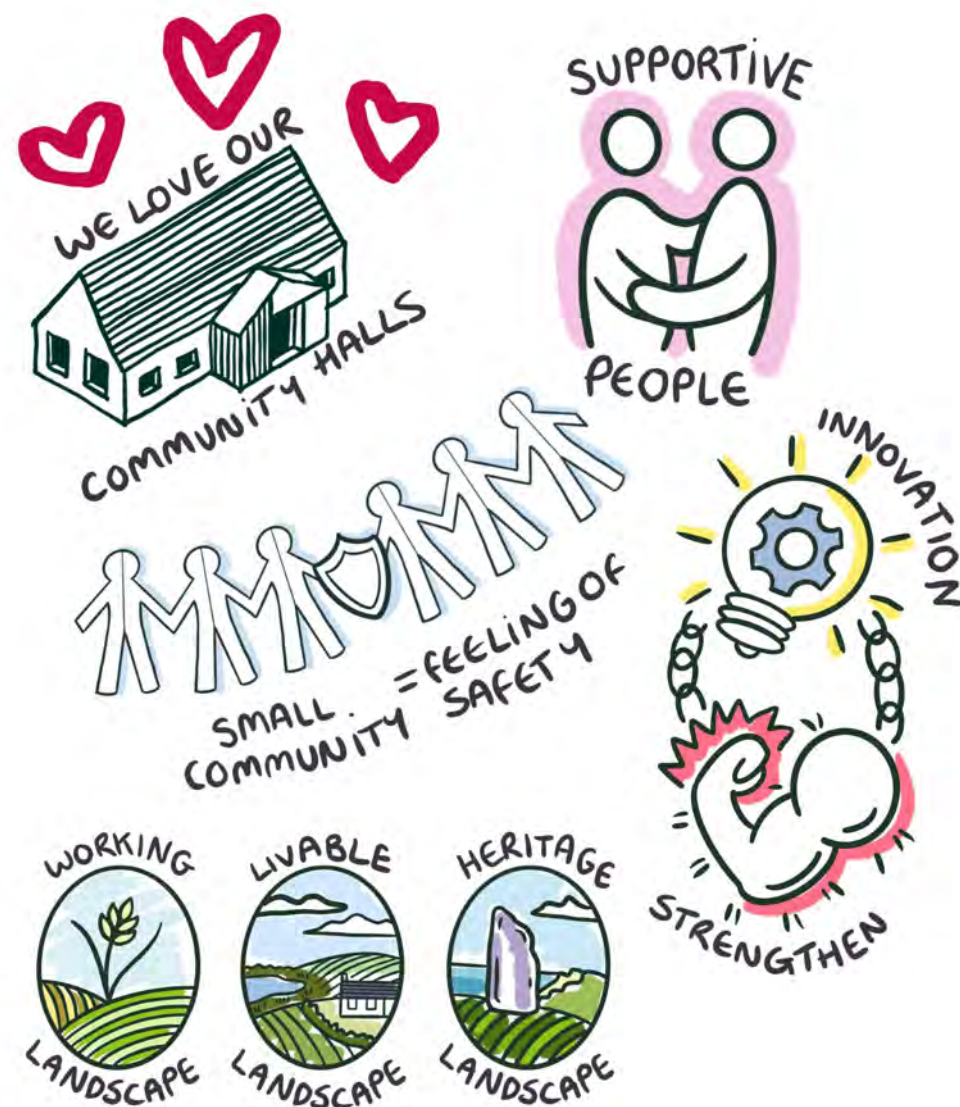


Figure 3: Diagram of community values following engagement meetings and survey

# OUR VISION

We want Harray and Sandwick to be places where families can stay, children can walk safely to school, businesses can thrive, and the landscape that defines us is protected for generations to come.

This Vision reflects the balance the community is seeking. It recognises that change is part of rural life and that growth is needed to sustain schools, services and businesses. It also recognises that change must feel proportionate, carefully located and rooted in local identity.

For families, this means housing that is accessible and achievable. For young people, it means opportunities to build or remain locally. For older residents, it means safe streets and services that are within reach. For businesses and farms, it means infrastructure and policy that support viability. For everyone, it means a village centre that feels welcoming and a rural environment that continues to feel open and cared for.

This Vision is grounded in daily experience — school runs, shop visits, community events, farm work, walks along familiar routes. It reflects a shared desire to strengthen Dounby as a vibrant hub while safeguarding the wider parish landscape that gives Harray and Sandwick their identity and economic basis.



The sections that follow translate this Vision into practical direction. They set out how movement can be made safer, how housing can support retention, how amenities can be strengthened, and how growth can be managed in a way that protects what people value most.

# MOVEMENT AND EVERYDAY SAFETY

Movement through and across the parishes shapes daily life. Whether walking to school, driving to work, cycling between halls, or travelling to Kirkwall, how people move affects how safe and connected they feel.

The strongest and most consistent message from engagement was concern about traffic speeds through Dounby. Residents described vehicles travelling quickly past the school, the shop and along routes that children use daily. Parents spoke about feeling anxious during busy periods. The introduction of 20mph areas is welcomed, and there is support for continued monitoring to ensure they are effective. There was interest in gathering clearer before-and-after data where speed indication devices are installed so that decisions are informed by evidence and shared transparently with the community.

Outside the village centre, the issue is different but related. Rural roads are narrow and exposed. Verges are often damaged where larger vehicles pass, reducing safe walking space. While improvement plans linked to coach routes and passing places are underway in some areas, residents experience the everyday impact of traffic along local corridors. Walking between houses, to bus stops or along informal routes can feel uncomfortable when vehicles pass at speed. During the summer months, coach tours add additional pressure to the road network. There is a strong community view that these vehicles are not well suited to the narrow rural roads, increasing safety concerns and reducing comfort for everyday users.

The priority is balance, that is roads that work for local people as well as through traffic and visitors. Safer crossings, clearer pedestrian routes, maintained verges and visible speed management all contribute to that sense of balance. There is also strong support for extending footpaths radiating out from Dounby, aligned with 30mph limits, to improve safety and encourage walking between homes, facilities and the village centre.

## Current Project: Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust – Getting Around Dounby

The Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust, working in partnership with Orkney Islands Council and the local community, is progressing the “Getting Around Dounby” project to improve everyday movement within the village. Building on earlier Market Green work and informed by a recent Mobility Audit, the project focuses on safer pedestrian crossings, improved bus stop access, clearer and more continuous walking routes, and measures to support appropriate vehicle speeds through the centre. The aim is to create a village environment that feels safer and more accessible for people of all ages, strengthening connections between the school, shop, green space and surrounding residential areas. This project provides a strong foundation for embedding active travel and safer movement within the wider spatial framework set out in this Plan.

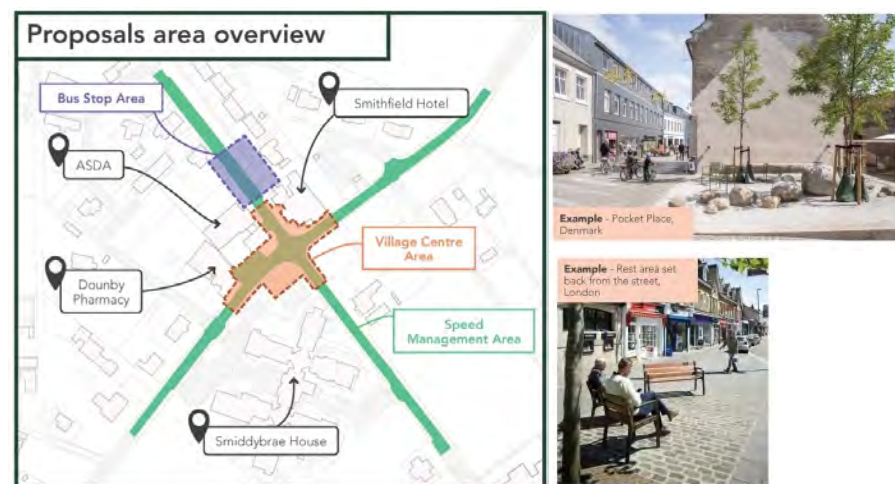




Figure 4: Map of key bus routes serving Harray & Sandwick

There is also a strong link between movement and independence. For older residents, safe walking environments support wellbeing, and quieter roads make it easier to continue accessing local services and facilities as mobility changes over time. For young people, calmer roads support confidence and active travel. For families, reliable and safe routes reduce daily stress.

Public transport is widely described as insufficient for a dispersed rural area. Many residents live too far from existing bus routes to use them easily, and services do not always align with working hours, school activities or everyday errands. For those without access to a car, this can limit employment opportunities, social participation and access to essential services. The issue is not simply frequency, but coverage and flexibility. The community supports exploring more responsive models of provision that reflect rural travel patterns and link effectively with established routes such as the X1 corridor. Improving connectivity is central to retaining residents and strengthening independence across all age groups.

This Plan supports a continued, data-led approach to traffic management within Dounby and along key rural corridors. It supports collaboration with Orkney Islands Council and Police Scotland to reinforce safe speeds around the school and village centre. It also supports the development of safer pedestrian infrastructure where practical and the integration of movement considerations into all future housing and land-use decisions.

Movement is not simply about transport. It is about everyday safety, confidence and quality of life.

Concerns were also raised about road surface quality, particularly along the route between Dounby and Sandwick Hall, where deterioration is reported to affect safety and comfort for everyday users.

# HOUSING AND KEEPING FAMILIES HERE

Housing is central to the long-term sustainability of both parishes. Without homes that local people can access, schools become vulnerable, businesses struggle to recruit and community life thins out over time. Residents were clear that housing is not simply about buildings. It is about whether families can stay, whether young people can return after study or training, and whether older residents can remain in the place they know.

There is currently no social housing beyond Dounby and Quoyloo, and young people face real challenges in securing building plots or navigating a planning system that is widely described as lengthy and complex. For some, the time and uncertainty involved can be enough to look elsewhere. This has implications not only for individual households but for the long-term resilience of the parishes.

The community supports modest, locally-needed housing growth that strengthens the school roll and helps retain families. Expansion adjacent to Dounby, particularly near the school and community facilities, is seen as practical and sustainable because it makes use of existing infrastructure and supports daily activity within the village. Smaller clusters of homes in appropriate locations are also supported, including opportunities around the halls. The idea of a "Hall hamlet" reflects an ambition to build gently around existing community anchors, creating small groupings of homes that reinforce rather than dilute social connection.

There was strong interest in exploring community-led serviced plots with mechanisms to support long-term affordability. Such an approach could allow land to be prepared collectively and sold at cost, with safeguards to ensure homes remain accessible over time. This reflects a desire to think proactively and creatively about housing supply, rather than waiting for external delivery.

Housing is also closely linked to independence. For older residents, the ability to remain locally depends on having appropriate homes within reach of services and on being able to move safely between home, hall, shop and social activities. As mobility changes over time, access to

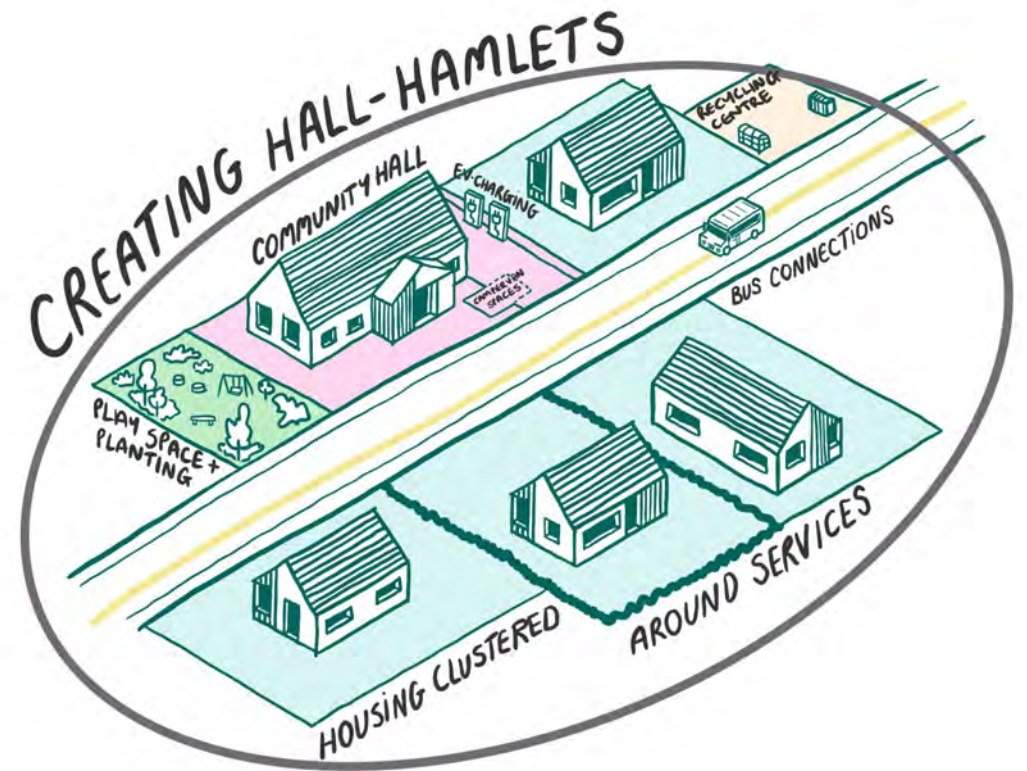


Figure 5: Concept diagram of Hall-Hamlets, with housing, transport connections, services, play space and tourism opportunities such as EV parking and Campervan facilities

nearby facilities becomes more important. Well-located housing supports continued independence and reduces the need for longer journeys.

Residents emphasised that growth should be proportionate in scale, well designed and integrated with infrastructure capacity. Prime agricultural land, open landscape and heritage settings are valued and should continue to be safeguarded. Development should respect views, topography and dark skies. New homes should sit comfortably within the rural character of Harray and Sandwick, strengthening the parishes without altering their identity.

In summary, the community supports housing growth that keeps people here, supports independence at every life stage and reinforces existing centres of activity. Managed carefully, housing can be a positive force for long-term sustainability and community resilience.

# COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The survey and community discussions made clear that infrastructure in Harray and Sandwick is not just about buildings. It is about whether daily life feels connected, welcoming and sustainable. Residents value strong social networks and active halls, but they also spoke about the gradual loss of everyday amenities and the impact this has on everyday life.

The absence of a café or pub in Dounby was mentioned repeatedly. Small changes in local provision can have disproportionate effects in rural areas. When informal meeting spaces disappear, the sense of energy and “buzz” in an area can fade. People described missing a place to gather casually, to meet after school events, to host visiting family or to hold small fundraisers. These conversations led to discussion about the future of the hotel and the possibility of community involvement if a viable and carefully structured model could be developed.

The emphasis throughout was on realism: any exploration of ownership would require a robust business plan, appropriate governance arrangements and long-term sustainability. More broadly, there is a sense that Dounby has lost some of its previous vibrancy as local services have reduced. The community is keen to see this rebuilt, strengthening the village as a place to live, work and gather. Opportunities such as the future of the Smithfield site, improved green space, and better integration of services and facilities form part of that wider ambition.

The parish halls at Harray, Sandwick and Quoyloo remain vital community anchors. There is an opportunity to strengthen their role further through improved car parking, small-scale EV charging and campervan hook-up facilities that could generate income, and exploration of additional revenue streams.

There is also a need to reduce operational costs through improved insulation, renewable energy solutions and other efficiency measures.

Outdoor space around halls could be enhanced to support informal play and community use, using play-led design and landscaping rather than large-scale equipment.

## Community Success: Milestone Kirk, Dounby

The development and continued use of Milestone Kirk in Dounby provides a strong example of community-led regeneration in practice. Delivered through local initiative, volunteer effort and partnership working, the project has created a new facility that supports worship, events and wider community activity.

Milestone Kirk demonstrates how new community infrastructure can be developed in a way that responds directly to local need while contributing to village vitality. It reflects the capacity within Harray and Sandwick to mobilise skills, commitment and collaboration to deliver valued facilities for the long term.

This experience provides confidence that future projects, whether related to village facilities, heritage or community assets, can be approached with the same care, structure and community leadership.



There is also wider potential in places such as the Smithfield Hotel and the surrounding area in Dounby. Residents expressed interest in thinking more strategically about how green space, footpaths, play areas, recycling provision and community uses and facilities, shops and services could connect more coherently. The aim is a more joined-up approach that makes the village centre more welcoming, accessible and practical for all generations.

Orkney Dance & Fitness Ltd has acquired the former Dounby United Free Church and is developing Thrive Studio Orkney as a health and wellbeing hub, delivering inclusive programmes and hybrid outreach to improve accessibility and reduce social isolation across rural and island communities.

Corrigall Museum was also mentioned as an opportunity. Residents see value in exploring how parish heritage, family histories and farming traditions could be more visible and accessible locally. A renewed heritage focus could strengthen identity and intergenerational connection, while complementing wider visitor activity linked to Skail House, Skara Brae and the surrounding coastline, and in turn supporting other visitor-focused offers across the parishes.



Figure 6: Dounby Village Centre improvement ideas sketch

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity in Harray and Sandwick is about more than movement. It is about independence, opportunity and resilience. For a dispersed rural population, physical transport and digital access are equally important foundations of daily life.

Residents were clear that current bus provision does not fully reflect the realities of rural living. Many households are located some distance from established routes, and timetables do not always align with working hours, school activities or healthcare appointments. For those without access to a car, this can limit employment opportunities, social participation and access to essential services. Existing services are primarily oriented towards Kirkwall, with more limited connectivity between West Mainland communities and into Dounby itself. The challenge is about frequency, coverage and flexibility.

There is strong interest in exploring more responsive models of rural transport, including demand-responsive services that could operate across Harray, Sandwick and neighbouring parishes. A flexible service capable of linking to the X1 Kirkwall-Stromness corridor, supporting and serving community events could strengthen independence across all age groups. A pilot approach could support long-term decisions to be evidence-based and sustainable.

Digital connectivity in Dounby and across the parishes remains inconsistent and, in places, poor. This affects businesses, public services and everyday life, limiting opportunities for remote working, access to services and economic resilience. Given Dounby's role as a service hub, these constraints are particularly significant.

Digital connectivity emerged consistently through survey responses and Steering Group discussion as a cross-cutting issue affecting daily life in Harray and Sandwick. In the community survey, residents repeatedly highlighted patchy mobile signal and inconsistent broadband reliability, particularly in the more rural parts of both parishes. For households and businesses operating beyond Dounby, connectivity can be uneven and unpredictable.

Reliable broadband and mobile coverage underpin the ability to work locally, run small businesses and reduce the need to travel to Kirkwall. Several respondents expressed interest in shared or community workspace in Dounby, and the reuse of existing buildings, noting that these ideas depend entirely on dependable digital infrastructure. Connectivity is therefore closely linked to employment opportunities and the long-term viability of housing growth.

Digital access also affects participation and resilience. Survey responses suggested that uneven connectivity and varying levels of digital confidence influence how well residents stay informed and engaged. For older residents and those less confident online, this can create barriers to accessing services or information.

The planned transition from traditional copper landlines to broadband-based digital voice services by 2027 further reinforces the importance of resilient infrastructure. As communication systems become dependent on electricity and internet access, power outages can disrupt essential contact unless appropriate backup arrangements are in place. For rural communities, such as Harray and Sandwick, connectivity must therefore be considered alongside power resilience and emergency planning.

The evidence supports treating digital connectivity as essential enabling infrastructure within this Local Place Plan. Improving coverage, reliability and resilience will support local employment, strengthen community resilience, improve access to health and public services, and enable fuller participation in community life.

Taken together, transport and digital connectivity form the backbone of independence. Safe and quiet roads, a denser public transport network, strong broadband and resilient mobile networks enable people to work locally, access healthcare, run businesses and remain socially connected. Without them, rural communities become increasingly isolated.

This Plan therefore supports continued improvement in both physical and digital connectivity. It supports exploration of flexible rural transport solutions, engagement with broadband rollout programmes, improved mobile coverage, and greater attention to power resilience for essential communication systems. Connectivity must be planned as a core utility for the long-term sustainability of Harray and Sandwick.



Photo of Dounby Bust Stop on West Mainland Show day

# A SPATIAL FRAMEWORK: STRENGTHENING OUR PARISHES

Across the survey responses, meetings and stakeholder discussions, a consistent spatial pattern emerged. Harray and Sandwick are thinking in terms of places — how key sites, routes and facilities connect to each other, and how investment in one area can strengthen the whole.

At the centre of this framework sits the role that Dounby plays for both parishes. It is the shared hub: home to the school, daily shopping, bus routes and many informal social interactions. Residents want Dounby to function well, with calmer movement, clear pedestrian routes, safe crossings, attractive green space and housing growth that supports the school and local services. The Bowling Club and associated recreational facilities also provide opportunities to strengthen multi-generational wellbeing.

Alongside this, there is an opportunity to support small, new and growing businesses within Dounby as the shared hub of the West Mainland. Community feedback highlights the importance of creating space for enterprise, including flexible business units, workshop space and opportunities for local services to establish and expand. Locating such provision within or close to the village centre would reinforce Dounby's role as a service hub, increase footfall to existing businesses and support



Photo of Smithfield Hotel from Junction of Dounby

a more resilient local economy. This could be explored in conjunction with wider development at key sites, including the Smithfield Hotel and surrounding area, ensuring that economic activity is integrated with community life.

Within Dounby, there is significant opportunity centred on the future of the Smithfield Hotel and its surrounding area. The Smithfield Hotel, which is currently on the market, occupies a prominent and strategic position within the village. Community discussions and the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust Mobility Audit highlight the importance of thinking about this part of Dounby comprehensively, recognising it as a key node within the wider parishes of Harray, Sandwick and Birsay.

The Smithfield Hotel sits within central Dounby and its cluster of assets that include the school, shop, main bus stop, green space and established walking routes. Viewed together, these create the foundation for a strengthened village heart and wider community beyond Dounby. With the Smithfield Hotel currently on the market, residents have identified that there may be an opportunity for a potential community acquisition which could secure the long-term future of the Hotel. There is a clear desire to examine this option carefully and constructively, recognising that ownership could provide greater alignment between the hotel's future use and wider community priorities. Any such step would require detailed financial appraisal, governance planning and partnership working, but the opportunity is recognised as significant. The future of the Smithfield Hotel is of key importance to the community in Dounby and the wider West Mainland. The West Mainland currently has a limited cafe, pub and visitor accommodation, especially when compared to previous years and the current offering in the East Mainland, Burray and South Ronaldsay. The Smithfield Hotel is recognised as a strategically important site within Dounby. The community has expressed strong interest in seeing the site contribute positively to village life and the wider economy.

Based on community feedback and identified demand, there is confidence that additional provision could be supported without undermining existing businesses across the West Mainland. The Local Place Plan supports exploration of options for the future of the site, including potential community involvement, subject to detailed feasibility, governance and financial planning.

Any purchase of the Smithfield Hotel would provide economic benefit in a number of ways. There would be the retention and development of local employment, as well income generation through local and tourism markets. The income that could be generated from a community owned asset could be reinvested in other community initiatives, such as housing, recycling, capacity building and other community priorities. This mirrors the model utilised by a number of island development trusts across Orkney that have income from community turbines.

## Learning from Elsewhere: Community Ownership of Stronsay Hotel

The community purchase and reopening of the Stronsay Hotel provides a recent Orkney example of how local ownership can revitalise a key village asset. Through structured governance, external funding support and a clear operational model, the hotel has been re-established as both a hospitality venue and an important social hub.

The Stronsay experience demonstrates that successful community acquisition requires robust feasibility work, appropriate legal structures and realistic financial planning. For Harray and Sandwick, it illustrates the level of preparation and partnership required should community involvement in Smithfield be progressed.



The ongoing Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust work provides a strong platform for linking movement, green space and community infrastructure in Dounby. Proposals focus on safer crossings, bus stop improvements, clearer pedestrian routes and speed management through the centre. This provides a strong platform for a wider spatial approach linking movement, green space and community infrastructure.

The core path network and the St Magnus Way are valued assets, however there is a perception that some sections are deteriorating. There is an opportunity to prioritise maintenance, improve connections into Dounby, and enhance signage and interpretation.

Strengthening these links would help bring people into the village and support local businesses, while also improving everyday access for residents. Future improvements should consider path design approaches that minimise long-term maintenance requirements, including appropriate surfacing, drainage and alignment suited to local conditions.

There is also an opportunity to improve wayfinding and interpretation across the parishes. This could include clearer signage for walking routes and local points of interest, alongside the introduction of interpretation boards at key community locations such as halls. Together, these measures would improve accessibility, strengthen sense of place and support a more connected network of routes linking community assets and heritage sites.

## Learning from Elsewhere: Community Stewardship of the Tomb of the Eagles

The community acquisition of the Tomb of the Eagles in South Ronaldsay provides an Orkney example of heritage stewardship at parish level. Through structured governance and phased investment, the site is being conserved, interpreted and managed for long-term sustainability.

The project demonstrates how community leadership, supported by professional expertise and external funding, can secure the future of a heritage asset while strengthening local identity and education. For Harray and Sandwick, this illustrates how a renewed future for Corrigal could be explored through partnership and clear long-term planning.



## Learning from Elsewhere: Bruckland Community Recycling, Northmavine, Shetland

Bruckland SCRAN Recycling Centre, operated by the Northmavine Community Development Company (NCDC), demonstrates how a rural community can build on the standard local authority recycling offer to deliver enhanced local value. Centrally located within the community, Bruckland provides a dedicated space for residents to reuse, recycle, and responsibly dispose of household items. Since opening in 2019, it has developed into a well-used community asset with clear environmental and social benefits. It also attracts visitors from a wider area, with many travelling to browse and repurpose items from the 'bruck'.

### What Bruckland Does

Bruckland provides a flexible, community-focused service including:

- Reuse hub – Residents can drop off surplus household goods, including furniture, toys, and tools, for others to take in exchange for a donation.
- Recycling and disposal – The site accepts materials such as scrap metal, waste plastics, and bulky household waste, reducing the need for long-distance trips to alternative facilities.
- Membership model – Users can opt for an annual membership (approx. £60) for unlimited skip use, or discounted volunteer membership, or pay-as-you-go access.

The facility currently includes three shipping containers and a portacabin housing a wide range of reusable items. Due to increasing demand, there are plans to replace these with more permanent shed structures. Between September 2022 and September 2023, the centre diverted over 9 tonnes of material from landfill.

Bruckland operates on a part-time basis, typically open two days per week (one weekday and Sunday), and is supported by a part-time staff member alongside volunteers. While not a full-time facility, this model balances accessibility with operational sustainability in a rural context.



Taken together, the Smithfield Hotel and the surrounding area offer a clear opportunity to strengthen the shared hub of Harray and Sandwick, improving movement, supporting community life and creating a Dounby that feels safe, functional and connected.

The concept of strengthening housing near existing anchors features strongly in community feedback. There is a clear and evidenced need for additional housing across the West Mainland, with current availability and choice not meeting the needs of local households or supporting workforce retention. This is particularly important in sustaining school roll, local services and everyday community life.

Expansion adjacent to the school and community facilities is viewed as practical and sustainable. There is a need to deliver a balanced mix of housing, including private, affordable and social provision, to meet a range of needs and support a resilient and sustainable population.

Around the halls, the idea of small 'Hall Hamlets' reflects an ambition to reinforce community hubs through modest clusters of housing that sustain activity and social connection. This approach supports proportionate, infrastructure-led growth that aligns with the character and capacity of the parishes.

The halls in both parishes remain key anchors. They host events, sport, seasonal gatherings and everyday meetings. Survey responses consistently highlighted their importance. There is support for enhancing their long-term sustainability through energy improvements, adaptable internal spaces and better-designed outdoor areas, including looking at mini play parks.

Heritage and visitor assets form another important layer of this framework. The closure of Corrigall Farm Museum represented a loss to the West Mainland heritage offer. There is an opportunity to consider how heritage provision could be re-established or reimagined, potentially through a facility that provides interpretation and information on the history of the parishes and West Mainland. A renewed focus here would

strengthen local identity and deepen intergenerational connection while complementing wider visitor activity.

Skaill Beach represents an important asset for both the local community and visitors, and there is an opportunity to enhance access and amenity at this location. This could include improvements to parking, provision of appropriate toilet facilities, and better connections between the road, the beach and access to the water. There is also potential to strengthen links with surrounding assets, including Skaill House and Skara Brae, to support a more coordinated visitor experience. Any future work would be progressed in partnership with relevant stakeholders and landowners, ensuring that improvements are sensitive to the landscape and local context.



Figure 7: Skaill beach plan showing aspiration for improved accessibility and facilities.

Skaill Beach represents an important asset for both the local community and visitors, and there is an opportunity to enhance access and amenity at this location. This could include improvements to parking, provision of appropriate toilet facilities, and better connections between the road, the beach and access to the water. There is also potential to strengthen links with surrounding assets, including Skaill House and Skara Brae, to support a more coordinated visitor experience. Any future work would be progressed in partnership with relevant stakeholders and landowners, ensuring that improvements are sensitive to the landscape and local context.



Photo of Skaill Beach from edge of existing toilet block and potential location of accessible access

The lochs are also highly valued, both for local use and for fishing tourism. Improving access, signage and promotion of the lochs would enhance both visitor experience and community benefit. At the coastal edge, Skaill House, Skaill Beach and Skara Brae form an internationally significant heritage corridor. The community supports improved path connections, orientation and well-integrated infrastructure that strengthens links with Harray and Sandwick while safeguarding landscape character. Thoughtful integration of visitor access can enhance local economic benefit and reinforce quality of place.

Movement ties all of this together. Footpaths, safer routes to school, calmer traffic through Dounby and on rural roads, and well-maintained verges connect homes, halls, heritage sites and green space. This will enable, for example, the school children to safely access the world around the school as part of a wider learning landscape around them. The 'Getting Around Dounby' project presents an opportunity to embed active travel within this wider spatial framework, making it easier and safer to move between key destinations.

Throughout engagement, residents emphasised that growth should be proportionate, well integrated and respectful of context. Prime agricultural land, open views and heritage settings continue to define the parishes. Future development should respect topography, dark skies and rural character.

Taken together, these places of opportunity form a coherent network: Dounby as a strengthened hub; halls as local anchors; Smithfield Hotel as an integrated village social space; Corrigan and Skaill as heritage and visitor nodes; housing clusters located to support infrastructure; and safe routes linking them all.

By thinking spatially and building on what people value, Harray and Sandwick can support housing, vitality and independence while sustaining the character that defines both parishes.



Photo of Skara Brae, Skail

# DELIVERING THE PLAN, PARTNERSHIP AND REVIEW

This Local Place Plan sets out a clear community-led direction for Harray and Sandwick. Delivery will depend on partnership, coordination and sustained commitment over time.

Some elements of the Plan can be progressed locally. The Community Council and local groups can support feasibility work, coordinate discussion around housing opportunities, explore options for community asset development, and advocate for infrastructure improvements. Community-led initiatives, particularly around more major facilities, halls, heritage, green space and local engagement, will continue to play a central role in shaping how places evolve.

Other priorities require collaboration with Orkney Islands Council and external partners. Movement and traffic management measures depend on continued partnership with Roads Services and Police Scotland. Some housing growth and land-use decisions sit within the planning framework and must align with the Orkney Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4. Improvements to public transport, digital connectivity and some other elements will rely on local and national investment programmes.

The Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust project in Dounby provides an example of how partnership working can translate community aspiration into design proposals and delivery on the ground. Similar collaborative approaches will be important as other elements of this Plan progress.

This Plan is intended to inform future Local Development Plan reviews and should be considered in relevant planning and infrastructure decisions affecting Harray and Sandwick. It provides spatial clarity on where growth is supported, where landscape protection is valued, and how community infrastructure can be strengthened.

Delivery will take place over time. Some projects will be short-term and incremental; others will require longer-term funding and coordination. The Community Council can review the Plan annually to monitor progress, identify emerging priorities and respond to changing circumstances. This will ensure that the Plan remains a live document.

Above all, delivery depends on maintaining the strong community involvement that shaped this document. The Vision set out in this Plan reflects everyday experience and shared ambition. Continued engagement will ensure that future decisions remain rooted in that same collective understanding.

The development of this Plan has been supported by a committed Steering Group alongside external consultancy input. To deliver its ambitions, there is a need to build and sustain local capacity within the community, including leadership, project delivery capability and organisational resilience.

# ACTION PLAN

The action plan sets out a phased approach to delivery, recognising that change will take place over time and will require coordination between partners, funding and community effort. Actions are grouped into short, medium and long-term priorities to reflect both early opportunities and longer-term ambition. Short term (0–2 years) focuses on quick wins, planning and early delivery. Medium term (2–5 years) reflects developed projects, partnerships and capital works. Long term (5+ years) captures transformational, infrastructure-led change that will support the long-term sustainability of Harray and Sandwick.

	THEME <b>Movement &amp; Safety</b>	THEME <b>Housing</b>	THEME <b>Community Infrastructure</b>
<b>SHORT TERM</b> (0-2 YEARS)	<p>Improve safety in and around Dounby, including extending footpaths aligned with 30mph limits and addressing rural road conditions and verge safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priority safety and path improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>Support delivery of modest, locally-needed housing in and around Dounby and appropriate small clusters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage on housing sites (inc. Hall Hamlets).</li> </ul>	<p>Strengthen sustainability of halls and wider community infrastructure through improved facilities, energy efficiency and potential income-generating opportunities. Enhance outdoor space around community facilities to support informal play and community use, and explore opportunities to develop a new, integrated approach to recycling and reuse provision in Dounby, potentially replacing existing facilities and drawing on models such as Bruckland to create a more accessible, well-designed and community-led space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review community facilities and recycling provision.</li> <li>Explore Bruckland-style recycling/re-use model.</li> </ul>
<b>MEDIUM TERM</b> (2-5 YEARS)	<p>Deliver footpaths, crossings and safety improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver footpaths, crossings and safety improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>See the development on mixed-tenure housing and small clusters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See the development on mixed-tenure housing and small clusters.</li> </ul>	<p>Upgrade Halls and community outdoor spaces.</p> <p>Develop integrated recycling/re-use facility proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade Halls and community outdoor spaces.</li> <li>Develop integrated recycling/re-use facility proposals.</li> </ul>
<b>LONG TERM</b> (5+ YEARS)	<p>Deliver a connected, low-maintenance path network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver a connected, low-maintenance path network.</li> </ul>	<p>Sustain housing delivery to support the population and workforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustain housing delivery to support the population and workforce.</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a community-led recycling and re-use facility.</p> <p>Support a resilient, thriving local economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a community-led recycling and re-use facility.</li> <li>Support a resilient, thriving local economy.</li> </ul>

THEME

**Dounby & Village Centre**

Strengthen Dounby as a hub for shops, services and community activity. Explore future use of key sites, including the Smithfield, as part of a coordinated approach to village centre improvement. Review access and movement within the village, including potential improvements to back road circulation, and building on the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust work considering movement within the Dounby.

**Transport & Connectivity**

Explore more flexible and demand-responsive public transport options linked to existing routes, and support improvements to broadband and mobile coverage, recognising connectivity as essential infrastructure

**Heritage & Natural Assets**

Explore opportunities for future heritage provision following the closure of Corrigan. Improve access to assets including Skail Beach. Explore options for enhanced facilities, subject to feasibility, including access to the beach and the water and working with partner and landowners to develop proposals.

**Core Paths & Wayfinding**

Improve connections between villages, community hubs and key assets through upgraded paths, low-maintenance design, enhanced signage and interpretation.

**Delivery & Capacity**

Build local capacity to support the delivery of projects and maintain momentum following the Plan.

Engage on Smithfield and village centre opportunities, exploring the business case.

Develop project ideas, working with community and stakeholders, explore funding opportunities.

Project development, engagement and feasibility work.

Audit core paths, signage and wayfinding.

Explore opportunities, and work with neighbouring West Mainland parishes to secure capacity support

SHORT TERM  
(0-2 YEARS)

Progress Dounby and key site improvements.

Expand flexible / demand-responsive transport.

Deliver Skail Beach access and amenity upgrades.

Improve paths, signage and interpretation.

Build local capacity to support delivery of projects and maintain momentum following the Plan.

MEDIUM TERM  
(2-5 YEARS)

Realise a strengthened Dounby village centre.

Long term plan, review and development

Delivery reimagined heritage provision.

Maintenance approach

Secure sustainable future for officer capacity to support ongoing projects

LONG TERM  
(5+ YEARS)

# CONCLUSION

This Local Place Plan reflects the time, thought and commitment of many people across Harray and Sandwick. It has been shaped by survey responses, open discussion, community meetings and the work of the Steering Group, who have given their time to consider evidence, explore options and refine direction. The strength of this Plan lies in that collective effort.

Residents have shared their experiences of daily life – what works well, where pressures are felt and how change could strengthen the future of both parishes. From conversations about safer routes to school and housing for young families, to discussions about halls, heritage and village vitality, the input has been practical, measured and forward-looking.

The Steering Group has played a central role in guiding the process, ensuring that evidence is considered carefully and that proposals remain grounded in what the community has said. Their contribution, alongside the many individuals and groups who engaged through the survey, discussions and workshops, has created a Plan that is both realistic and ambitious.

Harray and Sandwick are strong rural parishes with a shared hub at Dounby. This Plan sets out how they can continue to evolve in a way that supports independence, strengthens community life and protects the landscape that defines them. It provides a clear, community-led framework to guide future decisions and investment.

The work does not end here. This Plan provides direction, and its success will depend on continued partnership and engagement. The commitment shown throughout this process provides confidence that Harray and Sandwick will continue to shape their future together with clarity and purpose.



Photo of Harray Loch, West Mainland



## Appendix B Copies of consultation notices

Dear Councillors King, Stevenson, Tierney and Tullock

15th April 2026

### **Notification of Proposed Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan**

I am writing to inform you, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, that the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan is now available for consultation prior to submission to the planning authority. As a local Councillor representing the area covered by the Plan, we are providing you with a copy of the proposed Local Place Plan along with this notice.

The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan has been developed in collaboration with the local communities to set out a vision for the future development of the area. The Plan identifies key priorities and aspirations, with a focus on four consistent priorities:

- Movement and Everyday Safety
- Housing supply and retention
- Village vitality and community infrastructure
- Public transport provision
- Digital connectivity and economic resilience.

Across all discussions, residents emphasised balance supporting necessary growth while protecting agricultural land, open views, heritage settings and rural character.

Our aim is to ensure that community-led priorities are reflected in future planning decisions.

We are now inviting representations on the content of the proposed Local Place Plan. Comments, suggestions, or concerns can be submitted to [harrayandsandwickclerk@gmail.com](mailto:harrayandsandwickclerk@gmail.com).

The deadline for submitting representations is 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026. If you require any further information or would like to discuss the Plan in more detail, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan Steering Group

15th April 2026

To: Harray & Sandwick, Birsay, Firth & Stenness, Stromness Community Councils

Dear Community Councillors,

### **Notification of Proposed Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan**

I am writing to inform you, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, that the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan is now available for consultation prior to submission to the planning authority. As a local Councillor representing the area covered by the Plan, we are providing you with a copy of the proposed Local Place Plan along with this notice.

The Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan has been developed in collaboration with the local communities to set out a vision for the future development of the area. The Plan identifies key priorities and aspirations, with a focus on five consistent priorities:

- Movement and Everyday Safety.
- Housing and Retention.
- Public Transport and Digital Connectivity.
- Vitality and Community Infrastructure.

Across all discussions, residents emphasised balance supporting necessary growth while protecting agricultural land, open views, heritage settings and rural character.

Our aim is to ensure that community-led priorities are reflected in future planning decisions.

We are now inviting representations on the content of the proposed Local Place Plan. Comments, suggestions, or concerns can be submitted to [harrayandsandwickclerk@gmail.com](mailto:harrayandsandwickclerk@gmail.com).

The deadline for submitting representations is 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026. If you require any further information or would like to discuss the Plan in more detail, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan Steering Group

# Appendix C: Summary of community engagement feedback

## Introduction

Community engagement and participation has played a key role in the development of the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan.

A range of engagement methods were employed to ensure that the Plan was informed by as many voices as possible.

This Appendix provides a detailed summary of stakeholder engagement activities undertaken during the development of the Plan:

- Information about the Steering Group.
- Community survey.
- Events and community group meetings.
- Discussions with businesses,
- Discussions with external stakeholders.

## The Steering Group

Whilst the initiative had been led by the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan, the Steering Group has been both representative and diverse; the group established brought together individuals from a range of background and sectors.

The Steering Group involved representatives from the Harray and Sandwick Community Council, an Elected Member, representatives from Harray Community Association, a resident and a representative from Sandwick Community Association/local business.

Membership was as follows:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Members</b>
Harray and Sandwick Community Council	Mr D Hamilton, Mr G Brown, Mrs E Grant, Mr E Grieve, Mr C Kirkness, Mrs K Ritch, Mr S Tait, Mr K Groundwater.
Elected Member	Councillor R King
Harray Community Association	Mr G Sinclair, Miss G Petrie
Resident	Mr J Grant
Sandwick Community Association/Business Owner	Mrs K Norquoy

The group met regularly with the Consultant Team and played a vital role in shaping the Local Place Plan, helping to identify and develop the key priorities.

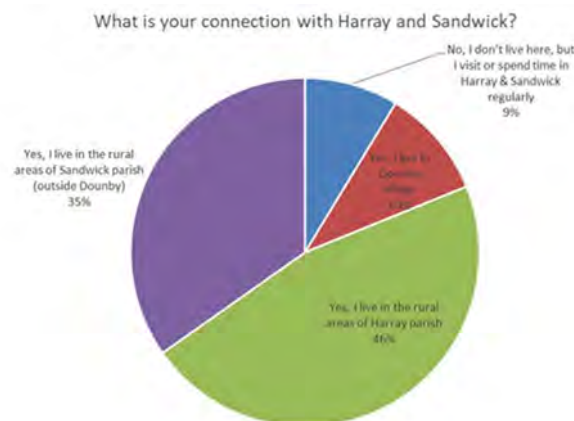
## Community Survey

A core element of the stakeholder engagement strategy has been the Community Survey, aimed at residents in Harray and Sandwick. The survey was designed to capture both overall perceptions and differences in experience across age groups and life stages,

providing a robust evidence base to inform the development of the Plan. The survey was promoted widely over a sustained period using multiple channels. This included targeted promotion through local social media groups, sharing via established community networks, and the use of posters displayed in local facilities.

This approach was intended to maximise awareness of the survey and encourage participation from a broad cross-section of the community. In total, 138 responses were received. Based on electoral register data, the combined adult population of Harray and Sandwich is approximately 1,143 people. The number of responses therefore represents around 12% of the adult population, which is a strong level of engagement for a voluntary, comprehensive community survey in a rural context.

The survey responses were drawn predominantly from people with a strong day-to-day connection to Harray and Sandwich. Over four-fifths of respondents (81%) live within the two parishes, with the largest proportion living in the rural areas of Harray (46%) and Sandwich (35%), and a further 10% residing in Dounby village. A smaller proportion of respondents (9%) do not live in the area but visit or spend time in Harray and Sandwich regularly. This distribution indicates that the survey largely reflects the views of those who live in the area, while also capturing perspectives from regular visitors who use local facilities and services.



The survey comprised a set of questions asking for feedback around the Place Standard themes. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix D.

Respondents were presented with 14 'themes' and asked to rate Harray and Sandwich in respect to each of these using a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means that there is very little improvement needed).

The results essentially tell us how the community perceives various aspects within Harray and Sandwich in terms of what works well and what doesn't.



Several themes score highly on average, suggesting these are perceived as relative strengths within Harray and Sandwick: Identity and Belonging (4.43), the highest-scoring theme, with a moderate spread of views, indicating strong shared pride and attachment to place. Feeling Safe (4.11) and Natural Space (4.07), both score highly, reflecting positive perceptions of the local environment and sense of safety. Social Interaction (4.04) suggests that opportunities for social connection are generally viewed positively.

A smaller number of themes score notably lower, highlighting potential priorities for further exploration: Public Transport (2.60), the lowest average score, indicating widespread concern about provision, accessibility, or reliability. Moving Around (3.16) and Care and Maintenance (3.18) also score lower than most other themes, suggesting challenges around everyday movement and upkeep of the local environment. These themes do not show significant variability, which suggests that concerns may be fairly consistently felt.

Variability is particularly important in understanding where experiences differ most across the community: Feeling Safe shows the highest standard deviation (1.88) and a very high interquartile range (IQR) (3.50), indicating strongly divergent experiences. While the average score is high, some respondents clearly feel much less safe than others. Play and Recreation has a high IQR (3.00), suggesting significant differences in how well facilities or opportunities meet different needs or age groups. Themes such as Traffic and Parking, Housing and Community, and Facilities and Services also show relatively high standard deviations (around 1.5), pointing to mixed experiences depending on location, circumstance, or life stage. These themes may benefit most from targeted engagement, as headline averages alone mask important differences in lived experience

Respondents also had an opportunity to provide feedback on each of the themes which have been used to shape the content of the Local Place Plan alongside the quantitative analysis.

## Events and Community Group Meetings

In order to inform the community as widely as possible about the development of the Place Plan the Consultant Team attended community group meetings.

The purpose of these consultations were to gather shared concerns, ideas and opportunities for improvements. A summary of key discussions are provided below:

### Rainbows

For the session with rainbows, child-friendly, accessible materials were created to help capture engagement. A copy of the document is provided at Appendix E. Pictures were used to represent different themes, and the children were invited to score each area using facial-expression symbols and simple drawings.



They were also encouraged to draw or talk about their favourite things to do in Harray and Sandwick, both as the area looks now and how they would like it to be in the future.

- Most children circled “good” for feeling safe and for “fun things to do”.
- Some marked “needs work” beside play or facilities, suggesting a wish for more or better play spaces.
- Drawings often showed parks, swings and outdoor play scenes.

### Guides

A document was created for Guides to help support engagement. A copy of the document is provided at Appendix F. This included different steps as follows:

- 1) Look at a map of the parishes and show places they love, places that need improved and places with potential.
- 2) In small groups, they were asked to have a conversation around this.
- 3) Six themes were identified in advance: homes and spaces, environment, things to do, getting around, voice and feeling safe and included. The Guides were asked to write one or two comments about each.
- 4) They were asked to “dream big” and note if one change could be made, what would it be?

Key priorities were:

- Play and recreation (parks, zoo, ice rink).
- Shops and amenities.
- Litter and traffic safety.

- Better communication and signage.
- Opportunities for young people and families.

## Yoga

Key topics discussed were:

- The community feels broadly safe, but deteriorating roads, especially Beauquoy and Brodgar along with blocked ditches, uncut verges, limited pavements, and it is considered that the rear of the Masonic Hall is unsafe, and created significant infrastructure concerns.
- Social life has been weakened by the closure of Smithfield Hotel, but that the local café, through Milestone Church, Harray Hall, harvest homes, and the annual tree-lighting event continue to foster community connection.
- Residents have chosen to self-fund Active Movers sessions after external funding ended.
- Local accommodation providers are struggling with rising taxes and registration costs, and campervans are viewed as damaging roads without contributing economically.
- Services remain limited, with inadequate recycling in Dounby, a shortage of public toilets at tourist hotspots, and poor public transport.
- While improvements to Market Green are appreciated, maintenance worries persist, there are no dedicated play parks beyond the school, and the closure of Corrigall Farm Museum represents a notable loss for heritage and education.

## Bowling Club

Key topics discussed included:

- The Bowling Club are exploring a wide range of upgrades from power, heating, kitchen improvements and security repairs to better lighting, storage, furniture and signage with the deteriorating garden wall flagged for council support.
- Improved facilities could help attract more groups and generate income, addressing past financial constraints.
- Wider community planning priorities include creating an additional playpark, addressing the lack of amenities in Harray and Sandwick, upgrading key infrastructure such as the Harray layby, improving access to Corrigall Farm Museum, and formalising Bay of Skaill carpark for caravans.
- Road safety concerns centre on speeding, hazardous junctions and poor verge maintenance, with suggestions for a consistent 40mph limit and concave mirrors where visibility is poor.
- Social ideas include establishing a community café, improving seating for food vans, reopening the Smithfield Hotel, and supporting interest in table tennis.

- It was noted that a variety of groups remain active across the area, though activities for young people are limited; the bowling club is recovering post-COVID, new mats are needed for indoor bowls, and Harray Hall and local clubs continue to host regular sessions and events.

### Sandwick Young Farmers

- The Sandwick Young Farmers group is made up largely of 14 to 30 year olds who often live outside the area.
- It was noted that there is limited affordable housing and an ageing local population.
- Young Farmers meet monthly and support the hall financially, but the hall's small size, lack of a stage, absence of playing fields, and no nearby playpark restrict events, intergenerational activities, and fundraising.
- It was noted that the wider community lacks social venues, toddler groups, and fitness options for young adults, and members strongly support the reopening of Smithfield Hotel.
- Infrastructure concerns include dangerous main-road speeds, poor-quality side roads, and tourism that increases traffic without benefiting locals.
- Employment opportunities are limited it was stated.
- It is considered that public transport is unreliable and doesn't cover where people live in a rural area.
- It was noted that shopping has shifted to Kirkwall and Stromness following the loss of the local butcher.
- The group would like a larger hall, proper playing fields, and more housing, particularly in areas like Quoyloo, to help retain young people.

## West Mainland Agricultural Society

- Flood lighting at the all-weather pitch was identified as a priority. The pitch is widely regarded as the best winter surface in Orkney, and the addition of lighting would support youth rugby and reduce the need for families to travel to Kirkwall.
- Concerns were raised regarding the lack of planning and housing opportunities in Sandwick. Participants highlighted that the majority of zoned land is held by a single landowner, with no new homes currently being developed, limiting local housing availability.
- Transport provision was described as inadequate, particularly during peak times and in relation to the night bus service. This prompted discussion around the potential for a community-run minibus model, potentially subsidised through daytime tourism use.
- Road conditions were identified as a significant issue. Yesnaby Road was highlighted as having deteriorated to the extent that cruise liners have ceased visiting, while other routes, including Voy to Skara Brae, Quoyloo, and Brodgar, were also noted as experiencing substantial wear and verge damage.
- From an economic perspective, participants noted that income generated by cruise liner visits rarely benefits the parish directly. This was discussed in the context of Dounby's role as a key service hub and the importance of local businesses such as Isbister's in Quoyloo.
- The loss of the Smithfield building was described as a major impact on the community. While there is some interest in exploring a community buyout, this is tempered by concerns regarding the building's condition and overall viability.
- There was also interest in progressing a live case study led by the group, including exploring potential future uses for the Smithfield building and surrounding park. This included discussion of the potential to utilise part of the pavilion as a seasonal community pub.

## Harray SWRI

- Concerns were raised about pedestrian safety within the community. Residents reported feeling unsafe walking due to fast-moving traffic, hazardous locations such as near the Brig and postbox, and poor road conditions on routes including Vetquoy and Brodgar. The development of new housing at Netherbrough was also noted as adding to these concerns.

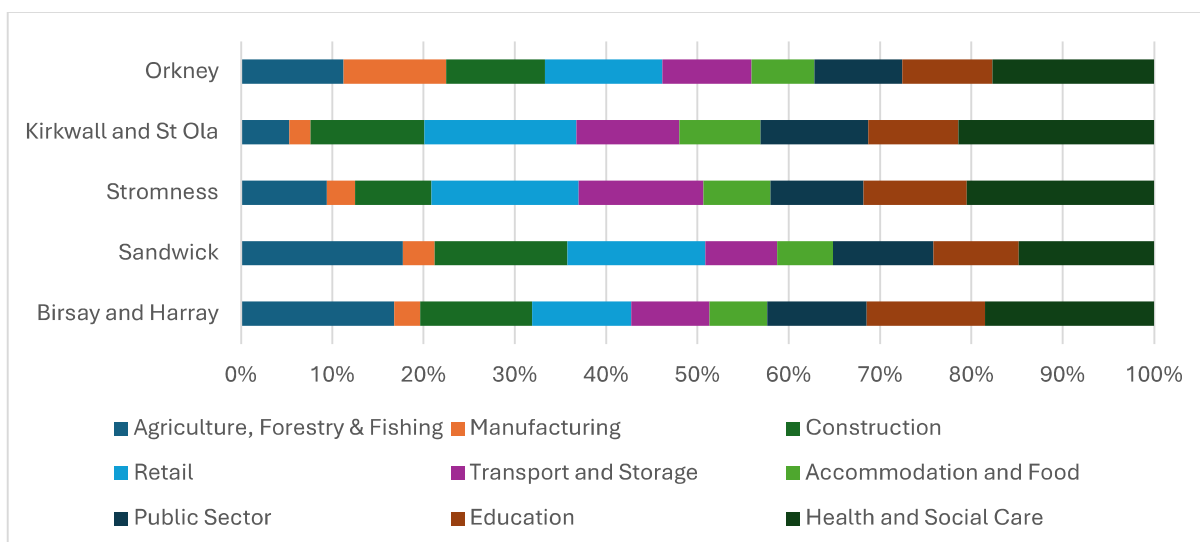
- There was strong interest in enhancing local recreational and active travel infrastructure. Suggestions included mapping and signposting walking routes, improving drainage on existing tracks, expanding children’s play equipment, and exploring fundraising opportunities for a dedicated playing field. It was also noted that the local gym is currently underused, with a lack of clarity around access arrangements.
- Harray Hall was highlighted as a well-used and valued community asset. Participants expressed interest in developing a community café offer to further strengthen opportunities for social connection.
- Views on transport provision were mixed. Bus services were considered adequate for those able to access them, however accessibility remains a barrier. Suggestions included the introduction of a night service and community minibuses. The park and ride facility was noted as useful in principle, but currently suffers from poor maintenance.
- The closure of Corrigall Farm Museum and the sale of St Michael’s Kirk were both highlighted as losses to the community, with concern expressed about the impact on local heritage and identity. *(Since the time of meeting Orkney Dance & Fitness Ltd has recently acquired the former Dounby United Free Church and is progressing plans to develop Thrive Studio Orkney as a health and wellbeing hub, supporting inclusive, community-led programmes, outreach across rural and island communities, and improved access through both in-person and livestream provision, with a focus on wellbeing, accessibility and reducing social isolation.)*
- In terms of local amenities, it was noted that most shopping is undertaken in Kirkwall or Stromness. However, the coffee van and Merkister Hotel were identified as valued local assets that contribute positively to community life.
- The loss of the Smithfield Hotel was also noted, with participants highlighting its previous role within the community.

## Businesses Engagement

### *Overview of economic sectors in Harray and Sandwick*

According to the 2022 Census there were just over a thousand residents in employment between the ages of 16 and 74 across the parishes of Sandwick (464) and Harray & Birsay (715). The Census also reports 506 residents within Dounby in employment. The working population makes up around 10% of Orkney’s labour market.

Economic activity is largely aligned with that across the rest of Orkney; agriculture accounts for around 13% of employment, compared to 9% across Orkney. Other key sectors comprise the public sector, education and social and health care, accounting for around 30% of all employment in the area. Construction and retail account for around 10% of the labour market respectively.



Source: Scottish Government 2022 Census.

There is a mix of businesses located in Dounby, although in recent years some have closed or reduced their operation, such as the Smithfield Hotel and the Dounby Butcher. There remains a mix of business activity including a busy retail outlet (Asda), craft shop, bathroom showroom, a Post Office and Pharmacy. Other key employers include the Smiddybrae Care Home and Dounby School.

There are multiple businesses scattered outside of any settlements, including tourist attractions and businesses (such as the Harry Potter, Skail House, Skara Brae, and the Orkney Distillery), farms, self-employed tradesmen and accommodation providers.

In Quoyloo, the Isbister Brothers operate several businesses including a shop, IT technical support, haulage and garage facilities, a major employer for the area.

While there is a base of businesses in Dounby, many residents commute to Kirkwall for employment; it is likely that many of these jobs are related to public services, health or education provision.

### *Discussions with businesses*

A total of 31 businesses or organisations based in Harray or Sandwick were contacted and invited to participate in a discussion regarding the development of the Place Plan. These were spread across a range of sectors, with a view to obtaining a broad view from all different types of business.

Sector	Number contacted
Agriculture	8
Tourism	4
Retail	5
Trades (e.g. plumbing, engineering, etc)	3
Community / Care	2
Accommodation	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

Discussions were carried out either in-person or by telephone and explored the following:

- What are the key issues and constraints for your business in Harray / Sandwich?
- What are the key opportunities for Harray / Sandwich?

Discussions held include:

- Skail House.
- Isbister Brothers.
- Asda.
- Dounby Post Office.
- Dounby Pharmacy.
- Hyndland Farm.

Key points raised by businesses included the following:

### **Tourism:**

Skail Beach was identified as an underutilised asset within the area. Participants highlighted the need to upgrade toilet facilities to improve both local use and the visitor experience.

To better support tourism, there was recognition of the need for additional infrastructure, including more campsites and campervan hook-up facilities.

Participants noted a lack of accessible spaces for families, particularly places where children can play both indoors and outdoors. At present, provision is limited, with the nearest soft play facilities located in Kirkwall.

Limited signage at key entry points was also raised as an issue, particularly on arrival into Quoyloo, where improved wayfinding could enhance both visitor orientation and local visibility.

### **Planning, housing and economic development:**

Harray and Sandwich were recognised as strong agricultural areas, benefiting from fertile land and good access to supplies and services, which continue to support the sector locally.

However, there is an identified need for affordable building sites, alongside anecdotal evidence of challenges within the planning system. This includes difficulties in securing permission for agricultural development, such as general-purpose sheds, which may be constraining sector growth and diversification.

Dounby's role as a local centre was discussed in the context of competition with Kirkwall. Participants noted that the wider range of services and activities available in

Kirkwall makes it a more attractive place to live, reinforcing existing population trends.

Concerns were also raised about the sustainability of Dounby's local economy, particularly in relation to shop closures and a lack of cafés and social spaces. Suggestions included the potential value of a charity shop and a broader question around what measures could be introduced to incentivise increased business activity within the village.

### **Transport & infrastructure:**

Road condition issues were highlighted, with potholes and areas of subsidence identified as ongoing concerns affecting both safety and accessibility.

A significant traffic and safety issue was raised in relation to the Asda site in Dounby. Participants reported that HGVs regularly reverse into the car park, creating conflict with vehicles accessing fuel and those attempting to park. It was noted that adjacent waste ground could present an opportunity to reconfigure the layout and provide a safer, more effective parking solution.

Public transport was recognised as a valuable service, particularly the late evening buses. However, there was discussion around whether route adjustments could be explored, including the potential for Dounby to be prioritised as the first drop-off, to better meet local needs.

Participants also noted that there is strong local knowledge of walking and circular routes that are not currently mapped or formally promoted, presenting an opportunity to enhance active travel and recreation through improved documentation and signage.

Issues with broadband connectivity were also highlighted, with concerns about reliability and performance impacting residents and businesses.

### **Other:**

It was noted that the Community Council currently has a relatively low profile within the community, with limited visibility of its role and activities.

Participants also highlighted a decline in attendance at community events, raising concerns about levels of engagement and participation across the area.

#### *Snapshot of specific business discussions*

A locally significant rural business was highlighted as an important employer and service provider within the area, supporting a wide range of activities that are valued both locally and across Orkney. This includes the provision of retail, fuel, transport, and services that are particularly important to the agriculture sector, alongside other essential goods and services.

Participants noted a number of pressures that may affect the long-term viability of such businesses. Rising operating costs, including increases in business rates and labour costs, were identified as key challenges.

There was also discussion around barriers within the planning system that may limit opportunities for business development and diversification. In particular, difficulties in securing permission for uses that could provide important services at an island-wide level were highlighted, with wider implications for resilience and service provision.

Infrastructure constraints were also noted, including issues with water supply affecting operational activities, as well as concerns regarding digital connectivity, particularly fibre access.

More broadly, changes within the agriculture sector, including reduced availability of grant funding, were identified as having knock-on effects for linked local businesses.

Road conditions were again highlighted as a significant issue, with subsidence, potholes and drainage problems impacting both day-to-day operations and the wider functioning of the local economy.

Another local business, Skail House, works closely with the Historic Environment Scotland-run Skara Brae, having joint initiatives whereby tourists can visit both sites via a joint ticket. Around 75,000 visitors pass through Skail House during the season. As well as Skail House as a visitor attraction there is a shop and the owners have developed experiences within their gardens, in recent years falconry and a seafood shack. There is a willingness to develop more experiences both within the existing walled garden and to develop an indoors facility too – not just for visitors but for the community also. Potential to create a more formalised walking loop between Skail House and Skara Brae was mentioned. Skail House is keen to work with other community groups and through the implementation of the Local Place Plan to contribute to the wider community and economy.

## External Stakeholders

Discussions with external stakeholders comprised a core element of the stakeholder engagement strategy, earlier on in the development process; these were undertaken in a face-to-face format where possible, or via Teams or phone.

The following stakeholders were engaged:

- Orkney Islands Council:
  - Development and Marine Planning.
  - Roads.
  - Core Paths.
  - Housing.
  - Social Care and Childcare.
  - Transport.
  - Engineering Services.

- Volume Tourism.
- Recycling.
- Walk Wheel Cycle Trust.
- Orkney Housing Association Limited.
- Historic Environment Scotland.

While the nature of these discussions varied, they provided significant value in informing the Local Place Plan. The purpose of this engagement was to understand infrastructure capacity, service sustainability, policy alignment, and delivery constraints relevant to future aspirations within Harray and Sandwick.

Across Council services, there was broad recognition of Dounby's role as a key rural service hub within the West Mainland. Officers emphasised the importance of aligning the Local Place Plan with the Orkney Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4, particularly in consolidating growth in areas where infrastructure already exists, rather than encouraging dispersed development. Housing need was acknowledged, particularly in supporting workforce recruitment and maintaining school roll sustainability. However, there was consistent emphasis that any growth must be proportionate, phased, and infrastructure-led, with wastewater capacity, road safety, and junction performance identified as critical considerations.

Road conditions and safety were also explored, with supporting data on road speeds shared and reviewed by the LPP Steering Group. It was noted that footway provision along key routes, including school travel corridors, often does not extend far enough to cover the full journeys undertaken by children who are within the catchment for school transport. There was agreement that integrating active travel infrastructure at the outset of new development is significantly more effective than retrofitting it later. The Core Paths Officer further highlighted that, while the existing path network is relatively strong, it is fragmented in places, presenting opportunities to improve connectivity between Dounby and surrounding rural areas, particularly by recognising and formalising well-used informal routes.

Discussions relating to social care and childcare reflected wider demographic pressures, including an ageing population and challenges in workforce recruitment linked to housing availability and transport constraints. Service sustainability was identified as being closely tied to modest population growth and the provision of accessible housing.

Transport officers confirmed that Dounby functions as an important movement node. While public transport connectivity is in place, services do not always align with working or leisure patterns, reinforcing reliance on private vehicles. Incremental improvements to safety and everyday active travel infrastructure were identified as realistic and deliverable interventions, particularly within Dounby and its surrounding area.

Tourism discussions acknowledged the seasonal pressures experienced across the West Mainland, particularly in relation to traffic, parking, and infrastructure strain associated with internationally significant heritage sites. While the economic contribution of tourism is recognised, there is a clear need to manage infrastructure capacity and protect community amenity.

The Recycling Service Manager provided specific operational insight into the local recycling facility, noting ongoing challenges relating to the cost and frequency of skip provision, as well as logistical constraints linked to fleet capacity. Service resilience is therefore influenced not only by budget considerations but also by vehicle availability and competing operational demands. However, there was a willingness to consider community aspirations through the Local Place Plan process, with any proposed changes able to be assessed in terms of their operational and financial implications.

The World Heritage Site Programme emphasised the importance of protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site and its wider landscape setting. While some incremental change may be acceptable, it must be sensitively designed to avoid adverse impacts on key views, archaeology, and landscape character.

In parallel to the Local Place Plan, the Walk, Wheel, Cycle initiative is supporting ambitions to improve walking and cycling provision within and around Dounby, particularly to enable everyday journeys to school, shops, and community facilities. Targeted, deliverable interventions are seen as capable of materially improving safety and liveability, and these have been embedded within the Local Place Plan.

Overall, stakeholders did not express opposition to the emerging proposals. There was consistent alignment around the need for managed and proportionate growth, aligned with infrastructure capacity; the protection of landscape and heritage; support for service sustainability; and targeted improvements to safety and connectivity. The technical and policy evidence therefore supports a strategy of strengthening Dounby as the primary service centre, while safeguarding the rural character and environmental quality of the Harray and Sandwick parishes, and maintaining their identity as distinct communities.

## Conclusion

Overall, a significant amount of information and feedback was obtained during the stakeholder engagement, upon which the Place Plan has been developed.

# Appendix D: Stakeholder Survey Questionnaire

- **Challenges accessing buses (e.g. distance to stops, service frequency, routes).**
- **Potential for a community bus (shared with other parishes or linking to the XI).**
- **Options for a community minibus serving both community events and residents in rural areas.**

7. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to Public Transport on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. What works well or is good at present in terms of public transport?

9. How could things be better in the future in terms of public transport?

10. Would you support a trial of community bus services across Harry & Sandwick?

Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

11. Would you use a bus if it connected better with the XI service or linked rural areas to Dounby?

Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

**5. Traffic and Parking**

Below are some key aspects related to traffic and parking in Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- **Use of rural walking routes if they were better signposted or maintained.**

2. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to Moving Around on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. What works well or is good at present in terms of moving about?

4. How could things be better in the future in terms of moving about?

5. Would you use more rural walking routes if they were accessible and well signposted?

Yes  
 No  
 Any comments:

6. Should historic rights of way be considered for reopening?

Yes  
 No  
 Any comments:

**4. Public Transport**

Below are some key aspects related to public transport in Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- **How well the current bus service works for those in Dounby and in the rural areas, and those needing to travel to Dounby.**

**1. Harry and Sandwick Place Plan**  
 The Harry & Sandwick Community Council is leading the development of a Place Plan to shape the future of our parishes. This builds on the earlier Dounby Place Plan and ongoing work at the Market Green, helping us to join up local priorities and plan for the wider community together.

We want to hear from everyone in the community. Your voices, ideas, and feedback are crucial to making this plan work for all of us!

This survey asks for your views on 14 themes covering what makes Harry & Sandwick work well now, and what could change in the future to make things even better.

You don't need to answer everything — just score each theme, and share your thoughts on the questions that matter most to you.

We are not asking for any personal identifiable information. All responses will be considered collectively and used only for developing this Place Plan for Harry & Sandwick.

The survey is being undertaken by Harry & Sandwick Community Council, managed by Eylan Skyn consultants.

For queries please email [naomi@eylandskyn.co.uk](mailto:naomi@eylandskyn.co.uk) or call / message / WhatsApp 07974561181.

**2. Do you live in Harry and Sandwick?**

1. Where do you live?
- Yes, I live in Dounby village
  - Yes, I live in the rural areas of Sandwick parish (outside Dounby)
  - Yes, I live in the rural areas of Harry parish
  - No, I don't live here, but I visit or spend time in Harry & Sandwick regularly

**3. Moving Around Harry and Sandwick**  
 Below are some key aspects related to moving around Harry and Sandwick by walking, wheeling, or cycling.

The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- **Improving walking and cycling routes in both Dounby and the rural areas (e.g. paths, pavements, signage, seating).**
- **Safety of routes to school or shops, especially where there is fast traffic or no pavements.**
- **Informal or historic rights of way in rural Harry and Sandwick that could be improved or reopened.**
- **Access to places like Skall Beach or St Magnus Way.**

- **Speeding and congestion in Dounby village.**
- **Fast traffic and damaged verges on rural roads in Harray and Sandwick.**
- **Parking problems at shops, halls, and popular rural spots.**
- **Possible measures: smiley-face speed signs, traffic calming, crossings.**

12. Rate Harray and Sandwick in respect to Traffic and Parking on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. What works well or is good at present in terms of traffic and parking?

14. How could things be better in the future in terms of traffic and parking?

15. Would you support a 20mph limit around the school and through the village where people are most likely to be walking and cycling?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments:

16. Do you think a crossing in Dounby is needed, and if so where?

- Yes  
 No

If yes, where:

17. Would you support traffic calming measures (e.g. smiley-face signs, narrowed road or other measures) in the village and on rural roads?

- Yes  
 No

Any comments:

#### 6. Buildings and the Built Environment

Below are some aspects relating to the character and accessibility of Harray and Sandwick, including the atmosphere, points of interest, ease of navigation, inclusivity of public spaces, and any potential challenges. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- Existing community buildings (e.g. Harray Hall, churches).
- Underused/vacant sites (e.g. Corrigal Farm).
- Opportunities for heritage or cultural projects.

18. Rate Harray and Sandwick in respect to the built environment on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. What works well or is good at present in terms of built environment?

20. How could things be better in the future in terms of the built environment?

#### 7. Natural Space

By natural space, we mean parks, woodlands, fields, streams, and green spaces alongside paths and roads, among others. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters, such as the natural spaces you recognise in and around Harray and Sandwick, their accessibility, upkeep, potential barriers to use, and how they might be improved to better serve the community.

- **Protecting and enhancing natural spaces (fields, coast, lochs).**
- **Outdoor areas like Skallil Beach and farmland trails.**
- **Improvements like seating, signage, and access.**
- **Concerns about flooding and erosion.**

21. Rate Harray and Sandwick in respect to the natural space on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. What works well or is good at present in terms of natural space?

23. How could things be better in the future in terms of the natural space?

24. Would you support designated areas for campervans or motorhomes (e.g. near Harray Hall) to manage tourism?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments:

25. Would more picnic areas or seating spots encourage use of rural spaces?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments, or thoughts on where?

#### 8. Play & Recreation

Below are some aspects relating to opportunities for play, sports, culture, arts,

and leisure in and around Harry and Sandwick, as well as the accessibility of spaces for all ages and abilities. The questions that follow explore how well these facilities are used and whether there are any issues, such as access, cost, or community support, that may impact their use.

- Playparks in Doumby and the rural areas.
- Facilities for under-5s.
- Upgrading older play areas.
- Other spaces for play, sport, recreation.

26. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to play and recreation on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. What works well or is good at present in terms of play and recreation?

28. How could things be better in the future in terms of play and recreation?

#### 9. Facilities & Services

Below are some aspects relating to the key facilities and services in and around Harry and Sandwick, including support available through clubs, social groups, and advice services. The questions that follow explore whether these facilities and services meet local needs now and in the future, their accessibility, and any barriers that may hinder people from using them.

- Current facilities (shops, halls, clubs).
- Importance of replacing lost amenities in Doumby (pub, café, butcher, stores).
- Gaps in services across the wider rural areas.
- Ideas for community ownership of facilities.

29. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to facilities & services on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. What works well or is good at present in terms of facilities & services?

31. How could things be better in the future in terms of facilities & services?

32. How important is a café or bar or equivalent meeting place for community life?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not so important
- Not at all important

33. Would you support community ownership of facilities if the opportunity arose?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Any comments:

#### 10. Work & Local Economy

Below are some aspects relating to employment and economic opportunities in and around Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore whether there is work available for those who want it, opportunities for skill-building, the business landscape, key challenges facing the local economy, and how these factors influence feelings about the community.

- Local businesses and job opportunities.

- Small business/start-up units or shared workspaces.
- Tourism opportunities (brewery, coach trips, campervan provision).
- Potential for shared development officer post across West Mainland to support volunteer efforts and local businesses.

34. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to the local economy on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. What works well or is good at present in terms of the local economy?

36. How could things be better in the future in terms of the local economy?

37. Would small business/start-up units in Doumby or rural areas be useful?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Any comments:

38. Would you support developing underused spaces for community or business use?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Any comments, or ideas on where:

#### 11. Housing & Community

Below are some aspects relating to housing, homes, the neighbourhood and community across Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore these

and other related matters.

- Housing needs (affordable, family, older people, key workers).
- Potential new housing near Douby's school or Community Halls.
- Options in rural areas where young people may struggle to build.
- Community-led housing or serviced plots.

39. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to housing & community on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

40. What works well or is good at present in terms of housing & community?

41. How could things be better in the future in terms of housing & community?

42. Should the Place Plan identify areas where housing clusters or serviced plots would be supported?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments, or ideas of where?

43. Would you support housing focused around Douby and community halls, rather than scattered rural sites?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments:

## 12. Social Interaction

Below are some aspects relating to social interaction opportunities and challenges in Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- Strong traditions of community events (Harvest Home, sports).
- New activities to connect residents and rural households.
- Opportunities for intergenerational activities.

44. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to social interaction on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

45. What works well or is good at present in terms of social interaction?

46. How could things be better in the future in terms of social interaction?

## 13. Identity & Belonging

Below are some aspects relating to community identity and engagement in and around Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore the strength of the sense of identity and belonging, how the community celebrates its heritage and culture, the level of involvement among residents, the warmth of community interactions, and perceptions of the place from both locals and outsiders. The questions that follow relate to these and similar aspects.

- What makes Harry and Sandwick unique? Farming, heritage, St Magnus Way, Corrigal Farm.
- Sharing and celebrating local identity.
- Ensuring tourism benefits both Douby and the rural areas.

47. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to identity & belonging on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

48. What works well or is good at present in terms of identity & belonging?

49. How could things be better in the future in terms of identity & belonging?

## 14. Feeling Safe

Below are some aspects relating to safety and security in and around Harry and Sandwick. The questions that follow relate to whether everyone feels safe in the community, identify physical barriers or areas that may feel unsafe, examine social issues, discuss how concerns are shared among residents, and highlight any other issues that may affect perceptions of safety.

- Are there safety issues with roads, walking routes, or public spaces?
- Would measures like better lighting, signage, or traffic calming help?
- Road, walking route, and public space safety in both Douby and rural areas.
- Safe routes to schools, halls, and playparks.
- Measures such as 20mph zones, better lighting, crossings.

50. Rate Harry and Sandwick in respect to feeling safe on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

51. What works well or is good at present in terms of feeling safe?

52. How could things be better in the future in terms of feeling safe?

#### 15. Care & Maintenance

Below are some aspects relating to the maintenance and upkeep of buildings, roads, paths, and public spaces in and around Hurray and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore whether these areas are well-maintained, who is responsible for their upkeep, the challenges faced in maintaining them, the process for reporting issues, and the quality of local services such as cleaning and recycling.

- Roads, paths, and verges in both Doumy and rural parishes.
- Damage from large vehicles.
- Importance of existing Doumy recycling facility and how it could be improved.
- Litter, dog bins, flooding, or coastal erosion.

53. Rate Hurray and Sandwick in respect to care & maintenance on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

54. What works well or is good at present in terms of care & maintenance?

55. How could things be better in the future in terms of care & maintenance?

56. Does the current recycling facility in Doumy meet your needs?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Any comments?

57. Are you concerned about drainage, flooding or erosion in particular areas?

- Yes  
 No  
 Unsure

Please provide details:

#### 16. Influence & Sense of Control

Below are some aspects relating to community voice and participation in and around Hurray and Sandwick. The questions that follow explore whether the community has the confidence to engage and influence decisions, how well its needs are understood and consulted, the effectiveness of local groups, the willingness of residents to take action collaboratively, and any barriers that may prevent some individuals from participating.

- Representation by the Community Council.
- Ability to take action yourself or with neighbours.
- Barriers to involvement.
- Volunteering challenges.

58. Rate Hurray and Sandwick in respect to influence & sense of control on a scale of 1 to 7, here 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement needed:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

59. What works well or is good at present in terms of influence & sense of control?

60. How could things be better in the future in terms of influence & sense of control?

61. Do you feel there is enough information and communication about what's happening in Hurray & Sandwick?

- Yes  
 No

Any comments:

62. What would make it easier for you (or your neighbours) to get involved in local groups or volunteering?

#### 17. About you

Different people think about places in different ways. Some people may face unique issues and have special needs, or may face specific barriers, for example on accessibility - whether physical, visual or hearing.

Please provide some information about yourself to help the assessment identify whether there are specific issues for some people in and around Hurray and Sandwick.

This information will only be used by the consultants to analyse the data. It will help us to know if the feedback represents the people that live and work in Hurray and Sandwick, or if there are some people missing.

The information will be analysed collectively and individual responses from earlier in the survey will not be associated with individual answers in this section of questions.

63. Your postcode?

Postal Code

64. Age

- Aged 16-18  
 19-24  
 25-34  
 35-44  
 45-54  
 55-64  
 65-74  
 75 and over  
 Prefer not to say

65. Which of the following options most closely aligns with your gender?

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- A gender not listed here
- Prefer not to answer

66. Are you involved with any groups within Harray and Sandwick, either as a volunteer or participant.

- Yes - multiple groups
- Yes - one or two groups
- No - but I have been in the past
- No - never

18. Finally...

**Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience living or working in Harray and Sanwick? We'd love to hear any ideas, concerns, or suggestions you have that could help improve the community and make Harray and Sandwick an even better place to live, work, and visit?**

67. Any other ideas, concerns or suggestions?

# Annex E: Rainbows Materials

## Harry and Sandwick – Local Place Plan

Your child has been helping to share ideas for the community!

This week, the young people took part in an activity to share what they like about living in Harry and Sandwick (and neighbouring areas) – and what could make it even better.

The Community Council are working on a Local Place Plan – a big community plan that looks at things like:

- 🏠 Homes and community spaces
- 🌳 Nature and outdoor areas
- 🎮 Play and fun activities
- 🚶 Getting around safely
- 😊 Feeling happy and safe
- 🎨 Art, clubs and creativity
- 🗣️ Having your say

The children looked at these themes and told us what they enjoy most, what they'd like to see more of, and what could be improved. Their ideas will be added to the Place Plan to make sure young voices are included. We were not collecting any personal information.

### We'd love to hear from you too!

Parents, carers and community members will have their chance to share ideas soon. Please keep an eye out for upcoming events, folk inviting you for a chat if you run a business in the area, and online surveys where you can add your thoughts about the future of Harry and Sandwick.

Together, we're aiming to help shape a thriving, friendly, and sustainable community for everyone.

Find out more:

📧 [harrysandwickclerk@gmail.com](mailto:harrysandwickclerk@gmail.com) or [naomi@evlandskyn.co.uk](mailto:naomi@evlandskyn.co.uk)



## Harry and Sandwick

Tell us what you think!



We want to know what you think about where you live.






Look at each question and circle a face. Do you think it is

😊 Good    😊 Okay

😞 Needs work

You can draw your ideas or pictures too for each topic!

Topic	What	Score	Draw your ideas
	<b>Homes</b> – Are there nice homes and places for people to live?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	
	<b>Nature</b> – Do you like the beaches, parks and countryside?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	

	<b>Play</b> – Are there fun places to play?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	
	<b>Fun Things</b> – Are there clubs or things to do after school?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	
	<b>Getting Around</b> – Is it easy and safe to walk or go places?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	
	<b>Your Ideas</b> – Do grown-ups listen to your ideas?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	
	<b>Feeling Safe</b> – Do you feel happy and safe where you live?	<input type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Okay <input type="radio"/> Needs work	



Draw a picture or tell us about your favourite thing in Harry or Sandwick

As it looks now, or what you would like to see in the future

# Appendix F: Guides Document

## Harray and Sandwich – Local Place Plan

The Guides have been helping to shape the future of the community!

This week, the Guides took part in an activity to explore what makes Harray and Sandwich a great place to live – and what could make it even better.

They looked at key themes from the **Local Place Plan**, including:

- 🏠 **Homes and spaces** – Are there good places for people to live, meet, and spend time?
- 🌿 **Environment** – How can we protect and enjoy our natural spaces?
- 🚶 **Things to do** – What's missing for young people?
- 🚗 **Getting around** – Is it easy and safe to travel without a car?
- 👥 **Wellbeing** – What helps us feel safe, supported, and connected?
- 🗣️ **Voice** – How can young people have more say in decisions?

The Guides discussed what they value about their community, what challenges they see, and their ideas for change. Their feedback will help shape the Local Place Plan that is being developed by the Harray and Sandwich Community Council – so young people's voices are part of shaping local priorities for years to come.

👪 **Parents and carers** – we'd love your input too!

A Local Place Plan sets out a shared vision for the future of Harray and Sandwich, and community input is essential.

Please **watch out for details of upcoming drop-ins, surveys and other opportunities** where you can have your say too.

Together, we are aiming to create a thriving, sustainable, and welcoming community for everyone – now and in the future.

**Find out more:**

✉️ [harraysandwichcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:harraysandwichcouncil@gmail.com) or [naomi@eylandskyn.co.uk](mailto:naomi@eylandskyn.co.uk)

## 🌟 Harray & Sandwich – Guides' Challenge

### Help Shape the Future of Your Community!

**We want to hear your ideas!**

The Harray and Sandwich Local Place Plan is about making the parishes even better places to live – now and in the future. You're part of this community, so your voice matters!

#### 🗺️ **Step 1: Explore the Map**

Take a look at the map of Harray and Sandwich. Mark on the following:

- 🏠 **Places you love**
- 📉 **Places that need improving**
- 🌟 **Places with potential** – where something new could happen

You can write and draw on the map if you like!

#### 🗣️ **Step 2: Talk It Out**

In small groups, chat about what you marked on the map. Think about:

- Why do you like the places you chose?
- What would make the 📉 places better?
- Where could there be new spaces or activities for people your age?

#### 🌟 **Step 3: The Big Themes**

Write one or two thoughts for each theme below:

- 🏠 **Homes and Spaces** – Are there good places for young people to meet or hang out?
- 🌿 **Environment** – How can we look after nature and make green spaces and beaches better?
- 🚶 **Things to Do** – What's missing for young people here?
- 🚗 **Getting Around** – Is it easy and safe to travel without a car?
- 👥 **Voice** – How could young people have more say in what happens locally?
- 👥 **Feeling Safe & Included** – Do you feel part of the community?

#### 🌟 **Step 4: Dream Big**

If you could make **one change** to Harray and Sandwich for young people, what would it be? Draw or describe your idea.

#### 🗣️ **Step 5: Share**

We'll collect everyone's maps and ideas to feed into the Local Place Plan – the real plan that will help shape how our community develops in the years ahead.



### Your Big Idea for Harray & Sandwich!

If you could make one change for young people, what would it be? Draw or describe it below.

HARRAY AND SANDWICK LOCAL PLACE PLAN

## Appendix G: Links to supporting documents referenced in or utilised in the production of the plan

Orkney Local Development Plan, Adopted: 18 April 2017: [Orkney Local Development Plan](#)

Review of Local Development Plan: [Review of Local Development Plan](#)

Orkney Local Transport Strategy, Delivery Plan:  
<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/media/0ejk3hwi/lts-delivery-plan.pdf>

The Orkney Community Plan: [The Orkney Partnership | Home](#)

Orkney Outdoor Access Strategy: [Orkney Outdoor Access Strategy](#)

National Planning Framework 4: [National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot](#)

National Islands Plan: [National Islands Plan - gov.scot](#)

## Appendix H: Community Survey Results

This annex contains the full technical results of the Harray and Sandwick Community Survey. A summary of key findings is provided in Appendix C. This annex is included to support the evidence base of the Harray and Sandwick Local Place Plan.

# Harry and Sandwick LPP

## Survey Write Up

As part of the preparation of the Harry and Sandwick Local Place Plan, a community survey was undertaken to gather views on a wide range of themes relating to living, working and spending time in the area. The survey was designed to capture both overall perceptions and differences in experience across age groups and life stages, providing a robust evidence base to inform the development of the Plan.

The survey was promoted widely over a sustained period using multiple channels. This included targeted promotion through local social media groups, sharing via established community networks, and the use of posters displayed in local facilities. This approach was intended to maximise awareness of the survey and encourage participation from a broad cross-section of the community.

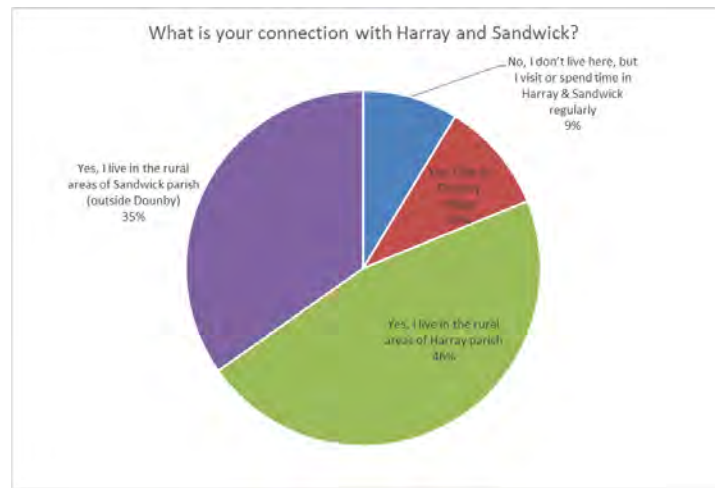
In total, 138 responses were received. Based on electoral register data, the combined adult population of Harry and Sandwick is approximately 1,143 people. The number of responses therefore represents around 12% of the adult population, which is a strong level of engagement for a voluntary, comprehensive community survey in a rural context.

While the survey is not intended to be statistically representative in a strict sense, the scale of participation allows for meaningful analysis both overall and by age band. The consistency of responses across themes, alongside the clear life-stage patterns identified, indicates that the findings provide a robust and credible reflection of community views and lived experience.

The survey results have therefore been treated as a reliable evidence source within the Local Place Plan, informing the identification of strengths, challenges and priorities for future action. Where variations in experience are evident, these have been explored further to support a life-stage-aware and place-based approach to planning.

## Connection to Harry and Sandwick

The survey responses were drawn predominantly from people with a strong day-to-day connection to Harray and Sandwick. Over four-fifths of respondents (81%) live within the two parishes, with the largest proportion living in the rural areas of Harray (46%) and Sandwick (35%), and a further 10% residing in Dounby village. A smaller proportion of respondents (9%) do not live in the area but visit or spend time in Harray and Sandwick regularly. This distribution indicates that the survey largely reflects the views of those who live in the area, while also capturing perspectives from regular visitors who use local facilities and services.

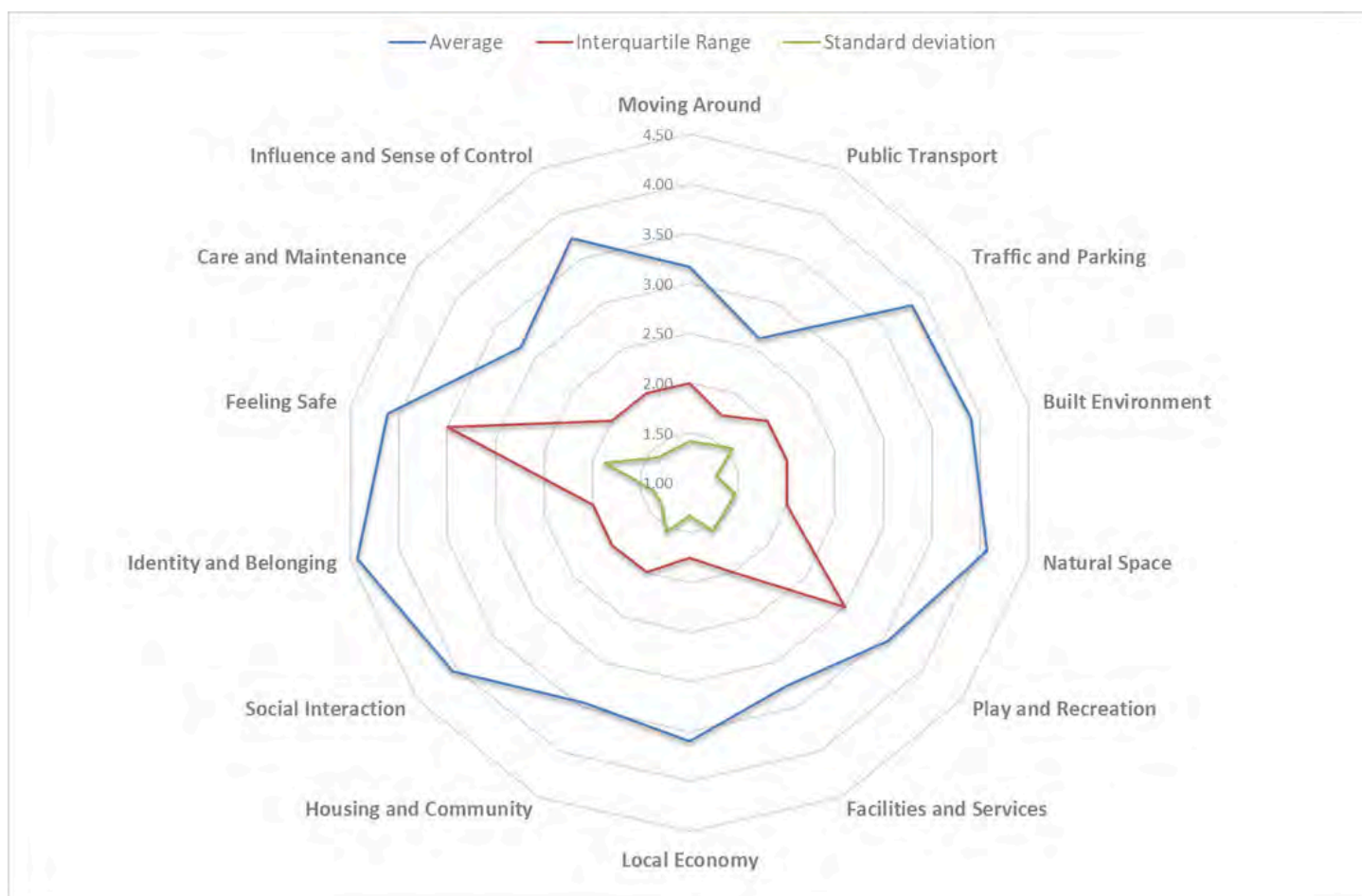


## Theme Rating

Average scores range from 2.60 to 4.43, indicating generally positive perceptions across many themes, alongside some clear areas of concern.

Most themes show an interquartile range (IQR) of around 2, suggesting a moderate spread of views rather than strong consensus.

A small number of themes exhibit notably higher variability, pointing to more polarised or mixed experiences within the community.



Several themes score highly on average, suggesting these are perceived as relative strengths within Harray and Sandwick:

- Identity and Belonging (4.43) – the highest-scoring theme, with a moderate spread of views, indicating strong shared pride and attachment to place.
- Feeling Safe (4.11) and Natural Space (4.07) – both score highly, reflecting positive perceptions of the local environment and sense of safety.
- Social Interaction (4.04) – suggests that opportunities for social connection are generally viewed positively.

While these themes score well, none show a very low IQR, indicating that even within high-scoring areas, experiences are not uniform across all respondents.

A smaller number of themes score notably lower, highlighting potential priorities for further exploration:

- Public Transport (2.60) – the lowest average score, indicating widespread concern about provision, accessibility, or reliability.
- Moving Around (3.16) and Care and Maintenance (3.18) – also score lower than most other themes, suggesting challenges around everyday movement and upkeep of the local environment.

These themes do not show the highest variability, which suggests that concerns may be fairly consistently felt rather than driven by a small number of respondents.

Variability is particularly important in understanding where experiences differ most across the community:

- Feeling Safe shows the highest standard deviation (1.88) and a very high IQR (3.50), indicating strongly divergent experiences. While the average score is high, some respondents clearly feel much less safe than others.
- Play and Recreation has a high IQR (3.00), suggesting significant differences in how well facilities or opportunities meet different needs or age groups.
- Themes such as Traffic and Parking, Housing and Community, and Facilities and Services also show relatively high standard deviations (around 1.5), pointing to mixed experiences depending on location, circumstance, or life stage.

These themes may benefit most from targeted engagement, as headline averages alone mask important differences in lived experience.

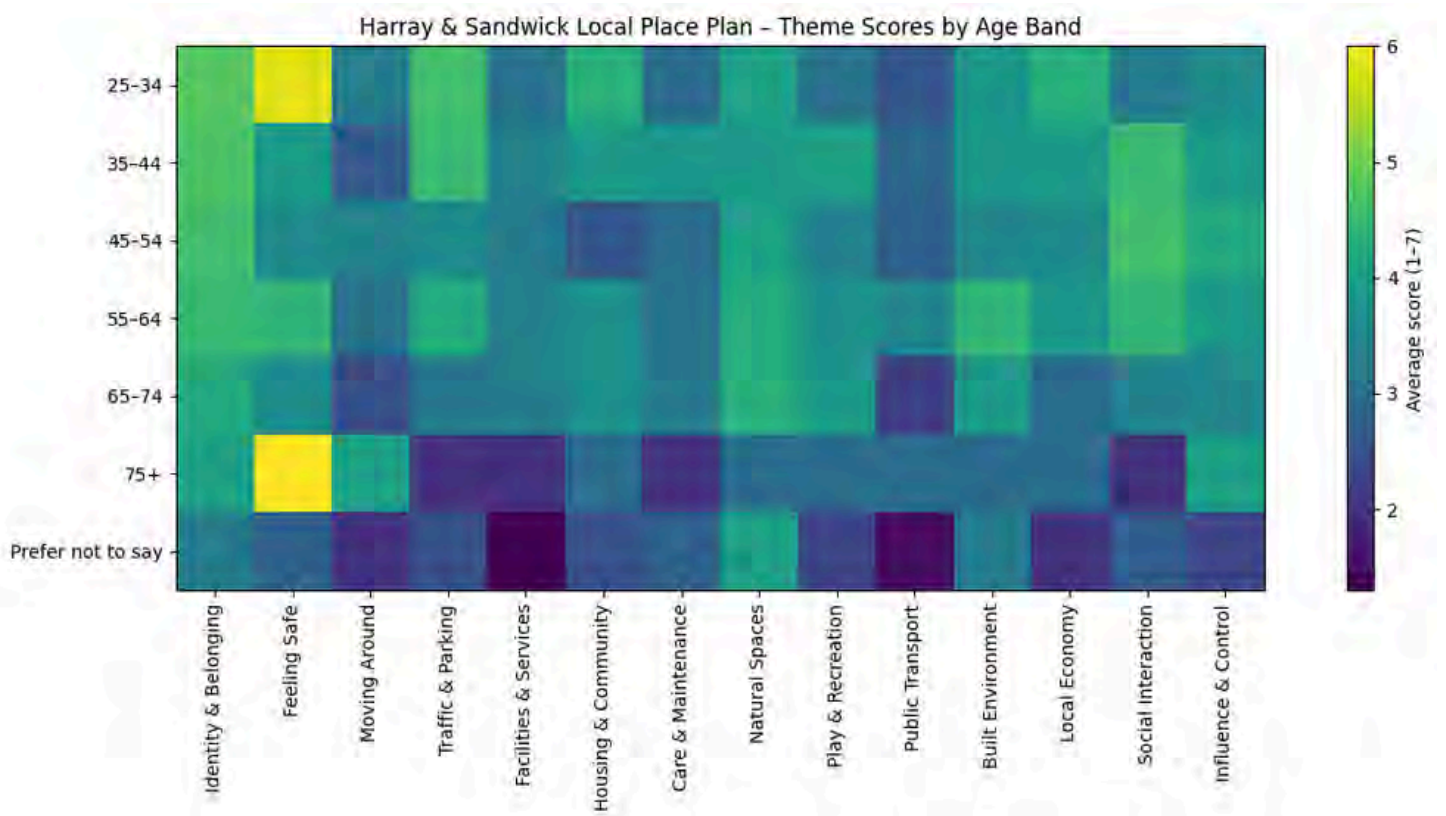
## Key implications for the Local Place Plan

- High-scoring themes such as Identity and Belonging and Natural Space represent clear assets to be protected and built upon.
- Low-scoring themes like Public Transport and Moving Around are likely to be priorities for action.
- High-variability themes (notably Feeling Safe and Play and Recreation) warrant deeper qualitative exploration to understand why experiences differ and how interventions could be better targeted.

Taken together, the results reinforce the value of combining average scores with measures of spread, ensuring the Local Place Plan responds not just to overall trends but also to areas of disagreement or unequal experience within the community.

## Theme Ranking by Age

The heatmap demonstrates that experiences of Harray and Sandwick vary significantly by age and life stage. While identity, belonging, and natural spaces are consistently viewed positively, transport, movement, and access-related themes score poorly across most age groups. Mid-aged residents report lower satisfaction across a wider range of themes, while older residents feel safe but experience greater challenges with transport, services, and social interaction. These patterns reinforce the importance of targeted, life-stage-aware actions within the Local Place Plan.



Analysis of average theme scores by age band highlights that life stage is a significant factor shaping how people experience Harray and Sandwick. While some themes are viewed positively across most age groups, others reveal marked differences in perception that help explain the variability observed in the overall results. These patterns indicate that challenges are not experienced uniformly across the community, but instead vary according to daily routines, responsibilities, mobility and access needs.

Working-age residents, particularly those aged 35–54, consistently report lower satisfaction across several themes. This is most evident in relation to moving around, public transport, housing and community, and feeling safe, where scores for this group are noticeably below both younger and older age bands. This suggests that the pressures associated with balancing work, family responsibilities and daily travel are most acutely felt by this life stage, and that issues such as transport reliability, traffic, housing availability and everyday safety have a disproportionate impact on this group.

In contrast, younger adults aged 25–34 report a strong sense of identity and belonging and a high level of personal safety, alongside relatively positive perceptions of the local economy. However, this group records lower scores for facilities and services, play and recreation, and public transport. This combination points to a cohort that feels connected to place and optimistic about local opportunities, but may experience gaps in everyday provision and infrastructure that affect quality of life and long-term retention.

Older residents, particularly those aged 75 and over, present a distinct pattern. This group reports the highest levels of feeling safe, indicating strong personal security and familiarity with the local environment. At the same time, they record lower scores for transport, traffic and parking, facilities and services, and social interaction. This suggests that while older

residents feel secure, they may face increasing challenges related to mobility, accessibility, service access and opportunities for social participation as they age.

Across all age groups, transport and movement emerge as cross-cutting issues, with public transport scoring poorly regardless of life stage, though the impacts are likely experienced differently. Similarly, themes such as play and recreation and influence and sense of control show clear life-stage effects, performing well for some groups while leaving others less well served. These findings reinforce the importance of adopting a life-stage-aware approach within the Local Place Plan, ensuring that future actions and interventions respond to the differing needs and experiences of residents at different points in their lives, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all solutions.

## Analysis by Theme

### Moving Around

People value the rural setting and the availability of quieter back roads and informal paths, but moving around without a car is widely seen as unsafe, fragmented and difficult, particularly along main roads and between settlements.

#### Key strengths

- Quiet side roads, lanes and informal tracks offer good walking opportunities.
- Existing rural routes and core paths are well used by those who know them.
- Recent improvements in Dounby and at Skail are welcomed.

#### Key concerns

- Lack of continuous pavements, footpaths and cycle routes linking Dounby to surrounding areas.
- Fast traffic, high vehicle volumes and large vehicles make walking and cycling feel unsafe.
- Significant concerns about children walking or cycling to school on high-speed roads.
- Poor lighting, worn road surfaces and eroding verges reduce safety, particularly in winter.
- Public transport does not meet the needs of many rural residents or commuters.



#### What people want to see

- More connected and clearly signposted walking and cycling routes.
- Safer routes between settlements, schools and key destinations.
- Better use, protection and reopening of historic rights of way.
- Improvements designed with accessibility in mind, including for buggies, wheelchairs and those with limited mobility.

Responses relating to moving around highlight a strong appreciation for the rural environment and the availability of informal walking routes, alongside consistent and widespread concerns about safety, connectivity and accessibility, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and children.

Many respondents value the quiet nature of side roads, back roads and lanes, which provide opportunities for walking and cycling away from main traffic routes. Several people highlighted the availability of rural tracks and informal paths, particularly in Harray, as well as specific recent improvements such as new public spaces in Dounby, improved parking at key locations, and seating at Skail. There was also recognition that drivers are often considerate on single-track roads and that road networks function reasonably well for private car use.

However, positive comments were frequently accompanied by caveats, with respondents noting that these routes often lack signage, maintenance or clear information about access rights, making them difficult for non-locals, families or those with mobility issues to use confidently.

The most consistent issue raised relates to the lack of safe walking and cycling infrastructure, particularly along main roads and between settlements. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the absence of pavements, footpaths or cycle routes connecting Dounby to surrounding areas such as North Bigging, Howaback, Harray village and Skail. This was frequently framed as a school safety issue, with parents expressing concern about children walking or cycling to school along fast roads with limited visibility, high traffic volumes and speed limits of 50–60mph.

Traffic speed and volume were identified as major barriers to walking and cycling. Many respondents described walking along main roads as intimidating or dangerous, particularly with increasing numbers of coaches, camper vans, agricultural vehicles and buses. Poor road surfaces, eroding verges, faded markings, blind bends and limited lighting—especially during winter—were also cited as factors reducing safety and confidence when moving about.

Public transport emerged as another significant concern. While some respondents value the existing bus services, many noted that they are insufficient to support daily commuting, do not serve rural roads well, or require people to wait in exposed locations on fast roads without shelters. Calls were made for more meaningful bus services, better-located stops, and park-and-ride or hub-style facilities.

There was very strong support for improving access to rural walking routes, with the majority of respondents stating they would use more routes if they were accessible, well signposted and clearly identified as public. Many people described uncertainty about where they are allowed to walk, including concerns about encountering livestock, blocked paths, or inadvertently entering private land.

Respondents expressed strong support for the reopening, protection and better management of historic rights of way, particularly where older routes have been blocked,

poorly maintained or lost following road realignments. However, several comments stressed the importance of working collaboratively with landowners and farmers, including appropriate fencing, signage and path design to protect livestock and agricultural operations.

A recurring theme was the need to improve accessibility for people with mobility challenges, prams, wheelchairs and buggies. Suggestions included dropped kerbs, widened pavements, better surfacing, boardwalks in wet areas, and improved access to popular destinations such as Skail Beach. Lighting, seating, bins and clear route information were also seen as important in supporting wider use of walking routes across all ages and abilities.

Overall, responses indicate that while Harray and Sandwick offer a strong foundation for walking and outdoor movement, the current network is fragmented and car-dependent, with safety concerns limiting everyday walking and cycling. There is clear appetite for a more connected, legible and inclusive movement network, focused on linking existing routes, improving safety on key corridors, and making it easier for residents and visitors to move around without relying on a private car.

## Public Transport

Public transport is seen as designed primarily around commuter travel to Kirkwall, with limited usefulness for day-to-day living, social activities or access to services. There is strong support for more frequent, flexible and better-connected services.

### Key strengths

- Existing weekday commuter services to Kirkwall are valued, particularly early morning and evening buses.
- Some respondents highlighted request stops, free Young Scot travel, and recent improvements as positives.
- A small number of residents are able to rely on buses when cars are unavailable.

### Key concerns

- Services are infrequent outside peak commuter times, with long gaps during the day.
- Weekend and evening services are very limited or impractical, particularly for Sandwick.
- Journeys can be long and indirect (e.g. via Evie or Birsay), making bus travel unattractive compared to driving.
- Timetables do not support hospital appointments, shopping, social activities or flexible working patterns.
- Bus stops, shelters, lighting and signage are often inadequate, particularly on rural roads.



### What people want to see

- More frequent services throughout the day, not just at commuter times.
- Later evening and weekend buses.
- Better connections between rural areas, Dounby, Kirkwall and Stromness.
- Smaller or feeder buses linking into main routes.
- Strong interest in a community bus or demand-responsive service to fill gaps in the existing network.

### Levels of support

- A clear majority of respondents indicated they would support a trial of community bus services.
- A similarly strong majority said they would use the bus more if services connected better with the X1 or linked rural areas to Dounby.
- Only a small minority opposed these ideas, with most uncertainty coming from people who do not currently use public transport.

Responses relating to public transport consistently highlight a system that works reasonably well for weekday commuting to Kirkwall, but poorly for most other purposes. Many respondents described the current service as effectively a “workers’ bus”, with early morning and evening journeys timed around standard office hours. While this is valued by those who use it, it leaves limited options for people who need to travel during the day, attend appointments, visit friends, or return home in the evening.

A recurring theme was the length and indirect nature of journeys, particularly where buses route via Evie or Birsay, significantly increasing travel time. Several respondents compared bus journeys unfavourably with car travel, noting that using public transport can add several hours to the working day for little or no cost saving. Weekend services were widely described as inadequate, with last buses leaving Kirkwall too early to support evening activities or social events.

Despite these challenges, there is strong appetite for improvement rather than disengagement. Many respondents stated that they would use buses more often if services were more frequent, better timed, and better connected. There was particularly strong support for ideas such as community or demand-responsive buses, feeder services linking rural areas into main routes, and improved integration with health services to support access to GP appointments and essential trips for those unable to drive.

Overall, the responses suggest that public transport is not currently meeting the needs of a large proportion of residents, but that there is clear willingness to use improved services if they are designed around everyday life rather than narrow commuting pattern

## Traffic and Parking

Traffic and parking are seen as manageable in places but increasingly under pressure, particularly in and around Dounby. Concerns focus on speed, pedestrian safety and crossing points, rather than any lack of parking.

### Key strengths

- Parking provision at community halls and recent new parking areas in Dounby is generally welcomed.
- Passing places on single-track roads are seen as reasonably well provided and signed.
- Some recent traffic management measures (e.g. flashing school lights, extended 40mph zones in parts of Harray) are viewed positively.

### Key concerns

- Speeding through Dounby and along main routes is a dominant concern, particularly near the school, shops and crossroads.
- Pedestrians feel unsafe crossing the road, especially children, older people and those with mobility issues.
- Parking is perceived as disorganised in some locations (notably around Asda, the crossroads and older shop frontages), affecting visibility and safety.
- Verges, potholes and road edges are deteriorating, particularly where heavy vehicles and tourist traffic are common.
- Seasonal pressure from coaches, camper vans and agricultural traffic intensifies safety issues.

### 20mph limits



- A clear majority support 20mph limits around the school and in the village where people are most likely to walk and cycle.
- A minority express concern about compliance and enforcement, rather than the principle of lower speeds.

### Crossings

- There is strong support for one or more formal crossings in Dounby, with commonly suggested locations including:
  - Near Asda / the medical practice.
  - At or close to the crossroads.
  - Between the new parking areas, toilets and village shops.
  - Near the school and Market Green.
- Several respondents suggested that more than one crossing may be needed to serve different desire lines safely.

### Traffic calming

- Most respondents would support traffic calming measures, particularly:

- Smiley-face speed signs.
- Interactive or electronic speed indicators.
- Physical measures such as speed bumps or road narrowing are more controversial and attract mixed views, especially on rural roads.
- Enforcement is frequently cited as critical to making any measures effective.

### **What people want to see**

- Slower traffic through Dounby, especially near the school and shops.
- Safer, clearer crossing points for pedestrians.
- Maintenance of verges, road edges and potholes.
- Proportionate, well-targeted traffic calming rather than blanket approaches.

Responses relating to traffic and parking indicate that while the overall road network and parking provision are broadly functional, safety, speed and pedestrian experience are the dominant concerns, particularly within Dounby and at key junctions and destinations. The issue is less about a simple shortage of parking and more about how traffic moves through the village and how people cross and use the space safely.

### **What works well at present**

Many respondents acknowledged that parking provision is generally adequate in several locations, particularly at community halls, schools and newer parking areas in Dounby. Recent investment in village parking was frequently recognised as a positive step, helping to consolidate parking and reduce informal stopping in some areas. Passing places on single-track roads were also commonly described as reasonably well provided and signed.

Several respondents noted that traffic volumes are manageable for much of the year and that the village functions adequately for drivers, with issues becoming more pronounced during peak periods, including school drop-off and pick-up times, the tourist season, and during agricultural activity.

The most consistent and strongly expressed concern relates to vehicle speed, particularly through Dounby village and on the approaches to it. Respondents repeatedly highlighted fast-moving traffic, including large vehicles such as coaches, camper vans, agricultural machinery and delivery lorries, as creating an intimidating and unsafe environment for pedestrians.

Speeding was most frequently raised in relation to:

- The school area and routes used by children
- The main road through Dounby village
- The crossroads and shop frontage
- Routes with limited visibility, blind bends or constrained verges

While some respondents felt that existing speed limits are adequate, a much larger number emphasised that limits are not consistently adhered to, and that enforcement and driver

behaviour are as important as signage.

There is strong support for 20mph limits in locations where pedestrian activity is highest, particularly around the school and within the core of Dounby village. Many respondents stressed that lower speeds would make crossing the road safer and improve conditions for walking and cycling.

However, views are more mixed on the extent of these limits. A common position was support for:

- Targeted or time-limited 20mph zones, particularly during school hours.
- Retaining higher limits on less built-up rural stretches.

A smaller number of respondents opposed 20mph limits, often on the grounds of compliance, enforcement or concerns about blanket application rather than the principle of lower speeds in sensitive locations.

The absence of formal pedestrian crossings in Dounby was highlighted as a significant gap. Many respondents described difficulty crossing the road safely, particularly for children, older people, and those with mobility impairments. There was widespread agreement that one or more formal crossings would materially improve safety and accessibility.

Frequently suggested locations included:

- Near Asda and the medical practice
  - At or close to the crossroads
  - Between the new parking areas, toilets and village shops
  - Near the school and Market Green
- Several respondents suggested that more than one crossing may be required to reflect different pedestrian desire lines rather than relying on a single location.

There is broad support for non-intrusive traffic calming measures, particularly:

- Smiley-face speed signs
- Electronic or interactive speed indicators

These were widely seen as effective reminders that encourage drivers to slow down without creating additional hazards or congestion. In contrast, physical measures such as speed bumps, road narrowing or chicanes attracted mixed views, especially on A- and B-class roads and rural routes. Concerns included vehicle damage, noise, frustration, and impacts on agricultural traffic.

Across responses, enforcement was repeatedly identified as critical. Many respondents expressed scepticism that signage or limits alone would change behaviour without visible enforcement or consequences for speeding and dangerous driving.

While parking capacity itself is not seen as a major issue overall, respondents raised concerns about how and where vehicles park, particularly in areas that affect sightlines and pedestrian safety. Informal or poorly organised parking around shop frontages, junctions and older village areas was cited as reducing visibility for both drivers and pedestrians.

There were also calls for:

- Clearer markings and better-defined parking spaces.
- Improvements to verge condition and edge protection.
- Better maintenance of car parks, particularly where surfaces have deteriorated due to heavy vehicles.

## Rural and seasonal pressures

Several respondents highlighted the seasonal impact of tourism, including motorhomes, coaches and visitor parking at popular sites. This was linked to verge damage, congestion at informal stopping points, and increased safety risks on narrow roads. Suggestions included better-designed lay-bys at key visitor locations and clearer management of tourist parking to reduce pressure on village streets and rural verges.

## Overall message

Overall, responses suggest that traffic and parking issues in Harray and Sandwick are less about volume and more about speed, safety and balance. There is a clear desire for a village environment that prioritises pedestrian safety, particularly for children and vulnerable users, while remaining proportionate and sensitive to rural conditions. Targeted speed management, safer crossing points, better-organised parking and effective enforcement are consistently identified as the most important areas for action

## Built Environment

The built environment is shaped by a strong network of community buildings and halls, but this is undermined by under-used, neglected or closed buildings, particularly in Dounby. There is a strong desire to see existing assets brought back into use, rather than new buildings added without a clear purpose.

### Key strengths

- Community halls (Harray and Sandwick) and Milestone Church are well used and highly valued.
- Dounby School and associated facilities are seen as important community assets.
- Recent investment such as the new toilets and Market Green has improved parts of the village.
- The overall rural built form and landscape setting are viewed positively.

### Key concerns



- Closure and deterioration of prominent buildings, especially Corrigall Farm Museum and the Masonic Hall in Dounby.
- Poor condition of some buildings, walls, fences, car parks and public realm features.
- Limited facilities in Dounby following the loss of shops and hospitality uses.
- Perceived imbalance in development opportunities between Harray and Sandwick.
- Lack of informal, accessible spaces for older people, young people and those at risk of social isolation.

### What people want to see

- Vacant and under-used buildings brought back into productive community or mixed use.
- Corrigall Farm reopened and re-imagined as a living heritage and community asset.
- Improvements to the public realm, including paths, boundaries, play spaces and village appearance.
- Better alignment between buildings, services and community needs, rather than “buildings for buildings’ sake”.

Responses relating to the built environment consistently highlight the importance of existing community buildings as anchors of local life in Harray and Sandwick. Community halls, Milestone Church and Dounby School were repeatedly described as well used, valued and central to social activity. Many respondents emphasised that these facilities already provide a strong foundation for community life, particularly where they are warm, accessible and adaptable for different uses.

Alongside these strengths, there is widespread frustration about the loss, closure or under-use of prominent buildings, most notably Corrigan Farm Museum and the Masonic Hall in Dounby. Corrigan Farm was repeatedly cited as a missed opportunity, with respondents describing it as a valuable heritage asset that could support education, volunteering, tourism and social connection. Several responses highlighted its former role in bringing visitors into the area and suggested that reopening the site could help reconnect Dounby with wider visitor flows while also providing opportunities for local businesses and community groups.

Similarly, the Masonic Hall and the former church building near the school were frequently described as eyesores in their current condition. Respondents expressed a strong desire to see these buildings either renovated or repurposed, noting their prominent locations and potential to contribute positively to the look, feel and functionality of the village. However, some respondents also cautioned that the scale of reuse should be realistic, given the size of the local population, and that any future use should be clearly aligned with demonstrable community need.

The public realm emerged as another recurring theme. While recent improvements such as the Market Green and new toilet facilities were welcomed, respondents identified ongoing issues with deteriorating walls, fences, car parks and poorly maintained spaces. Specific concerns were raised about the condition of the school boundary, village paths, older car parks and areas of unused or untidy land. These were seen as detracting from the appearance of the village and undermining the otherwise positive rural setting.

Dounby, in particular, was described as having lost some of its vibrancy, with respondents noting the closure of shops and hospitality venues and a lack of informal places for people to meet. There were repeated calls for facilities such as a café, pub or flexible community space to help bring people together and support social life. In contrast, community halls elsewhere in the parishes were generally viewed as functioning well, though some respondents noted the need for ongoing investment to improve accessibility, energy efficiency and comfort.

Issues of equity and future development were also raised. Several respondents felt that Sandwich has had fewer opportunities for new development compared to Harray, which they felt had constrained growth and limited the evolution of community assets. Others highlighted the need for more social and affordable housing, noting that limited housing options can drive younger people away and reduce the sustainability of village life.

Across the responses, there was a strong preference for making better use of what already exists, rather than expanding the built environment without a clear plan. Respondents emphasised that buildings should support community resilience, social connection and everyday needs, including provision for older residents, young people and those at risk of isolation. Suggestions included multi-use community hubs, warm spaces, resilience facilities and more inclusive, accessible design.

Overall, the built environment in Harray and Sandwich is characterised by strong community assets alongside visible gaps and missed opportunities. The community values its halls,

school and churches, but wants to see neglected and closed buildings brought back into meaningful use, improvements to village appearance and public spaces, and future development guided by community need. Addressing these issues is seen as central to strengthening social life, supporting local services and reinforcing a sense of place.

## Natural Spaces

Harray and Sandwick are widely valued for their high-quality natural environment, including coastline, beaches, lochs and open landscapes. The main issues raised are access, maintenance, pressure from tourism, and inclusivity, rather than a lack of natural space itself.

### Key strengths

- Strong appreciation of Skail Bay, Yesnaby, lochside landscapes and wider open countryside.
- Existing walking routes, tracks and the St Magnus Way are highly valued.
- The area is recognised as one of Orkney's key natural assets, both for residents and visitors.

### Key concerns

- Limited accessibility to some natural spaces, particularly for people with mobility issues (e.g. Skail Beach).
- Coastal erosion, path degradation and lack of maintenance in places.
- Pressure from tourism, including campervans, motorhomes and seasonal congestion.
- Insufficient bins, toilets and supporting facilities at popular sites.
- Poor visibility or lack of signposting for walking routes and access points.



### Tourism management

- Many respondents support designated campervan/motorhome areas to manage impacts, provided they are well located, serviced and managed.
- Views are mixed on location, with strong emphasis on avoiding sensitive landscapes and residential areas.
- There is clear support for modest charges to fund upkeep and facilities.

### What people want to see

- Better access to beaches, lochs and paths, including inclusive design.
- Improved signage, maintenance and clarity around where people can walk.
- More benches, picnic areas and informal seating in appropriate locations.
- A more managed, sustainable approach to tourism that benefits the community and protects the environment.

Responses relating to natural spaces reflect a strong and consistent appreciation of the quality, variety and importance of the natural environment in Harray and Sandwick. Many

respondents described the landscape, coastline and open spaces as outstanding and central to quality of life, with Skail Bay, Yesnaby cliffs, lochside areas and inland tracks frequently referenced as valued places for walking, recreation and wellbeing.

Despite this high level of appreciation, accessibility emerged as a major concern. Respondents highlighted difficulties accessing certain beaches and paths, particularly Skail Beach, where loose stones, steep gradients and lack of defined access points make it challenging or unsafe for older people, those with mobility impairments, families with buggies and others. Suggestions included simple, sensitive interventions such as slipways, causeways or boardwalk-style access that would improve inclusivity without urbanising the landscape.

Similarly, while many walking tracks and routes exist, respondents often noted that it is unclear which routes are accessible or publicly usable, particularly where farmland is involved. Better signposting, clearer cues and working with landowners to define and maintain routes were repeatedly suggested.

## Maintenance and environmental pressures

Concerns were raised about path condition, erosion and coastal vulnerability, particularly in high-use areas and along coastal routes. Respondents highlighted the impacts of climate change, coastal erosion and heavy footfall, and called for nature-based solutions that protect biodiversity while maintaining access.

Maintenance issues were also raised in relation to litter, dog fouling, lack of bins and insufficient toilets at popular locations. Many respondents stressed that encouraging use of natural spaces must be accompanied by basic supporting infrastructure, otherwise pressures on the environment will increase.

## Campervans, motorhomes and tourism management

Views on campervans and motorhomes were mixed but nuanced. A significant number of respondents supported designated areas for campervans as a way to manage impacts, reduce informal overnight parking and protect sensitive sites. Support was strongest where proposals included:

- Toilets, waste disposal and chemical toilet emptying points
- Modest overnight charges to fund maintenance
- Clear rules and management

However, there was also strong caution about location. Many respondents felt that campervan provision should avoid the most scenic or sensitive areas, beaches and residential settings. Several suggested that facilities should be located near existing hubs (such as halls or village edges), but with equivalent provision across both parishes to ensure fairness.

A smaller number of respondents opposed campervans entirely, citing environmental damage, waste issues and impacts on residents. Even among supporters, there was a clear

message that tourism must be managed and proportionate, not allowed to overwhelm local infrastructure or landscapes.

There was broad support for more picnic areas, benches and informal seating, particularly along walking routes, at viewpoints and near lochs or the coast. Respondents noted that existing picnic areas are often under-used due to poor maintenance, lack of promotion or poor siting.

Many highlighted that small-scale interventions, such as benches, shelters or viewing points, can significantly increase everyday use of natural spaces by residents, particularly older people and families. However, respondents also stressed that any increase in seating or picnic provision must be matched with litter management and toilets where appropriate.

A recurring theme throughout responses was the need to balance access with protection. While residents value being able to enjoy natural spaces, there is strong concern about overuse, particularly from cruise tourism and peak summer visitor numbers. Some respondents expressed frustration that popular sites can feel overwhelmed, reducing enjoyment for both residents and longer-stay visitors.

There was support for spreading visitor pressure, improving lesser-known sites, and encouraging more sustainable patterns of use that benefit local communities rather than concentrating impacts at a few iconic locations.

## Overall message

Overall, the natural environment of Harray and Sandwick is seen as a major strength and defining asset, but one that requires careful stewardship. The community is not asking for more natural space, but for better access, clearer routes, improved maintenance and more sustainable tourism management. Inclusive access, environmental protection and modest, well-designed infrastructure are seen as key to ensuring that natural spaces remain accessible, valued and resilient for the future.

## Play and Recreation

Play and recreation opportunities are seen as strongly concentrated in Dounby, with recent improvements welcomed, but significant gaps remain in Harray and Sandwich. Respondents consistently call for more local, age-appropriate and inclusive play spaces, rather than relying on a single central facility.

### Key strengths

- The new playpark at Dounby School is widely praised and well used.
- Sports facilities, including football pitches, the school sports hall and tennis court, are valued.
- Community events using outdoor spaces (e.g. tree lighting) are seen as positive uses of shared spaces.

### Key concerns



- Very limited play provision in Harray and Sandwich, particularly for younger children.
- Older or secondary play areas in Dounby are described as run-down or under-used.
- Lack of facilities for under-5s, teenagers and informal social play.
- Centralisation of facilities in Dounby is seen as eroding parish identity and accessibility.
- Safety concerns (traffic speed, walking routes) deter families from accessing facilities.

### What people want to see

- Small-scale play areas linked to parish halls in Harray and Sandwich.
- Better use of existing spaces (e.g. gardens, show park, Market Green).
- More natural play, seating and picnic areas.
- Ongoing maintenance and renewal of play equipment.
- Clearer separation of play, sport and cultural provision where appropriate.

Play and recreation opportunities across Harray and Sandwich are perceived as unevenly distributed, with provision strongly concentrated in Dounby. While recent investment in Dounby is widely welcomed and seen as successful, respondents consistently highlight that this centralisation leaves significant gaps in more outlying parts of the parish, particularly in Harray and Sandwich themselves.

The new playpark at Dounby School is repeatedly identified as a major asset and is clearly well used by local families. Alongside this, respondents value access to sports facilities such as football pitches, the school sports hall and the tennis court, as well as the use of outdoor civic spaces for community events. These examples demonstrate that where facilities are provided, they are actively used and contribute positively to community life.

However, survey responses indicate that reliance on a single central hub does not meet the needs of all residents. Families living further from Dounby describe limited local options for everyday, informal play, particularly for younger children. There is a strong sense that opportunities for play and recreation should be more locally accessible, rather than requiring travel to one location.

### Key issues and gaps

Concerns were raised about the condition and suitability of some older or secondary play areas, particularly in Dounby, which were described as run-down, poorly maintained or under-used. In addition, there is a perceived lack of facilities that cater for specific age groups, notably under-5s, teenagers and those seeking informal social spaces rather than structured sport. This gap was linked to wider issues around inclusion, choice and long-term engagement of young people.

Several respondents also highlighted safety and accessibility barriers, including traffic speeds and the quality of walking routes, which can discourage families from allowing children to travel independently or regularly access facilities. These issues reinforce the case for smaller-scale, local provision that reduces the need for car journeys and improves everyday access.

Looking ahead, respondents expressed clear support for a more distributed approach to play and recreation. Suggestions included modest play areas associated with parish halls in Harray and Sandwich, better use of existing green and civic spaces such as gardens, the show park and Market Green, and increased provision of natural play features, seating and picnic areas. There is also a strong emphasis on the importance of ongoing maintenance and renewal, to ensure facilities remain safe, attractive and well used.

Overall, the survey responses point towards a desire for play and recreation provision that supports local identity, accessibility and inclusion, complementing existing sports and cultural facilities while better meeting the everyday needs of families across the whole parish.

## Facilities and Services

Facilities and services in Harray and Sandwick provide a strong core of essential provision, but respondents feel that the loss of key everyday services and social hubs has significantly weakened community life. While Dounby remains the main service centre for the parishes, its role has been undermined by closures, leading to reduced vibrancy, fewer opportunities to meet locally, and increased reliance on Kirkwall and other centres.

Key strengths:

- Supermarket, post office, pharmacy, GP services and fuel provision in Dounby.
- Important local shops such as Isbister's in Quoyloo.
- Community halls, churches and clubs providing activity and social contact.
- Schools, sports facilities and health services serving the wider parish.



Key concerns

- Closure of the Smithfield Hotel as a pub, café and restaurant.
- Loss of the butcher and reduction in food and hospitality options.
- Lack of cafés or informal meeting spaces across the parishes.
- Decline in Dounby's role as a lively local hub.
- Very limited local services in Harray.
- Increasing isolation for some groups, particularly older people and young parents.

What people want to see:

- A café, pub or equivalent community hub in Dounby.
- Reopening, repurposing or replacing the Smithfield Hotel.
- Support for remaining local businesses and encouragement of new ones.
- Exploration of community ownership of key buildings or premises.
- Flexible, sustainable models that combine community benefit with private operation.

Survey responses show that residents value the essential services that remain across Harray and Sandwick, but feel strongly that the overall offer has been weakened by a series of closures and missed opportunities. Dounby is widely recognised as the natural hub for the parishes, with a concentration of services including the supermarket, post office, pharmacy, GP services, school and fuel provision. These services are described as essential and are used by residents from across Harray, Sandwick and surrounding areas.

Smaller local facilities also play an important role. Isbister's shop in Quoyloo is repeatedly highlighted as a vital service, while community halls, churches and clubs are valued for the activities, lunches, classes and social opportunities they provide. The Merkister Hotel is frequently mentioned as a positive example of hospitality provision, though respondents note that it does not compensate for the lack of facilities in Dounby itself.

Despite these strengths, there is a strong and consistent view that the loss of several key services has had a damaging impact on community life. The closure of the Smithfield Hotel as a functioning pub, café and restaurant is the most commonly cited issue. Respondents describe this as more than the loss of a business; it is seen as the loss of a social heart, an informal meeting place and a driver of footfall for other businesses. The absence of a butcher and the limited availability of food and drink throughout the day and evening are also highlighted as significant gaps.

Many respondents describe Dounby as having lost its “spark” or sense of vitality. Empty or underused buildings, fewer reasons to stop and stay, and reduced opportunities for casual social interaction are all seen as contributing to decline. For residents of Harray, the situation is described as more acute, with very limited local services remaining and increased dependence on travelling elsewhere for basic needs.

There is exceptionally strong agreement on the importance of a café, pub or equivalent meeting place for community life. Most respondents rate this as extremely important, linking it directly to wellbeing, social connection and inclusion. Respondents note that without such spaces, people are more isolated, informal networks are weaker, and opportunities to bring different generations together are reduced. A café or pub is also seen as important in supporting local businesses, encouraging visitors to stay longer, and rebuilding confidence in Dounby as a place to invest.

Support for community ownership of facilities is widespread. Many respondents express willingness to support or participate in community-led solutions, particularly where these help to secure key assets for the long term. Importantly, community ownership is often described as a means of enabling services, rather than running them directly, with interest in models where the community owns buildings or premises and leases them to private operators. Some respondents also highlight the potential for linking community assets to wider revenue streams, such as renewable energy, to support long-term sustainability.

Overall, the survey responses point to a clear desire to rebuild everyday services and social infrastructure in a way that strengthens local identity, reduces isolation and supports a more resilient and vibrant future for Harray and Sandwick.

## Local Economy

The local economy in Harray and Sandwick is seen as having solid foundations, particularly in farming, tourism and established local businesses, but respondents feel there is significant unrealised potential. Economic activity is perceived as overly concentrated, limited in range, and constrained by the loss of premises, services and infrastructure that would allow small businesses and local employment to grow.

Key strengths:

- Farming, agriculture and land-based businesses.
- Tourism-related employment, including Skara Brae, Skail, Merkister, Orkney Brewery and the Craft Trail.
- Established local shops, hotels, halls and service businesses.
- A strong sense of community enterprise and willingness to support local businesses.
- Growing levels of home working and self-employment.



Key concerns

- Limited range of local jobs outside farming, tourism and public services.
- Closure of businesses and loss of premises in Dounby.
- Lack of small business units, shared workspaces or start-up accommodation.
- Over-reliance on tourism, with limited year-round opportunities for locals.
- Transport, connectivity and digital infrastructure constraints.
- Underused and neglected buildings detracting from confidence and investment.

What people want to see:

- Small business and start-up units in Dounby and rural locations.
- Shared workspaces, offices and meeting facilities.
- Reuse of underused buildings such as the Smithfield, back road workshops, halls and vacant shops.
- Better support for locally owned businesses and trades.
- Improved transport, digital connectivity and coordinated marketing of local businesses.
- A long-term, community-led economic vision for the area.

Survey responses suggest that the local economy of Harray and Sandwick is viewed as functional but fragile, with residents recognising both its strengths and its limitations. Farming and agriculture are consistently identified as core economic pillars, alongside tourism-related employment linked to Skara Brae, Skail House, Orkney Brewery, Merkister Hotel, accommodation providers and businesses on the Craft Trail. These sectors are seen as providing important jobs and attracting people into the area.

Respondents also highlight the contribution of local shops, halls and service businesses, as well as the growing number of people working from home or running small enterprises locally. There is clear recognition that the area has skills, enterprise and a strong work ethic, and that many businesses perform well despite constraints.

However, there is a widespread perception that the local economy lacks diversity and resilience. Employment opportunities outside farming, tourism and public services are described as limited, particularly for younger people and those seeking year-round work. Several respondents note that while tourism brings benefits, the economy feels overly dependent on it, with fewer opportunities that serve local needs throughout the winter months.

Dounby is repeatedly identified as the natural economic centre for the parishes, but many respondents feel it is failing to realise its potential. The closure of businesses such as the butcher and Alison Moore is seen as symbolic of wider decline, and some respondents express frustration that new uses have not replaced these losses in a way that benefits the community. There is particular criticism of underused or poorly maintained buildings, especially on the back road, which are described as detracting from confidence and discouraging investment.

A recurring theme is the lack of suitable premises for small businesses, start-ups and people working locally. Many respondents express strong support for small business units, shared offices or flexible workspaces in Dounby or rural locations. These are seen as essential to supporting home workers, encouraging new enterprises, reducing commuting, and creating opportunities for collaboration. The Smithfield Hotel, vacant shops, halls, former workshops and other underused buildings are frequently suggested as potential locations.

Transport and connectivity issues are also seen as economic constraints. Limited public transport, dependence on private cars, and variable digital connectivity are all identified as barriers to accessing jobs, running businesses and attracting new activity. Several respondents link improved transport and mobile or broadband coverage directly to economic growth and inclusion.

Support for developing underused spaces for community or business use is consistently high. Respondents express strong backing for community-led or community-supported approaches, particularly where these would retain assets locally and ensure long-term benefit. There is also interest in better coordination, marketing and signposting of existing businesses, including directories, trails and shared promotion.

Overall, the survey responses point to a clear desire to move from a reactive to a more strategic approach to the local economy. Residents want to see a long-term, community-led vision that supports locally owned businesses, makes better use of existing buildings, broadens employment opportunities, and strengthens Dounby's role as a vibrant economic centre serving Harray and Sandwick as a whole.

## Housing and Community

Housing in Harray and Sandwick is widely seen as one of the most critical issues facing the parishes. Respondents consistently highlight a shortage of affordable and appropriate homes for local people, alongside frustration with planning constraints, second homes and empty properties. There is strong support for proactive planning to enable housing that sustains community life, while concern remains about protecting rural character and choice.

### Key strengths

- Some recent housing development in and around Dounby.
- Existing housing stock generally seen as being in good condition.
- Strong sense of community identity and desire to support local families.
- Recognition that Dounby has infrastructure (school, health services, shops) that can support housing growth.



### Key concerns

- Lack of affordable housing for local people, families and key workers.
- Very limited housing development in Sandwick and parts of Harray.
- Planning barriers to building on family land or small-scale rural sites.
- Growth in second homes, holiday lets and empty properties.
- Young people and families being priced out or forced to leave.
- Risk of over-centralisation or poorly designed clusters affecting rural character.

### What people want to see

- More affordable and social housing targeted at local need.
- Serviced plots or small housing clusters identified through the Place Plan.
- Easier planning routes for locals to build on their own land.
- A balanced approach combining village-focused housing and rural options.
- Better use of empty or underused homes and buildings.
- Housing that supports schools, services and long-term community sustainability.

Survey responses make clear that housing is one of the most pressing challenges facing Harray and Sandwick, with strong and often emotive views expressed about affordability, availability and fairness. Many respondents feel that the current housing system does not adequately support local people, particularly young families, key workers and those who have grown up in the area and wish to stay.

While there is recognition that some new housing has been delivered in recent years, particularly in and around Dounby, this is widely seen as insufficient to meet demand. Respondents frequently note that Sandwick, in particular, has seen very little new housing, contributing to declining population, fewer children in schools and reduced community

vitality. Harray is also described as lacking opportunities for new housing, especially social or affordable provision.

Affordability is a dominant concern. Many respondents state that housing costs, whether for purchase or rent, are beyond the reach of local people. Orkney Housing Association rents are not always perceived as affordable, and the private market is seen as increasingly dominated by retirees, incomers and second-home owners. Several respondents highlight the prevalence of holiday homes, seasonal lets and empty properties, describing this as a misuse of housing stock at a time of acute local need.

Planning constraints are repeatedly cited as a barrier. Respondents express frustration at the difficulty of securing permission to build on family land or small rural sites, even where there is clear local need. There is strong support for more flexible, locally responsive planning approaches that allow people brought up in the area to build and remain within their community. At the same time, respondents emphasise the importance of protecting the character of the countryside and avoiding inappropriate or poorly designed development.

The idea of housing clusters or serviced plots generates broad but nuanced support. Many respondents support identifying areas through the Place Plan where housing clusters or serviced plots would be acceptable, particularly near Dounby or community halls where infrastructure already exists. This is seen as a way to make housing delivery more achievable, reduce costs and support services such as schools, shops and transport. However, others express concern that clustered development could undermine rural character or force people into living arrangements that do not suit them.

There is clear consensus that no single approach will meet all needs. Respondents consistently call for a balanced housing strategy that includes village-based housing, rural options, serviced plots, social housing and opportunities for self-build. Choice, flexibility and fairness are recurring themes, alongside a strong desire to prioritise housing for local people.

Overall, the survey responses point to a strong mandate for the Place Plan to take an active role in shaping housing outcomes. Residents want clearer identification of where housing should go, stronger support for local need, and a planning framework that helps sustain communities rather than seeing them hollowed out over time. Housing is seen not just as a physical issue, but as fundamental to the future of schools, services, businesses and community life across Harray and Sandwick.

## Social Interaction

Social interaction in Harray and Sandwick is generally seen as active and varied, with a strong base of clubs, halls and events supporting community life. However, respondents also highlight gaps in inclusion, accessibility and connection between groups, alongside the loss of informal meeting spaces that help bring people together across ages and backgrounds.

### Key strengths

- Wide range of clubs, groups and activities for different ages and interests.
- Active community halls in Harray, Sandwick and Quoyloo.
- Strong programme of events including lunches, bingo, coffee mornings, sport and fitness.
- Good opportunities for children and young people to be involved.
- Dedicated volunteers and hall committees sustaining local activity.



### Key concerns

- Lack of a central informal meeting place such as a café or pub.
- Fragmentation, with activities often serving specific groups rather than the whole community.
- Barriers to participation including transport, timing and limited promotion.
- Challenges for incomers or quieter residents in integrating socially.
- Decline of traditional whole-community events.
- Risk of volunteer fatigue and limited involvement from younger generations.

### What people want to see

- A café, pub or social hub to support informal interaction.
- Better communication and coordination of events and activities.
- More inclusive, family-friendly and alcohol-free events.
- Support for integration of newcomers and quieter residents.
- Community transport and accessible timings to widen participation.
- Renewed opportunities for whole-community gatherings.

Survey responses indicate that social interaction across Harray and Sandwick is supported by a strong foundation of community activity. Many respondents describe the community as active and well served by clubs, halls and organised events, with opportunities available for people of different ages and interests. Sports activities, fitness classes, cards nights, lunches for older people, art groups and church-led events are all highlighted as contributing positively to social life.

Community halls are consistently identified as central to this activity. Harray Hall, Sandwick Hall, Quoyloo Old School and the Milestone Church are described as hosting a wide range of events, from regular weekly activities to seasonal gatherings. Respondents praise the

commitment of hall committees and volunteers who organise and sustain these opportunities, often with limited resources.

Despite this activity, there is a strong sense that social interaction is **unevenly experienced**. While many people feel well connected, others report feeling excluded or unsure how to engage, particularly those who are new to the area, less confident socially, or not already part of established networks. Several respondents describe difficulty integrating into a community where long-standing relationships already exist, noting that this can create unintentional barriers to inclusion.

A recurring theme is the absence of informal, everyday meeting spaces. The lack of a café or pub is repeatedly cited as limiting spontaneous social contact and reducing opportunities for people to meet outside structured activities. Respondents suggest that without such spaces, social life becomes more fragmented, reliant on organised events rather than casual interaction, and less accessible to those who may not wish to join formal groups.

There is also concern that many activities cater to specific interests or age groups, rather than bringing the whole community together. The decline of traditional events such as Harvest Homes is noted by several respondents, with calls for new forms of inclusive, family-friendly gatherings that are not centred on alcohol. Respondents express interest in events that encourage interaction across generations and between different parts of the parish.

Practical barriers to participation are also highlighted. These include transport, particularly for older residents or those without access to a car, as well as timing clashes with work or caring responsibilities. Communication is another issue, with calls for clearer, more coordinated promotion of events and activities so people know what is happening and feel invited to take part.

Finally, respondents note that sustaining social interaction relies heavily on a small number of volunteers, often older or retired. There is concern about volunteer fatigue and a desire to encourage greater involvement from younger people, while recognising the pressures they face.

Overall, the survey responses suggest that Harray and Sandwick have a strong base of social activity, but that more could be done to connect people, reduce barriers and create inclusive spaces for everyday interaction. Strengthening informal social hubs, improving communication and supporting inclusive, community-wide events are seen as key to maintaining a healthy and resilient social fabric across the parishes.

## Identity and Belonging

Identity and belonging in Harray and Sandwick are strongly rooted in people, shared activities and local places, but are experienced unevenly across the parishes. While many residents feel a strong sense of community, others—particularly incomers or those less connected to organised groups—find identity harder to define. Respondents see clear opportunities to strengthen belonging through better use of local assets, shared spaces and clearer expression of what makes the parishes distinctive.

### Key strengths

- Strong community spirit and neighbourly support.
- Active community halls and events that bring people together.
- Shared identity through schools, sport, agriculture and local traditions.
- Distinctive landscape, coastline, farming heritage and cultural events.
- Well-known local events such as shows, runs, fishing competitions and festivals.



### Key concerns

- Identity feels fragmented across a large and dispersed parish area.
- Some residents do not feel a strong sense of belonging, particularly “incomers”.
- Loss or weakening of parish identities over time.
- Under-used community assets that could strengthen identity.
- Over-emphasis on tourism benefits rather than local identity.
- Limited informal spaces for everyday connection.

### What people want to see

- Clearer expression of local identity through signage, storytelling and place-based projects.
- Better use of halls and community spaces to support everyday belonging.
- Events and activities that bring together the whole community, across ages and backgrounds.
- Recognition of farming, nature, heritage and community life as central to identity.
- Balanced approach to tourism that supports rural areas without overwhelming them.
- A welcoming narrative that supports integration of newcomers.

Survey responses indicate that identity and belonging in Harray and Sandwick are closely tied to people, relationships and shared activity rather than to formal boundaries. Many respondents describe the community as caring and supportive, with strong informal networks where people look out for one another. Community halls, schools, sports clubs and local events are repeatedly identified as important anchors for belonging.

Events such as agricultural shows, runs and races, fishing competitions, horticultural events and sports fixtures are highlighted as moments when identity is most visible and shared. These activities, alongside regular hall-based events and clubs, help reinforce a sense of place and continuity. Respondents also point to the landscape itself—beaches, lochs, farmland, brochs and sunsets—as fundamental to how people connect emotionally to the area.

Schools are frequently mentioned as an important unifying element, particularly Dounby School serving the wider area. Some respondents note that strengthening links between the school and the wider community could further reinforce shared identity across the parishes.

However, there is also a strong theme of uneven belonging. While many people feel deeply connected, others express uncertainty about what the shared identity of Harray and Sandwick actually is, particularly given the size and spread of the parishes. Some respondents feel that historic parish identities have been diluted over time, especially following changes to schooling and service provision, and that this has never been fully replaced with a new, shared narrative.

Several respondents describe feeling excluded or less connected, particularly those who did not grow up locally. Some note that integration can be difficult and that unspoken social boundaries exist, even where there is no intention to exclude. There are also comments challenging the tendency to blame incomers or tourists for local issues, with calls for more open and inclusive conversations about change.

A recurring concern is the under-use of local assets that could help strengthen identity. Respondents reference halls, heritage resources, farming history, natural sites and community spaces that could play a bigger role in expressing what makes the area distinctive. There is interest in clearer signage, interpretation and visual cues that signal pride in place and welcome both residents and visitors.

Tourism is seen as both an opportunity and a tension. While some respondents value the role of tourism in supporting jobs and facilities, others question why identity initiatives should focus on tourism benefit rather than serving local people first. There is support for spreading tourism more evenly across rural areas and easing pressure on hotspots, but with caution about over-commercialisation.

Overall, the survey responses suggest that identity and belonging are present but could be strengthened through more intentional action. Respondents want clearer ways to express what makes Harray and Sandwick distinctive, more inclusive spaces and events that bring people together, and a shared narrative that values both long-standing residents and those who have chosen to make the parishes their home.

## Feeling Safe

Harray and Sandwick are widely perceived as safe places to live in terms of crime and community trust, with strong neighbourly support and people looking out for one another. However, respondents consistently identify road safety, walking routes and traffic behaviour, particularly around Dounby, schools and main roads, as the primary areas where safety could be significantly improved.

Key strengths:

- Very low levels of crime and strong community trust.
- People look out for each other and offer help when needed.
- General sense of personal safety within villages and neighbourhoods.
- Drivers are often considerate towards walkers, cyclists and horse riders on rural roads.



Key concerns:

- Speeding traffic, particularly through Dounby and on main approach roads.
- Unsafe walking routes to school, especially outside village cores.
- Lack of pavements, footpaths and safe crossing points.
- Poor lighting in some residential and rural areas.
- Sudden speed limit changes (e.g. 60mph to 30mph) without transition.
- Heavy vehicles and agricultural traffic creating safety concerns.

What people want to see:

- Slower speeds and traffic calming in Dounby and near schools.
- Extended 20mph or 40mph buffer zones approaching villages.
- Improved pavements, footpaths and off-road walking routes.
- Safer and better-marked crossing points.
- Improved street lighting in key locations.
- Safer routes :for children and those ineligible for school transport.

Survey responses show a clear distinction between how safe people feel in social terms and how safe they feel when moving around the area. In terms of crime and personal safety, Harray and Sandwick are widely described as very safe places to live. Respondents frequently refer to strong community trust, neighbourly behaviour and a culture of people looking out for one another, particularly during difficult weather or emergencies.

However, concerns about safety are overwhelmingly focused on roads, traffic and active travel. While walking and cycling within village cores is generally seen as acceptable, many respondents feel that routes outside villages, particularly along main roads, are unsafe. This is especially pronounced for children travelling to and from school, older residents, and people walking in low-light conditions.

Dounby emerges as a particular focal point for safety concerns. Respondents repeatedly reference speeding traffic through the village, congestion at peak times, and the difficulty of

crossing the main road, especially near the school and crossroads. Several respondents describe the transition from high-speed rural roads directly into 30mph limits as problematic, with little opportunity for drivers to slow down safely.

Lighting is another recurring issue. While some parts of Dounby are seen as adequately lit, respondents highlight poor or insufficient lighting in residential areas, newer housing developments and along walking routes. Low light levels are seen as increasing risk for pedestrians, particularly during winter months when children are travelling home in the dark.

There is also concern about the interaction between different road users. While many respondents acknowledge that most drivers are considerate, others highlight issues with speeding, heavy agricultural vehicles and drivers distracted by mobile phones. These concerns are amplified on narrow roads with limited verges, poor visibility or blind bends.

Across the responses, there is strong support for practical, proportionate safety measures rather than major infrastructure. Suggestions include extended buffer speed limits approaching villages, 20mph zones around schools at key times, better-marked crossings, modest traffic calming, and improved maintenance of verges and footpaths. Several respondents emphasise that making walking safer would also improve health, social interaction and access to services.

Overall, the survey responses indicate that while Harray and Sandwick feel socially safe and supportive, there is a strong mandate for the Place Plan to address road safety and active travel. Improving how safe it feels to walk, cycle and move around the parishes—particularly for children and vulnerable users—is seen as central to community wellbeing and future sustainability

## Care and Maintenance

Care and maintenance across Harray and Sandwick are seen as mixed. While respondents value the general cleanliness of the area, community pride, and the retention of key facilities such as the Dounby recycling site, there are widespread concerns about the condition of roads, verges, drainage and the limited scope of recycling provision. Many issues are linked to increased traffic, heavier vehicles and constrained maintenance budgets, alongside a strong desire for more proactive and coordinated management.

Key strengths:

- General cleanliness and pride in the local environment.
- Community volunteering, including tidy-ups and litter picks.
- Retention of the Dounby recycling facility, which is widely valued.
- Some well-maintained areas, including parts of Dounby and new facilities such as the playpark and Market Green.
- Delayed verge cutting in some areas supporting wildflowers and biodiversity.

Key concerns:

- Poor and deteriorating road surfaces, potholes and edge damage.
- Damage to verges from heavy agricultural and tourist vehicles.
- Inconsistent or poorly timed verge cutting affecting safety and biodiversity.
- Limited recycling options at the Dounby facility, particularly cardboard and plastics.
- Dog fouling and lack of bins on walking routes.
- Drainage, flooding and erosion issues on roads, verges and low-lying areas, often recurring in the same locations year after year.
- Poorly maintained or silted drainage ditches pushing water onto road surfaces.
- Localised flooding near Skail, Quoyloo Road, Harray Hall and burn crossings.
- Coastal erosion at Skail as an ongoing concern linked to wider climate impacts.
- Perception that some maintenance issues are left unaddressed for too long.

What people want to see:

- Improved road maintenance, resurfacing and edge strengthening.
- Better drainage, ditch clearing and flood prevention measures.
- A wider range of recycling options at the Dounby facility.
- More dog waste bins and litter bins, especially on rural walking routes.
- Smarter, safer verge cutting that balances visibility, access and biodiversity.
- Continued support for community clean-ups and local volunteering.
- Clearer responsibility and coordination between agencies.
  
- Proactive inspection, clearing and maintenance of ditches, burns and drainage infrastructure, with a focus on known flood hotspots and climate resilience



Survey responses indicate that residents care deeply about the condition and appearance of Harray and Sandwick, and many express pride in living in an area that is generally clean and well looked after. Community-led efforts such as litter picking, parish tidy-ups and informal volunteering are frequently mentioned, alongside appreciation for individuals who maintain public spaces in and around Dounby.

The Dounby recycling facility emerges as a particularly important asset. Many respondents describe it as extremely useful, especially for gardeners and for managing recycling without travelling to Kirkwall or Stromness. There is strong concern about retaining this facility and recognition that community pressure in the past has helped protect it. However, there is also near-universal frustration about the limited range of materials accepted, with cardboard and plastics most frequently cited as missing. Several respondents acknowledge the trade-off between expanding the facility and the need for supervision, but still express a desire for improved provision.

Road condition is the most significant concern raised. Respondents repeatedly describe potholes, poor resurfacing, breaking road edges and rutted verges, particularly on single-track and rural roads. Vetquoy Road, Swartland Road and other routes are referenced as examples where repairs are not holding up. Increased traffic, heavy agricultural machinery, tourist coaches and campervans are all seen as contributing to accelerated wear, with frustration that roads have noticeably declined in quality over recent years.

Verge management is another prominent issue. While some respondents welcome delayed cutting to support wildflowers and biodiversity, others highlight safety concerns where verges have become too high, particularly on bends, junctions and narrow roads. There is strong support for a more nuanced approach, with early or additional cuts in key locations to improve visibility and safety, alongside later cuts elsewhere to protect wildlife. Damage to verges from large vehicles and the blocking of drainage channels is also a recurring concern.

Drainage and flooding are raised as distinct and growing concerns across the parishes, with many respondents pointing to the same locations flooding repeatedly year after year. Poorly maintained or silted ditches are described as pushing water onto road surfaces rather than carrying it away, increasing risk for road users and accelerating surface deterioration. Specific problem areas are identified around Skail, Quoyloo Road (including North Unigarth), near the Orkney Brewery and quarry access, around Harray Hall, and at burn crossings near Harray Loch.

Respondents express frustration that these issues are well known locally but not addressed in a preventative or systematic way. There are calls for regular inspection and clearance of drainage ditches, better management of surface water during heavy rainfall, and clearer responsibility for maintaining burns, culverts and roadside drainage. Coastal erosion at Skail is also highlighted as an ongoing issue, with respondents noting that climate change is likely to intensify flooding and erosion risks over time.

Overall, drainage is seen not just as a maintenance issue, but as a safety, resilience and climate adaptation priority for the area. Drainage, flooding and erosion feature strongly in the responses. Many residents report standing water on roads, blocked ditches and flooding during heavy rainfall, with a perception that responsibility often falls to individuals rather than being addressed systematically. Poor drainage is seen as both a safety issue and a factor accelerating road deterioration.

Other concerns include dog fouling, lack of bins, and maintenance of public toilets and car parks. Several respondents note that new or upgraded facilities quickly suffer from maintenance issues, leading to frustration and reduced pride in public spaces.

Overall, the survey responses suggest a community that is willing to help look after its environment, but that feels stretched by declining infrastructure condition and limited resources. Residents want a more proactive, joined-up approach to care and maintenance, one that protects key facilities like the recycling centre, addresses road and drainage issues more effectively, supports biodiversity, and works with the community rather than relying on it to fill gaps.

## Influence and Sense of Control

Residents' sense of influence and control in Harray and Sandwick is mixed. While there is respect for the work of the Community Council and other local groups, many respondents feel disconnected from decision-making, unclear about how to raise issues, or unaware of what is happening locally. Communication and visibility, rather than a lack of structures, are the main barriers identified.

Key strengths:

- Active Community Council and local associations.
- Strong volunteering culture and willingness to help.
- Recognition that the Community Council is an important link with Orkney Islands Council.
- Growing use of social media and informal channels to share information.
- High engagement with this survey itself, seen as a positive step.



Key concerns:

- Many residents do not feel well informed about what is happening locally.
- Lack of clarity about who to contact, and how, to raise issues or influence decisions.
- Inconsistent or fragmented communication across different channels.
- Limited awareness of the role, remit and achievements of the Community Council.
- Perception that local voices are not always listened to by decision-makers.
- Barriers to involvement including time pressures and work commitments.

What people want to see:

- Clear, regular communication about local issues, decisions and opportunities.
- Better visibility of Community Council activity, including minutes and actions.
- Multiple communication channels to reach different audiences.
- Clear signposting of how to get involved, raise concerns or volunteer.
- Local noticeboards and simple, accessible information.
- Continued momentum from this survey and Place Plan process.

Survey responses show that many residents care deeply about their community and want to feel able to influence what happens locally, but do not always feel confident or informed enough to do so. While some respondents report a strong sense of control and engagement, others describe feeling disconnected, uncertain, or unaware of how local decision-making works.

The Community Council is widely recognised as an important institution, and several respondents praise its work and commitment. Those who are involved, or who regularly follow its activity, tend to report a stronger sense of influence. However, many respondents acknowledge that awareness of the Community Council is limited, with some people unsure

of its role, remit, or even its existence. This lack of visibility is seen as a key factor limiting wider engagement.

Communication emerges as the dominant issue within this theme. Many respondents state that they do not feel there is enough information about what is happening in Harray and Sandwick, while others feel information exists but is difficult to find unless you already know where to look. Social media, particularly Facebook, is frequently mentioned as a primary source of information, alongside posters in local shops, Radio Orkney and The Orcadian. However, reliance on any single channel is seen as excluding parts of the community.

Respondents repeatedly call for clearer, more consistent and more accessible communication. Suggestions include regular newsletters, better use of noticeboards, clearer signposting to Community Council minutes, and improved promotion of meetings, consultations and volunteering opportunities. There is also recognition that different people prefer different communication methods, and that a mix of online and offline approaches is needed.

Another recurring theme is uncertainty about how to influence decisions. Several respondents express frustration that they do not know who to contact first when issues arise, or how concerns raised locally are taken forward. Some feel that local voices are not always listened to by elected representatives or public bodies, leading to disengagement over time. This is particularly evident in comments about planning, roads and services.

Despite these concerns, there is strong evidence of goodwill and willingness to participate. Many respondents say they would be happy to help or get involved if they knew how, had the time, or felt their contribution would make a difference. Time pressures, work commitments and competing responsibilities are acknowledged as real barriers, particularly for working-age residents and families.

The survey itself is frequently referenced as a positive example of engagement, with respondents encouraging momentum to be maintained through feedback, updates and visible outcomes. This suggests that transparent processes, regular communication and clear follow-through can significantly strengthen residents' sense of influence and control.

Overall, the responses point to a need not for new structures, but for clearer communication, greater visibility and better connection between residents, local groups and decision-makers. Strengthening these areas is seen as essential to building confidence, participation and shared ownership of the future of Harray and Sandwick.

## **Final Survey Comments**

Cross-cutting messages from additional comments at the end of the LPP Survey.

The additional comments reinforce the overall picture emerging from the survey: Harray and Sandwick are places that people care deeply about, value for their rural character and sense of community, and want to see strengthened rather than fundamentally changed.

A consistent message is to build on what already exists, rather than focusing solely on new initiatives. Respondents repeatedly stress that many positive things already happen in the parishes, through halls, community groups, events and informal neighbourly support, and that these should be supported, resourced and grown. There is a strong desire to protect and sustain the core elements that give each parish its identity.

Protecting rural character and tranquillity is a recurring priority. Respondents emphasise the importance of keeping the parishes rural in feel, maintaining peace, landscape quality and access to nature. This is closely linked to pride in place, responsible behaviour (such as dog control and litter), and the importance of maintaining paths, verges and public spaces in a way that reflects care for the environment.

At the same time, there is a strong call to attract and retain young people and families. Respondents recognise that without affordable housing, accessible services and opportunities for social interaction, the long-term sustainability of the parishes is at risk. Schools, halls, shops and everyday services are seen as central to this, and their loss is felt keenly.

Dounby is repeatedly identified as a critical focal point. While valued for its remaining services, respondents describe it as looking tired in places, with underused or poorly maintained buildings detracting from its role as a village centre. There is clear support for measures that would encourage people to stop, walk, meet and spend time in Dounby, rather than simply passing through. Improving the public realm, reopening or repurposing key buildings, and introducing a café or social hub are all seen as ways to restore vibrancy.

Road safety and walkability continue to cut across multiple themes. Speed, deteriorating road surfaces, lack of pavements and poor lighting are repeatedly raised, alongside a strong belief that reducing speeds, particularly around Dounby, would transform everyday life according to respondents, encouraging walking, children's play and social interaction. Access to walking routes, rights of way and safer paths is also seen as an opportunity, both for residents and visitors.

Several comments express frustration with perceived distance from decision-making and public bodies. There is a strong sense that communities should have more control, influence and resources to address local priorities directly, rather than relying on external decision-making that may not reflect local knowledge. This reinforces earlier findings around influence, communication and community empowerment.

Finally, there is a clear message that community halls remain the backbone of parish life. As other services disappear, halls are increasingly seen as the remaining central points of each parish. Respondents stress the importance of supporting halls, volunteers and committees, recognising the rising costs and pressures they face, and ensuring they remain viable, welcoming and well used.

Overall, these comments strengthen the case for a Place Plan that:

- protects rural character while supporting everyday life.
- focuses on people, community and place rather than growth for its own sake.
- prioritises walkability, safety and shared spaces.
- empowers local decision-making.
- sustains the social and physical heart of the parishes.