



SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR THE BIRSAY LOCAL PLACE PLAN

Birsay Community Council



Supporting Document for the Birsay Local Place Plan

Contents

This section outlines the structure of the Supporting Statement, ensuring that the Birsay Community Council has taken the necessary steps to meet the Government's legal requirements for Local Place Plan preparation.

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Introduction

This document serves as the Supporting Statement for the Birsay Local Place Plan. The Birsay Local Place Plan outlines the vision and aspirations of the local community 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. 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 18th September 2025, with this document version being V1.

Contact Details

The designated contact for the Birsay Local Place Plan is:

Birsay Community Council

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

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.

Cognisance and Incorporation of Community

Aspirations into the emerging Local Development Plan

The Birsay Local Place Plan comprises a list of 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 Birsay Place Plan is:

VISION STATEMENT:

A **SUSTAINABLE** AND **THRIVING** BIRSAY, WHERE THE COMMUNITY'S **RICH HERITAGE**, STUNNING **NATURAL LANDSCAPES**, AND VIBRANT LOCAL LIFE ARE PRESERVED AND **CELEBRATED**, WHILE FOSTERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR **GROWTH**, **ACCESSIBILITY**, AND **INCLUSIVITY**. BIRSAY WILL BE A PLACE WHERE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE CAN CONNECT WITH NATURE, HISTORY, AND EACH OTHER, BENEFITING FROM THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS LOCAL BUSINESSES, ENHANCES THE ENVIRONMENT, AND PRIORITISES **THE WELL-BEING OF ALL**. A PLACE WHERE **INNOVATION**, **SUSTAINABILITY**, AND **COMMUNITY** PRIDE **FLOURISH TOGETHER**.



Five key themes were identified through the process of developing the Place Plan with aspirations set out for each of these.

THEME 1 CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES	Create a Birsay Rural Transport Hub
	Make Roads Safer for Pedestrians and Cyclists
	Review and Improve Parking Across the Parish
	Make Public Transport More Attractive and Flexible
	Improve Walking and Cycling Infrastructure
	Better Signage, Information and Interpretation
THEME 2 CULTIVATING HERITAGE, TOURISM AND ENTERPRISE	Promote Birsay as 'More Than a Day Trip'
	Develop a Heritage and Visitor Information Centre
	Support Local Businesses and Social Enterprise
THEME 3 NATURAL SPACES	Managing Access to Sites and Places
	Improving Amenity Services for All
	Develop Nature Trails and Heritage Walks
THEME 4 COMMUNITY ASSETS AND HOUSING	Asset Mapping and Feasibility Work
	Consider Community Intervention in Key Sites
	Explore Housing Models that Reflect Community Needs
	Make Use of Underused or Vacant Properties
	Improve Access at Buckquoy Slip
THEME 5 COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING	Employ a Community Development Officer
	Strengthen Volunteer Engagement
	Establish a Heritage Partnership
	Create a Local Economic, Business and Tourism Forum
	Improve Communication and Involvement

Community Support for the Local Place Plan

The Birsay 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 Place Plan.
- **Questionnaire**: Feedback gathered from 150 respondents.
- **Meetings with Community Groups**: Attendance at local group meetings including the Birsay Heritage Trust, the Lunch Club, Drama Group and Toddlers Group.
- **Attendance at the Birsay Car Boot Sale**.
- **Consultation with Local Businesses & Organisations**: Engagement with key local entities to ensure comprehensive representation.
- **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, and to check and validate the emerging Place Plan.
- **Statutory Consultation**: Formal engagement with Councillors and Community Council.

The feedback received highlighted strong community support for the Plan, with concerns addressed through revisions to the finalised document.

Evidence of Compliance with Regulation 4

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

- **Councillors Consulted:**
 - Rachael King: rachael.king@orkney.gov.uk
 - Jean Stevenson: jean.stevenson@orkney.gov.uk
 - Owen Tierney: owen.tierney@orkney.gov.uk
 - Duncan Tullock: duncan.tullock@orkney.gov.uk
- **Community Council Consulted**: Birsay 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

Appendix B: Copies of consultation notices

Dear Councillor King, Stevenson, Tierney and Tullock,

Date: 15/08/2025

Notification of Proposed Birsay Local Place Plan

I am writing to inform you, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, that the Birsay 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 Birsay Local Place Plan has been developed in collaboration with the local community to set out a vision for the future development of the area. The Plan identifies key priorities and aspirations, with a focus on five key themes:

- Theme 1: Connecting People and Places.
- Theme 2: Cultivating Heritage, Tourism and Enterprise.
- Theme 3: Natural Spaces.
- Theme 4: Community Assets and Housing.
- Theme 5: Community Capacity Building.

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 birsaycc@gmail.com. The deadline for submitting representations is 15th September 2025.

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,

Birsay Local Place Plan Steering Group

birsaycc@gmail.com

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Date: 15/08/25

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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,

Birsay Local Place Plan Steering Group

Birsaycc@gmail.com

Appendix C: Summary of community engagement

Introduction

Community engagement and participation has played a key role in the development of the Birsay 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

While the initiative has been led by the Birsay Community Council, the Steering Group formed has been both representative and diverse; the group established brought together individuals from a range of background and sectors.

The Steering Group included representatives from Birsay Community Council, Birsay Heritage Trust, Birsay Community Association, local businesses and residents.

This group met regularly with the Consultant Team and played a vital role in shaping the Local Place Plan—helping to identify and develop key themes and leading on the coordination of engagement activities within the community.

Community Survey

The core element of the stakeholder engagement strategy has been the Community Survey, aimed at residents in Birsay and promoted through the Birsay Community Council's social media presence. A total of 150 responses was gathered through a mix of online submissions and completed hard copies – this is an excellent response rate.

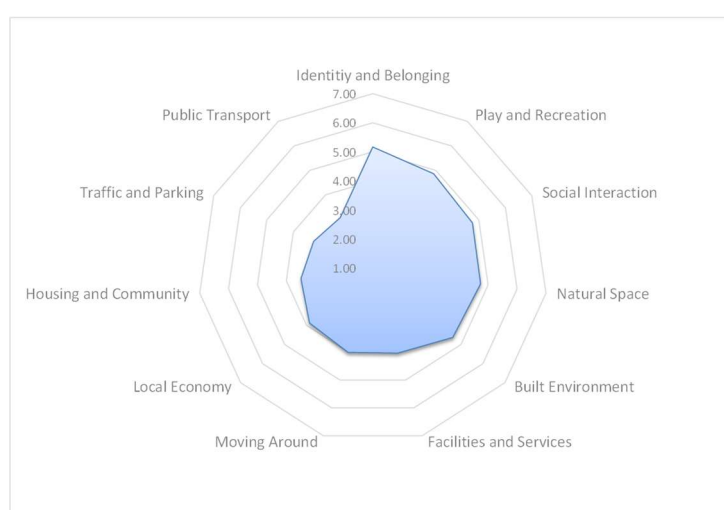
The survey comprised a set of questions asking questions around the Place Plan Themes. Respondents were presented with 14 'themes' and asked to rate Birsay in respect to each of these using a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means that there is very little improvement needed).

The results essentially tell us how the community perceives various aspects within Birsay in terms of what works well and what doesn't. Here's how the areas compare:

Moving Around: 4.01	Local Economy: 3.87
Public Transport: 3.07	Housing & Community: 3.49
Traffic & Parking: 3.23	Social Interaction: 4.76
Built Environment: 4.63	Identity & Belonging: 5.17
Natural Space: 4.74	Feeling Safe: 4.61
Play & Recreation: 4.86	Care & Maintenance: 4.00
Facilities & Services: 4.04	Influence & Sense of Control: 3.72

These scores show relatively strong performance in areas like Natural Space, Play & Recreation, and Identity & Belonging, while highlighting improvement opportunities in Public Transport, Traffic & Parking, and Housing & Community.

A summary for each theme is presented below. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Annex A and a more detailed presentation of survey results is presented in Annex B.



Moving Around

- The tone of responses is constructive but concerned. Many respondents spoke with pride about Birsay's beautiful coastal walks and natural environment. As one noted: *"The coastal walks are beautiful, but the roads are narrow and unsafe—especially with campervans and buses speeding through."*
- The walking routes, including paths to the Whalebone, Marwick Head, and along the St Magnus Way, are widely appreciated. However, safety concerns about narrow roads and lack of pavements were a dominant theme. Comments like *"We need pavements or at least safe verges, especially on the road to the Brough"* illustrate the demand for safer infrastructure.
- Suggestions include improved signage, better parking at key points like the Brough, and exploring new inland paths to take pressure off coastal routes during peak times.

Public Transport

- Respondents expressed a mix of appreciation and frustration. The existence of a bus service is valued, especially the night bus, but as one person put it:
“The bus service is there, but the timetable doesn’t work for most people—it’s too sparse.”
- Suggestions include increasing frequency, smaller buses more suited to narrow roads, and better signage and shelters at stops. Seasonal shuttle services and better links to Stromness and Kirkwall were also recommended.

Traffic & Parking

- While some noted that parking is adequate in winter, many highlighted seasonal congestion, especially near the Brough. One memorable quote sums it up:
“Tourists park anywhere—on verges, in driveways—then wander off oblivious.”
- Calls for expanded parking, campervan management, and clearer signage were strong. Ideas like a one-way system during tourist season and shuttle buses from the Community Hall car park were put forward.

Built Environment

- Pride shines through in descriptions of the Community Hall, described as a “brilliant hub,” and facilities like the playpark and Palace Stores. One respondent shared:
“The Hall offers everything—from toddlers to senior lunches. It’s the heart of the community.”
- There’s appetite for more affordable housing and better use of empty buildings. A visitor centre to tell Birsay’s story more fully was suggested as a future investment.

Natural Space

- Birsay’s stunning environment received enthusiastic praise. A typical comment:
“We are so lucky to have beautiful beaches, cliffs, and wildlife right here.”
- Improvements requested include better signage for walking routes, tide times at the Brough, and more benches and bins. Coastal erosion and path upkeep were flagged as areas needing attention.

Play & Recreation

The playpark near the Hall is a major success, with one person saying:
“It’s one of the best in Orkney, well-kept and loved by locals and visitors.”
There are ideas to add equipment for older children, develop sports facilities like basketball courts, and use the grounds behind the Hall more effectively.

Facilities & Services

- Key assets like the Palace Stores and Tearoom were praised, though some warned of pressures:
“The tea room is lovely but often too busy in summer—they need support.”
- Requests for more toilets, bins, and campervan waste disposal were common. Several respondents stressed the need to sustain the shop, possibly with grants or extra promotion.

Local Economy

- Local businesses are seen as resilient and vital, though barriers like housing and planning challenges are holding the area back. As one person put it:
“My daughter owned the local shop and leased a farm but had to give both up because we couldn’t get housing.”
- There’s strong demand for affordable housing, flexible planning, and investment to diversify beyond tourism.

Housing & Community

- This section drew passionate responses. While some felt there’s already enough housing, many strongly disagreed, citing a lack of affordable options. One voice stood out:
“No young person can afford to buy or build—and even if they can, planning makes it impossible.”
- Ideas include co-housing, small social housing schemes, and repurposing derelict buildings.

Social Interaction

- The Hall’s role as a social hub is widely valued:
“The hall committee do a fantastic job—it’s the glue holding us together.”
- More activities for youth and informal drop-ins were requested, alongside better promotion of existing events.

Identity & Belonging

- Respondents are proud of Birsay’s rich history and natural beauty. As one put it:
“We were the capital of Viking Orkney—how many folk know that?”
- Ideas include heritage trails, better interpretation, and reinstating the lost whalebone landmark.

Feeling Safe

- Birsay feels safe overall, but traffic is a worry. One resident said:
“It’s safe from crime—but not from speeding cars and buses.”
- Speed bumps, clearer signage, and traffic calming measures were widely requested.

Care & Maintenance

- Maintenance of the Hall and graveyards was praised, but road conditions drew frustration. A typical comment:
“The roads are a disgrace—it’s like we’re forgotten out here.”
- Better road repairs, ditch clearing, and bin emptying were common requests

Influence & Sense of Control

- While many feel able to raise issues with the Community Council, others doubt its influence:
“You can speak, but nothing changes.”
- Respondents want clearer communication, more visibility of decisions, and stronger representation at OIC level.

Other Comments

- Issues like planning, traffic, campervan management, and digital connectivity came up repeatedly. A striking quote summed up the sentiment:
“We’re OK to be visited by busloads in summer, but no one thinks we need broadband or housing.”

Events and Community Group Meetings

The Consultant Team attended community group meetings (the Birsay Heritage Trust, Drama Club, Toddlers Group and Lunch Club) and went along to the spring Car Boot Sale.

The purpose of these consultations was to gather shared concerns, ideas and opportunities for improving infrastructure, services, and community development across the parish. Key points raised are as follows:

Topic	Points raised
Car parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Major car parks (e.g. Marwick, Kitchener) are too small, poorly surfaced, and unmarked.• This is made worse by large buses and the predominance of single-track roads.
Tourism management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Birsay Palace area is often overcrowded during summer months.• There’s a need to encourage visitors to explore the wider parish to ease pressure on hotspots.
Infrastructure gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No EV charging point in Birsay.• Lack of public toilets across the parish.• No sheltered or comfortable place to wait for public transport, especially in poor weather.
Road and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single and narrow roads with insufficient passing places.• Ditch cleaning by the Council is creating safety issues due to how verges are left.• A safer pedestrian crossing is needed near the village.• Better and safer links needed between the community hall and the Palace.
Public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current bus timings are not practical for many, especially Marwick to Kirkwall (Mon–Thurs only).• Weekend bus services are better used.• Bus shelter location at the Palace isn’t ideal.
Local services and amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The shop and tea rooms are valuable assets, but there’s a strong need for more especially a pub or restaurant.• The campsite is very popular and could be expanded to help manage the growth in wild camping.

Topic	Points raised
Housing and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning restrictions are making it hard for young people to build on family-owned land within the parish.
Community asset ownership opportunities and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIC campsite. • Kirbister Farm Museum. • The Barony Hotel. • Old community hall. • Several privately owned underutilised buildings. • Barony Mill and the Brewery highlighted as key community assets. • Suggestion to create a heritage centre at HM Tern to enrich visitor experience.
Heritage and marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big opportunity to better market Birsay's natural and cultural heritage. • Current interpretive and general signage needs improvement. • A tide clock at the Brough would be a valuable and engaging addition.
Enterprise and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for creating an enterprise zone or hub for local groups, small businesses, and lone workers.

Birsay Farmers Gatheren: given the time of year there were no planned meetings that the Place Plan Team could attend. Instead, an email was circulated to all members of the group, with information about the Place Plan and requesting any feedback.

Discussions with Businesses

A total of 28 businesses or organisations operating tourist attractions based in Birsay were contacted and invited to participate in a discussion. At the time of writing 14 agreed.

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 Birsay?
- What are the key opportunities for Birsay in the future?

Discussions were held with:

- Birsay Heritage Trust in relation to Barony Mill and HMS Tern.
- Birsay Books.
- Birsay Tearoom.
- Palace Stores.
- Swannay Brewery.
- Yellowbird Gallery.
- Orkney Inga.
- Hundland Gallery.
- Several accommodation providers.

Key points raised by businesses included the following:

- Issues around access and transport both to their location and more generally in Birsay.
- Difficulties sourcing local labour, as well as from further field.
- Managing demand in the summer months.

Several organisations are investing in their operations or have plans to do so.

- Swannay Brewery has recent invested in a new Tap Room and café area and has future plans to develop flexible space for events and tours.
- Birsay Heritage Trust has ambitious plans to develop Barony Mill and HMS Tern.
- The Pier Arts Centre is planning to renovate and enhance the Linkshouse Orkney Arts Residency.
- There are proposals for improvements to the campsite and Kirbuster Farm Museum, both of which are owned and operated by the Council.

A snapshot of some of these plans is presented in Annex C.

External Stakeholders

A broad range of organisations and roles were engaged to ensure a comprehensive and well-informed approach. Key departments within Orkney Islands Council contributed extensively, including Development and Marine Planning, Community Learning and Development, Development Planning, Transportation, Enterprise, Roads and Grounds, Education, Leisure and Housing, Estates and Property Asset Management, Sports and Leisure, Engineering and Tourism. This involved senior service managers, team managers, corporate directors, heads of service, officers, and engineers, who provided strategic and technical input across planning, infrastructure, regeneration, and local services.

In addition to local authority representation, external agencies and stakeholders played an important role. These included Orkney Health & Care, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Pier Arts Centre, NatureScot, Destination Orkney, VisitScotland and RSPB.

Each organisation brought sector-specific expertise, from heritage and environment to tourism, energy infrastructure, and archaeology. This collaborative engagement ensured that the Local Place Plan reflected a wide range of perspectives and priorities across Orkney.

While the nature of these discussions varied considerably there was substantial benefit from them:

- Providing information on the Place Plan for Birsay, which many stakeholders were not aware of.
- Obtaining relevant information to feed into the Place Plan.
- Addressing some of the issues raised during the stakeholder engagement with relevant representatives of Orkney Islands Council.

Facebook LPP Validation

To test and refine the draft aspirations for the Birsay Local Place Plan, a series of themed Facebook posts was published on the Birsay Community Council page between 29 July and 5 August. Each post:

- Focused on one aspiration area (e.g., housing, natural spaces, community capacity, heritage & tourism, transport).
- Summarised key ideas in plain language, supported by bullet points and relevant emojis for visual appeal.
- Asked direct questions inviting the community to suggest additions, changes, or raise concerns.
- Used consistent hashtags to connect the series and make posts easy to find.

Engagement

The five posts collectively generated:

- Shares: At least 5
- Comments: 11 direct comments (plus sub-comments), offering suggestions, concerns, and clarifications.

Key Themes from Responses

1. Housing & Community Facilities

- Support for more local housing, particularly council housing at The Palace.
- Desire to support viability of the local shop and re-open the Barony.

2. Heritage, Tourism & Local Enterprise

- Support for a heritage centre, walking routes, and heritage trails.
- Concern about adding a new café – preference to support existing businesses (Birsay Bay Tearoom, Palace Stores) rather than introduce competition.
- Some reservations about increasing visitor numbers when infrastructure is already under pressure.

3. Natural Spaces

- No direct comments on the Natural Spaces post, but related concerns emerged elsewhere about protecting sensitive sites and managing tourism impacts.

4. Transport & Connectivity

- Acknowledgement that Birsay is large and diverse – concern that plans may focus too much on the Palace/Brough area (“Palace Plan”).
- Comments emphasised the need for community-wide coverage in proposals.

- Parking, traffic speed, and road safety were recurrent themes in other responses.

5. Other Issues Raised Across Multiple Posts

- Traffic management: calls for parking controls, speed bumps, speed signage, and designated campervan spaces.
- Safety and liveability: reminders that Birsay is a place where people live, and visitor activity should not compromise residents' quality of life.
- Local business support: ensuring proposals complement rather than compete with existing businesses.

Conclusion

The Facebook engagement exercise provided a quick, accessible way to test the draft aspirations with the community. Although few in number, the comments received confirmed support for many ideas in the Place Plan, while also surfacing concerns about tourism growth, competition with existing businesses, and the geographical spread of benefits. These points will be addressed in refining the final plan.

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

1. Birsay Place Plan

The Birsay Community Council is leading the development of a Place Plan to shape the future of Birsay.

We want to hear from everyone in the community —your voices, ideas, and feedback are crucial to making this plan work for everyone!

This survey asks for your views on 14 different themes that will be used to assess various elements of what makes Birsay work well, and what could be different in the future to make things better.

Please answer in respect to as many of the 14 themes as you feel relevant to you and your household.

We are not asking for any personal identifiable information. All information gathered will be considered collectively, and will be used for the purposes only of developing this Place Plan for Birsay.

The survey is being undertaken by Birsay Community Council, and is being managed by Eyland Skyn consultants. For any queries please email naomi@eylandskyn.co.uk or call or message 07974561181.

2. Do you live in Birsay?

1. Do you live in the parish of Birsay?

- ☐ Yes, I live in Birsay
- ☐ No, I don't live in Birsay, but I visit or spend time in Birsay regularly

3. Moving Around Birsay

Below are some key aspects related to moving around Birsay by walking, wheeling, or cycling. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- How can we improve the safety and accessibility of walking routes?
- What infrastructure improvements (e.g., cycle paths, e-bike hire, seating) would encourage more people to walk and cycle in Birsay?
- What barriers do you face when trying to walk or cycle around Birsay, and how could these be addressed?
- How can we better connect key locations (e.g., Community Hall, Palace (the Place), local amenities) to make active travel easier and more appealing?

2. Rate Birsay 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?

4. Public Transport

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

- How well does the current bus service meet the needs of residents and visitors, and what improvements would make it more useful?
- What challenges do you face in accessing buses, such as bus stop locations, shelter availability, or service frequency and where the bus goes to?
- How could we improve the accessibility of bus stops and transport links for people with mobility challenges?
- What additional bus options, such as community transport or demand-responsive services, could help fill current gaps in provision?

5. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

5. Traffic and Parking

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

- What are the main traffic concerns in Birsay, and what measures could improve road safety for all users?
- Should there be more parking, and if so, where?
- How can we better manage parking, particularly for visitors and motorhomes, to reduce congestion and ensure fair access for everyone?
- Are there particular issues with road surfaces, and pot holes etc., and where?
- What impact does seasonal tourism have on traffic and parking, and how could we address these challenges?
- Are there specific areas where speeding or hazardous driving is a problem, and what steps could help improve road safety?

8. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

6. Buildings and the Built Environment

Below are some aspects relating to the character and accessibility of Birsay, 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.

- How well do existing community buildings and facilities meet the needs of residents, and what improvements or new facilities would benefit the parish?
- Are there buildings or spaces in Birsay that could be better used or repurposed for community benefit? If so, how?
- What challenges do residents and businesses face when trying to develop or adapt buildings in Birsay, and how could these be addressed?
- How can we ensure that new developments, including housing and infrastructure, respect Birsay's heritage while supporting modern needs?

11. Rate Birsay 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
						

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

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

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 Birsay, their accessibility, upkeep, potential barriers to use, and how they might be improved to better serve the community.

- How can we better protect and enhance Birsay's natural spaces while balancing the needs of residents, visitors, and wildlife?
- What improvements could be made to outdoor spaces, and pathways, such as seating, signage, or accessibility, to encourage more people to enjoy them?

Which pathway need these improvements?

- Are there specific areas at risk from erosion, flooding, or other environmental pressures? How should these be managed?
- What opportunities are there to develop new community projects, such as nature trails, growing spaces, or conservation initiatives?

14. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

8. Play & Recreation

Below are some aspects relating to opportunities for play, sports, culture, arts, and leisure in and around Birsay, 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.

- How well does the Birsay playpark meet the needs of local children? Are there any additional play features or improvements that would make it better?
- Could areas like the Community Hall grounds, the route between the Hall and the Palace (the Place), or the Brough and Marwick be better used for recreation? What improvements (e.g., seating, signage, lighting) would help?
- How can we ensure that key recreation areas are accessible and enjoyable for everyone, including those with mobility challenges?

17. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

9. Facilities & Services

Below are some aspects relating to the key facilities and services in and around Birsay, 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.

- How well do existing community and other facilities, such as the Birsay Hall, the slip etc., meet local needs, and what additional services or improvements would be beneficial?
- How can we support key local services, shops and facilities, to ensure they continue serving the community and visitors?
- What new or improved services—such as waste disposal for campervans, e-bike hire, EV charge points, or a community growing project—would benefit Birsay residents and businesses? What are your ideas?

20. Rate Birsay 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
						

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

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

10. Work & Local Economy in Birsay

Below are some aspects relating to employment and economic opportunities in and around Birsay. 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.

- What support is needed to help local businesses to grow and thrive? How could we support young people to stay in the parish?
- How can we encourage new businesses and job opportunities in Birsay, including small business start-up units or community-led enterprises?
- What challenges do farmers and other local businesses face in diversifying their activities, and how could planning or other support help?
- Could certain projects create new economic opportunities for Birsay?

23. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

11. Housing & Community

Below are some aspects relating to housing, homes, the neighbourhood and community across Birsay. The questions that follow explore these and other related matters.

- How can we provide more affordable housing in Birsay, given the high cost and limited availability of plots? Could community-led housing projects be a solution?
- Are there specific sites that could be suitable for small housing developments? What type of housing would best meet local needs?
- How can we ensure that new housing developments respect Birsay's character while being modern, energy-efficient, and suitable for long-term residents?

26. Rate Birsay 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
						

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

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

12. Social Interaction

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

- How can we build on the momentum of Birsay Hall and the Community Association's activities to create more opportunities for people to come together?
- What kinds of activities, groups, or events would encourage more social interaction across different age groups in the parish?
- Could new projects help strengthen community connections?

29. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

13. Identity & Belonging

Below are some aspects relating to community identity and engagement in and around Birsay. 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 do you think makes Birsay unique, and how can we better promote its identity as Orkney's largest parish?
- How can we celebrate and strengthen Birsay's heritage, including important sites across the Parish?
- In what ways can we encourage a stronger sense of community and belonging, building on the renewed momentum of the Community Association and local events?
- How can Birsay better promote itself to visitors while ensuring tourism benefits the community and respects local life?

32. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

14. Feeling Safe

Below are some aspects relating to safety and security in and around Birsay. 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.

- How can we address concerns about speeding, particularly on fast roads like around Castlehill area, and through the parish at night, to improve road safety for all?
- Are there particular areas on roads or pathways where safety improvements are needed?
- How can we ensure that public spaces, including walking routes, parking areas, and community facilities, feel safe and accessible for everyone?
- What measures, such as better lighting, clearer signage, or improved maintenance, would help people feel safer when moving around Birsay?

35. Rate Birsay 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
						

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

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

15. Care & Maintenance

Below are some aspects relating to the maintenance and upkeep of buildings, roads, paths, and public spaces in and around Birsay. 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.

- Are buildings, roads, paths and spaces maintained? (clean and safe, quick repairs, loved and cared for, accessible to everyone)
- Who helps to maintain our place? (council, community, businesses, others)
- Are there any challenges? (litter and fly-tipping, vandalism, pavement surfaces, changes to services, flooding, extreme weather)
- Do we report issues? (who to, online or to a person, is it easy, how responsive, does this lead to action)
- What are local services like? (cleaning, recycling, property maintenance)

38. Rate Birsay 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

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

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

16. Influence & Sense of Control

Below are some aspects relating to community voice and participation in and around Birsay. 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.

- Does the community have a voice? (confidence to take part, getting involved, influencing decisions, doing things itself)
- Does the community know about the role of the Community Council?
- Is the community listened to? (are needs understood, how well is the community consulted, more or less consultation)
- Do folk feel able to take action on their own or with neighbours? (litter picking, local improvements, working together to take action)
- Are there barriers for some people? (online / digital tools, disabled people, can everyone take part)

41. Rate Birsay 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
						

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

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

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 key data about yourself to help the assessment identify whether there are specific issues for some people in and around Birsay.

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 Birsay, 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.

44. Your postcode?

Postal Code

45. Age

☐ Aged 16-18

☐ 35-44

☐ 65-74

☐ 19-24

☐ 45-54

☐ 75 and over

☐ 25-34

☐ 55-64

☐ Prefer not to say

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

☐ Woman

☐ Man

☐ Non-binary

☐ A gender not listed here

☐ Prefer not to answer

47. Are you involved with any groups within Birsay, either as a volunteer or participant.

Tick all that apply.

☐ Birsay Community Association

☐ Birsay Agricultural Society

☐ Birsay Community Council

☐ Birsay Heritage Trust

☐ Birsay Toddlers

☐ Birsay SWRI

☐ Other (please specify)

18. Finally...

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

48. Any other ideas, concerns or suggestions?

Appendix E: Community Survey Results (Detailed)

RESIDENTIAL STATUS

(Q1) Do you live in the parish of Birsay?

Yes, I live in Birsay: 106 respondents (76.26%)

No, I don't live in Birsay, but I visit or spend time there regularly: 33 respondents (23.74%)

The majority of respondents (around three-quarters) are residents of Birsay, suggesting the survey has strong local reach. Almost a quarter are non-residents who regularly spend time in the parish—this group likely includes tourists, workers, and those with family ties, demonstrating that Birsay holds broader importance beyond its resident population.

MOVING AROUND

(Q2) Rate Birsay in respect to Moving Around on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means a lot of room for improvement and 7 means very little improvement needed: = 4.01

There's strong appreciation for Birsay's natural assets—particularly its coastline and walking routes—but concerns are clear about the infrastructure's ability to support safe and pleasant movement, especially during the busy summer months.

(Q3) What works well at present in terms of moving around Birsay?

Strengths:

- Respondents praised the extensive coastal paths and walking routes, which are widely viewed as a key asset. Paths to the Whalebone, Marwick Boaty Houses, and along St Magnus Way are frequently mentioned as well-maintained, scenic, and enjoyable. Road conditions are generally seen as good, and the existing road and path network connects major points in the parish reasonably well. Some respondents highlighted the bus service to the Palace as a useful feature, along with the availability of car parking there. Signage—particularly for the St Magnus Way—was also commended by a few.
- Identifying relevant information to feed into the Place Plan.
- Addressing some of the issues raised during the stakeholder engagement with relevant representatives of Orkney Islands Council.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- A consistent theme was the difficulty and safety concerns around walking and cycling along narrow, busy roads, especially during peak tourist season. Respondents pointed out the lack of pavements and safe verges, with routes such as the road to the Brough, Loons Road, and Marwick Shore Road seen as especially problematic when shared with cars, buses, campervans, and tractors. There is a clear lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure, making routes challenging for families and less confident cyclists. Parking shortages near popular attractions (especially the Brough and the Palace) were mentioned repeatedly, alongside more minor concerns about dog fouling, the need for more bins and benches, and a lack of inland walking routes.

Other observations / suggestions:

- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety by creating pavements, safer verges, or dedicated paths—especially on the road to the Brough and other high-traffic areas.
- Expand parking provision near key attractions or offer alternative parking further from the village.
- Enhance signage and route information for tourists, including details on route lengths and available facilities.
- Install more dog litter bins and benches, particularly along popular walking routes.
- Develop new or improved inland walking and cycling routes to provide alternatives away from busy roads.
- Explore traffic calming measures or seasonal pedestrianisation in areas that become especially busy during peak times.

(Q4) How could things be better in the future in terms of moving around?

The tone is constructive but tinged with concern. Respondents express pride in Birsay's environment but frustration with the pressures created by rising visitor numbers, particularly around narrow and deteriorating roads. Despite this, feedback is solution-focused, with practical and thoughtful ideas for improvement. Some respondents also convey a broader vision for sustainable development, showing optimism that with the right measures, the needs of residents, visitors, and the environment can be balanced effectively.

Key improvement themes:

- **Road safety and maintenance:** Many respondents stressed the need to address the deterioration of road surfaces, citing potholes and wear as growing issues. Concerns focus on narrow roads shared by buses, campervans, and agricultural vehicles. Suggestions include widening roads where feasible, improving and adding passing places, and implementing speed control measures—particularly near the Palace and other busy areas. Some respondents suggested following the model used in Lewis, where single-track roads are marked for pedestrian use.
- **Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure:** There's a clear call for safer, more accessible walking and cycling routes. Suggestions include creating new paths connecting key sites (such as from the Palace to the Brough or the campsite to the Palace), improving coastal and inland routes, and providing wheelchair-accessible paths. Maintenance of bridleways and footpaths was also highlighted, with concerns about overgrown or poorly maintained sections.
- **Parking and access management:** Parking shortages remain a common frustration. Respondents suggested expanding parking near the Palace, graveyard, and Kitchener's Memorial, and creating new parking near the village. There's also strong support for restricting bus and campervan access to the Brough, possibly replacing this with shuttle services or encouraging use of existing car parks like Birsay Hall.

- **Bus services and public transport:** Many respondents requested more frequent buses between Birsay, Kirkwall, and Stromness, and better services connecting with key tourist sites. There's enthusiasm for reintroducing a minibus tour system to improve coverage of local attractions.
- **Signage and wayfinding:** Respondents highlighted the need for clearer signage and maps for walking and cycling routes. Suggestions included circular route guides, tide times, and detailed path information to help locals and visitors navigate the area confidently.
- **Supporting infrastructure:** Additional requests include more toilets, seating, and dog waste bins at popular sites like the Brough. Environmental protection was also raised, with calls to limit vehicle access in sensitive areas to prevent damage to grass and verges.
- **Vision for the future:** A few respondents offered a longer-term vision, proposing a central hub or visitor centre to act as a focal point for both locals and tourists. This could strengthen Birsay's identity as a vibrant year-round community and promote sustainable growth.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(Q5) Rate Birsay in respect to Public Transport on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means a lot of room for improvement and 7 means very little improvement needed: = 3.07

(Q6) What works well or is good at present in terms of public transport?

The tone is pragmatic and generally appreciative. While Birsay's rural nature means limitations are expected, respondents value the existence of a bus service and express gratitude for key services—particularly the night bus and school buses. Some frustration is noted around gaps in provision, but the overall feedback reflects a community that values public transport in principle and sees room for it to become more flexible and useful.

Strengths:

- The regular bus service linking Birsay to Kirkwall and local destinations (such as the Palace) was praised for its reliability and coverage of core working hours.
- The late-night and weekend buses received strong praise, seen as vital for safe social outings now that taxis are less affordable.
- The school bus service was noted as essential and well-used.
- A few respondents pointed out improvements over past decades, recalling when no bus service existed at all.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Many respondents rarely or never use public transport, often due to reliance on private vehicles or inconvenient bus times.
- Long gaps between buses—especially mid-morning and early afternoon—were highlighted as making full days out or appointments difficult.

- Some respondents from nearby parishes, such as Sandwick, expressed frustration about poor cross-parish connections.
- Low bus occupancy was mentioned, with some questioning how well current services meet actual travel needs.

Other observations / suggestions:

- A few respondents suggested that bus shelters could be beneficial, despite concerns about weather damage.
- Some were unclear about the locations of bus stops, particularly towards Marwick, and noted challenges in walking to them (e.g., from the Hall, over a mile from some homes).

(Q7) How could things be better in the future in terms of public transport?

The tone is practical, forward-looking, and supportive of improvements. Respondents are keen on making public transport more frequent, accessible, and responsive to local needs, while recognising the challenges of rural provision. Optimism prevails that small, targeted changes could have a meaningful impact.

Key improvement themes:

- Increased frequency and flexibility: More regular buses with shorter gaps between services were the top request, along with evening and late-night options to support social and work life.
- Smaller vehicles: Many suggested that smaller minibuses or electric shuttles would better suit Birsay's narrow roads, offering safer, more responsive services.
- Bus stop infrastructure and signage: There's a clear call for better bus stops, shelters, and signage—especially at high-use points like the Palace and Kirbister Museum—and clearer timetables, particularly for visitors.
- Better connections: Improved links to Stromness and key sites (e.g., Skara Brae, Tingwall ferry) were requested, with ideas like a hub model linking local services to main routes.
- Tourism and seasonal adjustments: Suggestions included a dedicated tourist shuttle service during peak months to relieve congestion and improve visitor access.
- Other considerations: Some respondents expressed caution about balancing increased services with the environmental and infrastructure impact of more bus traffic, suggesting that modest improvements might offer the best balance.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

(Q8) Rate Birsay in respect to Traffic and Parking on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means a lot of room for improvement and 7 means very little improvement needed: = 3.23

(Q9) What works well or is good at present in terms of traffic and parking?

The tone is pragmatic with occasional frustration. Respondents generally find parking manageable during quieter periods, especially in winter, but note growing strain in the busy

tourist season. While some praise existing car parks and improvements, others express annoyance over congestion, inconsiderate parking, and pressure on space—especially at key sites like the Brough and the Palace.

Strengths:

- Good parking facilities at Birsay Community Hall, the Palace, and the Point of Buckquoy were widely appreciated for easing congestion and serving as convenient access points.
- Parking was seen as sufficient during off-peak months, with respondents noting plenty of space in winter.
- Some praised recent improvements around Dounby and other areas and valued the car park provision at community venues.
- There was agreement that the Palace car park, while small, plays an important role.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Parking pressures rise sharply during summer, with cars spilling onto verges and creating hazards—especially near the Brough.
- Campervans and motorhomes were flagged as particularly problematic, taking up significant space and occasionally parking overnight without permission.
- A few residents shared frustrations about private driveways or access points being blocked by visitors.

Other observations / suggestions:

Respondents recognised that while parking is generally adequate, the physical limits of the landscape make expansion tricky. Several noted that visitor awareness of road etiquette (like using passing places) is poor and contributes to congestion.

(Q10) How could things be better in the future in terms of traffic and parking?

The tone is frustrated but constructive. Respondents are concerned about the mounting impact of tourism on Birsay's narrow roads and limited parking, especially in peak season. There's a clear appetite for better planning and infrastructure to handle the pressures without compromising the parish's character.

Key improvement themes:

- **Parking capacity:** Strong calls for expanded parking at key locations (Palace, Point of Buckquoy, Marwick, the Brough), with suggestions for designated campervan and coach spaces and ideas for paid parking to fund improvements.
- **Campervan and bus management:** Many want overnight campervan parking banned or better regulated, with alternatives like formal sites or paid areas. Large tourist buses were also seen as problematic, with suggestions for restricting their access or creating lay-bys.

- **Traffic safety:** Repeated concerns about narrow roads, blind corners, and worn surfaces, with suggestions for speed limits, repairs, traffic calming measures, and improved signage—especially around pinch points and passing places.
- **Park-and-ride ideas:** Some proposed park-and-ride schemes from Birsay Community Hall, along with seasonal shuttle services to ease pressure on the village itself.
- **Zoning and pedestrianisation:** Ideas included moving parking away from village centres to improve safety and creating hardstanding areas along the coast to formalise informal parking.
- **Other considerations:** Many respondents stressed the need for sensitive development that balances improved access with protecting Birsay's rural and natural beauty.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

(Q11) Rate Birsay in respect to the built environment on a scale of 1 to 7: = 4.63

(Q12) What works well or is good at present in terms of the built environment?

The tone is positive and appreciative. Respondents are proud of their community facilities—especially the Community Hall—and value heritage sites and local businesses. While some concerns exist, particularly around housing shortages, overall, the built environment is seen as a key strength.

Strengths:

- **Community Hall:** Universally praised as an excellent facility—a hub for events, well-maintained, and highly valued by all ages.
- **Heritage sites:** The Barony Mill, Kirbister Farm Museum, and Earl's Palace were highlighted as important both for history and tourism.
- **Local businesses:** The Palace Stores, tearoom, and other local shops were described as vital assets, contributing to Birsay's charm and economic resilience.
- **Play Park:** Seen as a standout feature, offering excellent facilities for children and families.
- **Public toilets:** Recognised as useful, though with room for improvements in accessibility.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Respondents raised concerns about a lack of social housing, the impact of holiday lets, and opportunities for better heritage promotion.

(Q13) How could things be better in the future in terms of the built environment?

The tone is optimistic and solutions focused. Respondents want more affordable housing, better visitor facilities, and thoughtful stewardship of heritage and infrastructure.

Key improvement themes:

- Housing: A clear call for more affordable and social housing, especially for young families and locals.
- Heritage and visitor hubs: Strong support for a central visitor/heritage centre and improved signage.
- Reuse of buildings: Suggestions for repurposing disused structures into cafes, craft hubs, or community spaces.
- Infrastructure upgrades: Ideas included better toilets, bins, and accessible paths.
- Planning flexibility: Many want more supportive planning policies, especially for locals building homes.
- Other considerations: Respondents suggested community ownership models and co-housing as ways to sustain growth while protecting community character.

NATURAL SPACE

(Q14) Rate Birsay in respect to natural space: = 4.74

(Q15) What works well or is good at present in terms of natural space?

The tone is proud and enthusiastic. Respondents deeply value Birsay's coastal landscapes, wildlife, and walking routes.

Strengths:

- The Brough, Marwick Head, and coastal paths were celebrated as highlights.
- Walking routes are well-regarded, with St Magnus Way praised for its signage.
- The peaceful, unspoilt nature of Birsay's environment was highlighted as a huge asset.

Other observations / suggestions:

- A few noted that parking limits naturally cap visitor numbers, helping to preserve the environment.

(Q16) How could things be better in the future in terms of natural space?

The tone is thoughtful and protective. Respondents focus on improving access, maintaining existing paths, and managing visitor impacts.

Key improvement themes:

- More circular walking routes and better linking of existing paths.
- Additional benches, bins, and toilets at scenic spots.
- Improved signage, especially for tide times and visitor etiquette.
- Erosion management and environmental protection measures.
- Wildlife features like bird hides and nature trails.

- Community projects like tree planting and improvements to local jetties were also mentioned.

PLAY AND RECREATION

(Q17) Rate Birsay in respect to play and recreation: = 4.86

(Q18) What works well or is good at present in terms of play and recreation?

The tone is highly positive. Respondents are proud of the play park and community facilities.

Strengths:

- The play park is widely praised as excellent, safe, and well-used.
- The Community Hall offers a range of indoor activities.
- Open spaces and coastal areas provide additional recreation.

Other observations / suggestions:

- Some minor maintenance issues were noted, along with a suggestion that the play park could be expanded.

(Q19) How could things be better in the future in terms of play and recreation?

The tone is constructive, with suggestions to enhance existing facilities and expand options for older children.

- Key improvement themes:
- More play equipment, especially for older kids.
- New facilities like basketball courts, crazy golf, or indoor spaces.
- Better use of existing grounds behind the Hall.
- Safer walking/cycling links to the play park.
- Community-led initiatives like a play park committee.

FACILITIES & SERVICES

(Q20) Rate Birsay in respect to facilities & services: = 4.04

(Q21) What works well or is good at present in terms of facilities & services?

The tone is positive and appreciative. Respondents highlight key local services like the Community Hall, shop, and tearoom as vital, with community effort playing a big part in keeping facilities strong.

Strengths:

- The Community Hall was praised as a fantastic space, well-run and central to parish life
- The Palace Stores was frequently mentioned as essential, both practically and socially.

- The Birsay Bay Tearoom and other local businesses contribute to a thriving local economy.
- Public toilets, parking, and other basic infrastructure support both locals and visitors.
- St Magnus Kirk's post office service was also valued.

Other observations / suggestions:

- Some suggested better promotion of existing facilities to boost their use and impact.

(Q22) How could things be better in the future in terms of facilities & services?

The tone is practical and detailed, with clear priorities around toilets, waste management, and supporting local businesses.

Key improvement themes:

- More toilets and bins, especially at popular visitor spots.
- Waste disposal points for campervans.
- Grants and support to keep the shop and local businesses sustainable.
- Improved parking and clearer signage.
- Repair of the fisherman's slipway and coastal facilities.
- Better transport options for elderly residents.
- Respondents stressed the need for sensitive placement of new infrastructure to avoid overloading the village centre.

LOCAL ECONOMY

(Q23) Rate Birsay in respect to the local economy: = 3.87

(Q24) What works well or is good at present in terms of the local economy?

The tone is realistic but positive, with pride in local businesses and a sense of resilience despite challenges.

Strengths:

- Palace Stores and Birsay Bay Tearoom are seen as core employers and community assets.
- Heritage sites and farms also provide jobs and support tourism.
- The Birsay Heritage Trust was praised for creating jobs and offering youth opportunities.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Housing shortages limit economic potential.
- Planning policies and transport constraints were seen as barriers to growth.

(Q25) How could things be better in the future in terms of the local economy?

The tone is frustrated but determined. Respondents want to see practical steps to unlock local potential.

Key improvement themes:

- Affordable housing is essential to support workers and retain young people.
- More flexibility in planning rules.
- Diversification beyond tourism and farming, with space for startups and remote working.
- Grants and council support for local businesses.
- Infrastructure improvements to help local trade.

HOUSING & COMMUNITY

(Q26) Rate Birsay in respect to housing & community: = 3.49

(Q27) What works well or is good at present in terms of housing & community?

The tone is mixed. Respondents praise strong community ties and key facilities but raise concerns about housing shortages.

Strengths:

- The Community Hall and village shop foster a strong sense of community.

Other observations / suggestions:

- Some felt housing levels are sufficient; others raised serious concerns about availability and affordability.

(Q28) How could things be better in the future in terms of housing & community?

The tone is solution-focused, with strong calls for more housing and planning flexibility.

Key improvement themes:

- Affordable and social housing for locals.
- Loosening planning restrictions.
- Creative housing solutions like co-housing and repurposing empty buildings.
- Prioritising housing near existing services.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

(Q29) Rate Birsay in respect to social interaction: = 4.76

(Q30) What works well or is good at present in terms of social interaction?

The tone is positive and appreciative. Respondents highlight the Community Hall as the beating heart of local social life.

Strengths:

- A wide range of activities at the Hall, with a welcoming atmosphere.
- Strong volunteer effort keeps the community connected.

Other observations / suggestions:

- Some noted communication gaps and challenges engaging younger residents.

(Q31) How could things be better in the future in terms of social interaction?

The tone is hopeful and constructive, with practical suggestions.

Key improvement themes:

- More youth-focused activities.
- Better promotion of events (Facebook, noticeboards).
- Addressing transport barriers.
- Creating informal drop-in spaces.
- Ideas for more varied adult activities.

IDENTITY & BELONGING

(Q32) Rate Birsay in respect to identity & belonging: = 5.17

(Q33) What works well or is good at present in terms of identity & belonging?

The tone is proud and appreciative. Respondents highlight strong community cohesion and a deep connection to Birsay's history and landscape.

Strengths:

- Pride in heritage sites and local businesses.
- Events like the Parish Cup foster a sense of belonging.
- Volunteer efforts maintain and celebrate Birsay's identity.

(Q34) How could things be better in the future in terms of identity & belonging?

The tone is positive but forward-thinking. Respondents want to see heritage better promoted and younger people engaged in sustaining Birsay's identity.

Key improvement themes:

- Improved interpretation (signage, apps, heritage trails).
- More engagement of younger residents.
- Sustaining identity through good infrastructure and housing.
- Restoring iconic landmarks like the whalebone monument.

(Q35) Rate Birsay in respect to feeling safe: = 4.61

(Q36) What works well or is good at present in terms of feeling safe?

The tone is confident and appreciative, with Birsay seen as peaceful and low in crime. However, road safety concerns are noted.

Strengths:

- Very low crime rates.
- Strong sense of trust and security.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Road safety issues (speeding, narrow roads) were highlighted as the main safety concern.

(Q37) How could things be better in the future in terms of feeling safe?

The tone is focused on traffic concerns. Respondents seek practical road safety improvements.

Key improvement themes:

- Traffic calming (speed bumps, signage).
- Better road and verge maintenance.
- More passing places and safer footpaths.
- Stronger enforcement of speed limits.

CARE & MAINTENANCE

(Q38) Rate Birsay in respect to care & maintenance: = 4.00

(Q39) What works well or is good at present in terms of care & maintenance?

The tone is mixed. Local volunteer efforts are praised, but frustrations with council services (especially roads) are clear.

Strengths:

- Hall maintenance, graveyards, and public toilets are seen as well cared for.

Challenges / limitations / concerns:

- Roads, verges, and drainage were identified as key problem areas.

(Q40) How could things be better in the future in terms of care & maintenance?

The tone is one of rising frustration, particularly around road and path conditions.

Key improvement themes:

- Better road repairs and drainage.
- More bins and regular emptying.
- Proactive maintenance of footpaths and public spaces.
- Fairer distribution of council resources.

INFLUENCE & SENSE OF CONTROL

(Q41) Rate Birsay in respect to influence & sense of control: = 3.72

(Q42) What works well or is good at present in terms of influence & sense of control?

The tone is mixed. Local structures like the Community Council are valued, but frustrations remain about the wider council's responsiveness.

Strengths:

- The Community Council is approachable.
- Some scepticism about its influence over Orkney Islands Council decisions.

(Q43) How could things be better in the future in terms of influence & sense of control?

The tone is constructive, with suggestions for clearer communication and stronger local advocacy.

Key improvement themes:

- More visibility for the Community Council.
- Better engagement with residents.
- Stronger advocacy to OIC.
- Addressing digital exclusion to widen participation.

(Q44) Any other ideas, concerns or suggestions?

Respondents emphasised frustration over planning policies, infrastructure gaps (especially roads and broadband), and tourism pressures. Positive suggestions included better youth activities, bike hire, and restoring the Whalebone landmark—balanced by calls to maintain Birsay's unique character while making thoughtful improvements.

Appendix F: Birsay Projects

Barony Mill is a unique heritage and visitor attraction in Birsay. It is the last working water mill in Orkney and the only place in the world still grinding bere, an ancient barley cultivated since neolithic times.

During the winter months the mill operates as a flour mill, producing beremeal in the traditional way using water from a nearby loch. In the summer the mill is open to the public for guided tours, giving visitors an opportunity to see the historic machinery in action and learn the story of bere.

Birsay Heritage Trust, the organisation responsible for operating the Mill, brought the mill back into operation and runs it as a well respected visitor attraction and successful heritage milling business. Last year the mill sold over eleven tonnes of beremeal flour, with nearly eight of those tonnes being sold in Orkney. The mill is fed with bere grown locally by the Trust. A significant quantity of the bere grown also goes to a local distiller of whisky and has historically also been used in local brewing. The Trust has a vision for its future which would include bringing the mill site into community ownership with subsequent renovation of an adjacent, derelict mill so that retail and exhibition space can be developed. This second mill could be brought into use as a mill or as a renewable energy generation facility subject to the appropriate permissions being obtained. A review of access to the site would be taken forward, with a view to improving parking arrangements for visitors.



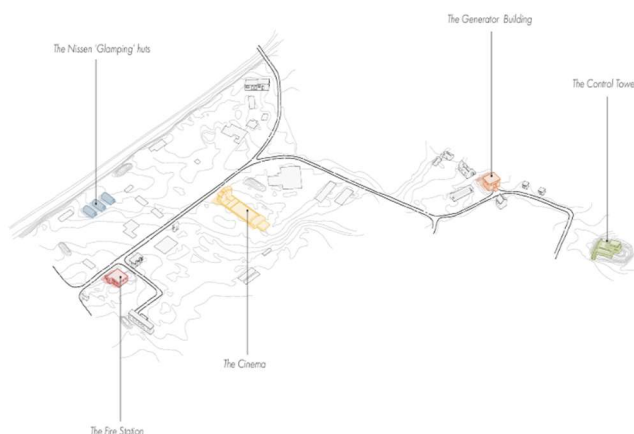
HMS Tern was a large airfield in World War II set up to protect and support the Royal Navy's fleet at Scapa Flow. It was constructed within months of the outbreak of War in 1939. Built on what was said to be the finest farmland in Orkney it was operational in 1941, with four runways and an area covering 564 acres. As many as 1,500 men and women were based there so the site was not only an airfield but included recreational and accommodation facilities. Today only a few of the buildings remain. Many of these were saved by the Birsay Heritage Trust which acquired the airfield in 2020.



Birsay Heritage Trust has operated the site as a visitor and heritage attraction and is preserving the remaining buildings and the story of the vital role HMS Tern played in the history, not just of Orkney, but of Britain in World War II. The Trust is now embarking on a major project to further protect and develop the site by bringing several of the buildings back into use to tell the story of the site, the people and its history.

The vision is to create a Visitor Journey - a visitor experience where the entire site is open to explore both inside and between buildings, either as part of a guided tour or individually. Within this open landscape there will be a core visitor route following a series of interpretation points. These interpretation points include key buildings, exhibitions and external interpretation and wayfinding points in the landscape.

Design options are being considered for five locations within the site: the Control Tower, the Cinema, the Generator Building, the Fire Station and new Nissen Glamping Huts. Several other buildings will be preserved and gradually brought back to life.



Linkshouse Orkney Arts Residency, located in Birsay Village, is a dedicated residential and creative space; both a landing strip for artists visiting Orkney and a launch pad for local creativity.



The property came to the Pier Arts Centre as a bequest from Barbara and Edgar Williamson in memory of their son, artist Erlend Williamson (1966-96), who found great inspiration in Orkney's landscape and environment. Pier Arts Centre has an established reputation for enhances community wealth through a combination of economic growth, education, cultural identity, and by actively fostering wellbeing through social connection and cohesion.

A pilot artist residency programme has been trialled at Linkshouse since 2002. The expansion at Linkshouse will provide all year-round facilities for artists, visitors and organisations to work from its spectacular location in Birsay and prevent the building from falling into a state of disrepair. Its improved group facilities will create networking opportunities for artists and organisations to engage in exchange nationally and internationally in ways that have not previously been possible in Orkney bringing income to local businesses in Birsay and the Orkney mainland. Users from around the world bring increased revenue to Birsay and the surrounding area by spending in local businesses contributing to GVA.

The Pier Arts Centre is keen to maximize the potential of this resource and have plans to improve the facility as part of Orkney's Creative Catalyst, an initiative part-funded by The Islands Growth Deal within the Creative Islands Wellbeing Programme.

The project comprises the redevelopment and expansion of facilities at Linkshouse, with construction works planned to commence in 2026. The design focuses on the themes of Practice, Gather and Retreat.



A priority aim is to undertake essential repairs so as to preserve the fabric of the building, futureproofing its usability for generations to come. Additional heated studio spaces will be created so that artists can be accommodated all year round, along with a self-contained residential studio so that both individual and group residencies can take place at the same time. There will be new flexible spaces to enable larger groups to gather, with a view to attracting both local and international visitors.

Pier Arts Centre will work with local creative partners such as Orkney Folk Festival, and other promoters in Orkney's creative and cultural calendar, to host workshops and summer schools. There will be new flexible spaces to enable larger groups to gather, with a view to attracting both local and international visitors.

Kirbuster Farm Museum offers an authentic insight into rural Orcadian life across four centuries—from its medieval origins through Victorian embellishments to its transition into a modern museum. The firehouse interior, peat hearth, stone neuk bed, working kiln, and preserved outbuildings make it a cultural and historic treasure unique to Orkney. This firehouse is a house centred around a peat-fuelled hearth with a smoke hole instead of a chimney.



Owned and operated by the Council there are long-term plans in development to expand the attraction. This will begin with the proposed construction of a replica Viking Longhouse, which is about to be submitted for planning approval and is fully funded. Subsequent proposals, as yet unfunded, include renovation of out buildings to facilitate the creation of an interpretation centre and group welcome space, and remedial works to the main house which will add 20th Century rooms to the existing 17th, 18th and 19th century spaces. There were around 8,000 visitors to the Museum in 2024; this number is expected to grow once the project has been completed.

Appendix G: Maps and links to supporting documents referenced in 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](#)

Orkney Tourism Strategy: [orkney_tourism_strategy_2020-2030.pdf](#)

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

Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan: [item-16-strategic-tourism-infrastructure-development-plan.pdf](#)