

UNST

THE ISLAND ABOVE ALL OTHERS

WELCOME PACK – ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO UNST

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Welcome! This guide was updated in May 2023 as a guide for future residents to the UK's most northerly island, Unst.

The guide is not absolutely formal. If you're visiting or moving here, we want you to know exactly what it's like – and we want you to get the best out of it. This guide will tell you a lot about what you need to know before relocating to Unst. Each section throughout this guide will provide you with general information that you will find useful before you make your big move. The end of each section will note practicalities to consider once you've made the trip north.

Unst is not just an island, it's a community, and we look forward to you becoming a part of it.

This guide was produced by Unst Partnership Ltd and supported by Unst Community Council and our SIC Community Planning and Development Officer.



Unst Community Council



Shetland Islands Council

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WELCOME TO UNST

Unst is the most northerly inhabited island in the United Kingdom often referred to as 'the island above all others'. As well as being a beautiful island with famous tourism recognition, it is also a fantastic place to live and raise a family.

Unst is unique in terms of its scenic beauty and mystical charm. It is one of the most spectacular, varied and interesting islands in Europe with ultramarine sea, beautiful sun-bleached beaches of pure sand, majestic cliffs and hills, outstanding flora and fauna and national nature reserves of international significance. Sited on a 12 by 5 mile area and with a population of approximately 650, the land remains unspoilt and is a pleasant place to live in.

Whilst living here, you will be provided with multiple opportunities to experience the splendour of the most northerly point in the UK. Your winter evenings become memorable with the northern lights making appearances and your summers are spent outdoors in the unlimited sunlight. New faces are always welcome to the community, so don't be afraid to get involved with activities, events and groups. You will meet new friends before you know it. Shetland is one of the safest places to live in the United Kingdom, and Unst strengthens the statistics even more. With little or no crime on the island, Unst is one of the safest environments to raise children with outstanding education, opportunity and flexibility. It's not a novelty to see a group of children outdoors without adult supervision, in fact it's the norm.

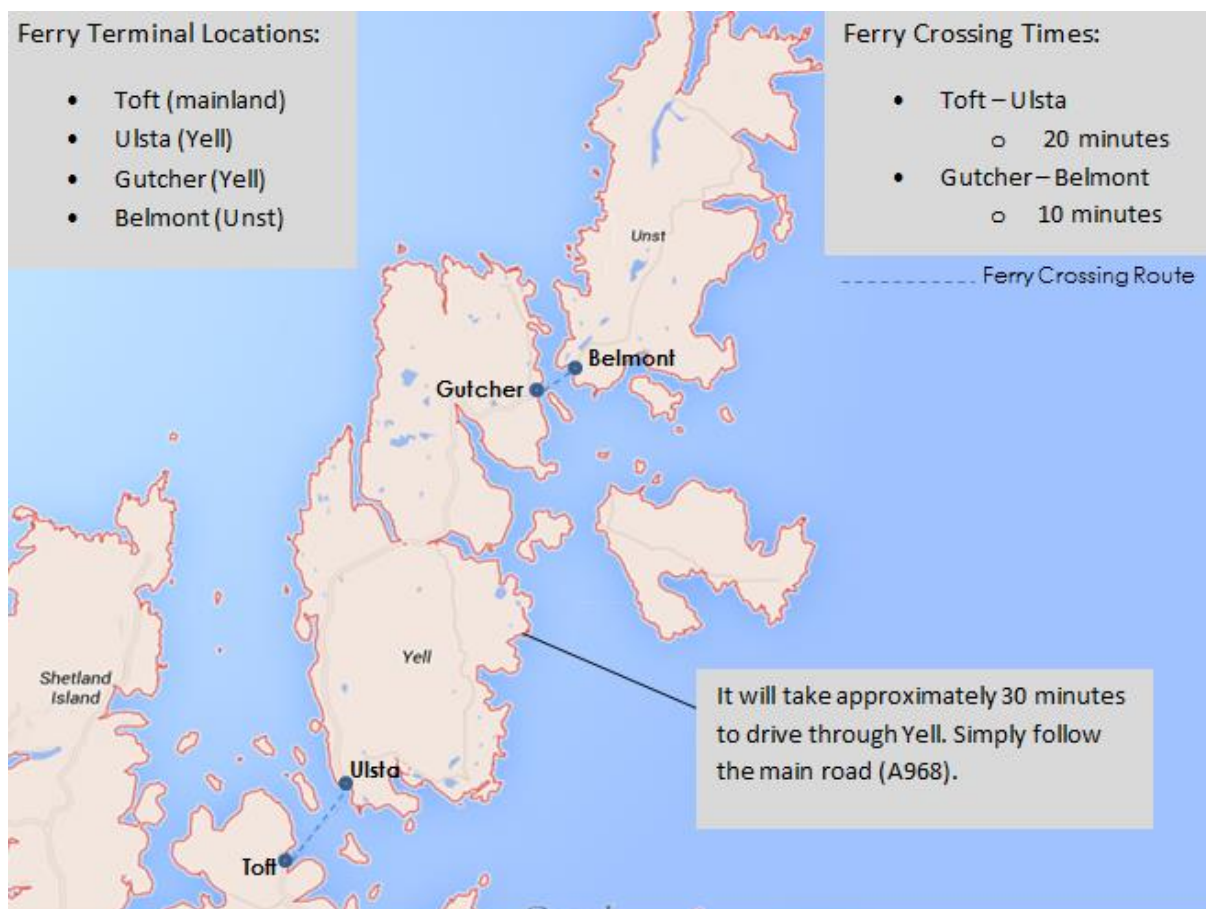




GETTING HERE

Getting to Unst may seem like an adventure, and it is. Who gets to say they live on the most northerly island in the United Kingdom? A trip to Shetland's main town, Lerwick takes time but is fairly straightforward. It's all very relaxed once you've faced that first journey, and is a journey which makes living in Unst so unique.

Getting from Lerwick to Unst will take 90 – 120 minutes and involves two ferry journeys. You do not pay on any route from Unst going **to** Lerwick. The only ferry fare payment made is from Lerwick to Unst on the Toft to Ulsta route. Please see below:



Lerwick to Unst – ferries leave Toft and Gutcher. Unst to Lerwick – ferries leave Belmont and Ulsta.

Ferry Timetables and Fares information can be found at: <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/ferries/timetable.asp>

Once you're here:

- Ferry bookings can be made online at the above address or on 01595745804.
- The earliest ferries are 0615 and 0630. The latest ferry is 2250. These ferries must be booked.
- Occasionally weather or technical issues may cause disruption to the timetable. You can sign up for alerts to your mobile from SIC.
- There are two ferry timetables published throughout the year: winter and summer timetables.
- If you can show you are an Isles resident, you can get a concession fare. The full ferry fare for a driver and car is about £15 return. The concession rate is just over £10 return.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Please note that public transport is limited compared to city bus services. If you are moving here without a car, please look into public transport first to ensure it can meet your needs.

BUS SERVICE

Locally based Jamieson's Coaches offer a bus service through Unst which also links with the bus service to Lerwick on mainland Shetland. It **is** possible to travel from Unst to Lerwick and back to Unst in the same day using the bus service.

For more information on bus times, please see <http://www.zettrans.org.uk/bus/documents/NorthIslesLeaflet.pdf>



If you are unsure of bus services, it may be worth phoning the local provider on Unst, Jamieson's Coaches on 01957 711666.

TAXI SERVICE ON UNST

There is one main taxi provider based on the island of Unst which will drop you at locations on and off island:

- R. G. Jamieson Ltd– 01957 711666

Once you're here:

- Jamiesons Ltd is located in Baltasound at Hagdale Industrial Estate beside The Final Checkout shop and café. To book on the bus service or order a taxi, please call 01957711666 or email info@rgjamieson.com

KEY CONTACTS

Emergency Contacts

In the event of an emergency, call 999 and ask for the emergency services required: ambulance, fire brigade, police or coastguard.

Call to emergency services remain free on Unst, and please ask for Police if you are unsure which service is needed.

NHS – Health Care on Unst

In the event of injury or a situation requiring medical assistance, please visit Unst Medical Centre:

Hillsgarth Surgery, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, ZE2 9DY

01957711318

Once you have moved to your new home in Unst, the first thing you should do is register with your new local surgery. Please visit the surgery during opening hours to find out more information on how to do this.

Unst Partnership Ltd - Community

This charity organisation is based on Unst at Hagdale Industrial Estate and will be willing to assist new residents in any way possible. Please email up@unst.org or call 01957711495 for more information.

Once you're here:

- The local community council is Unst Community Council. This comprises of 9 residents elected on a four yearly basis. Anyone over 18 on the Unst Electoral Roll has a vote.
- There is a **local phonebook** available to buy in The Final Checkout, Skibhoul Stores and Henderson's shops for a small fee.

HOUSING

Unst boasts various housing styles throughout the island. With modern dwellings, traditional croft houses, restored croft homes and a number of small housing estates, there is a home for everyone.

Social Housing

Shetland Islands Council and Hjalatland Housing Association work together to provide housing services which provides families and individuals physical homes and housing advice. These houses are often semi-detached and offer families a safe and friendly place to live. Please see information below for more details:

Hjalatland Housing Association

t. 01595 694986

w. <http://www.hjalatland.org.uk/>

e. mail@hjalatland.org

Shetland Islands Council Housing

t. 01595 744360

w. <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/housing>

e. housing@shetland.gov.uk

Private Rented Accommodation

There are a number of private rentals often available on Unst for those wishing to relocate. This is changing all the time, however, so we advise looking on Shetlink and online to find this accommodation. To gain local knowledge on private rented housing currently available on Unst, please call Unst Partnership's Local Development Officer on 01957711495.

Buying a Home

Any homes listed for sale on Unst will be advertised online. Below are some suggestions which may advertise any available:

- www.estateagencyshetland.co.uk Harper McLeod
- <https://www.andersonstrathern.co.uk/residential-property-service/> Anderson Strathern
- <http://www.tait-peterson.co.uk> Tait & Peterson
- <http://www.shetlandislesproperty.co.uk> Michael Inkster
- <http://www.anderson-goodlad.co.uk/> Anderson & Goodlad
- <http://www.inksters.com> Inksters Ltd.
- <https://arthurandsimpson.com/> Arthur & Simpson

Once you're here:

- Don't forget to have a look at the notice boards! Private rented accommodation and furniture for sale is often advertised in local shops.
- Lerwick offers a number of stores which will help you make your home yours.
- Unst Partnership sells household goods and some furniture at their shop in Baltasound.

COURIERS AND DELIVERIES

Deliveries from Lerwick

Goods can be transported to Unst from Lerwick by both local and Shetland couriers. Henderson's in Cullivoe, Yell have a truck and a van that delivers from the Shetland mainland. (Henderson's tel 01957 744 248.)

Royal Mail

Unst has its own Post Office, situated next to Skibhoul Stores. There is one daily mail delivery for residents Monday to Saturday. For posting mail, it leaves the island at around 9:15 every morning. It is worth considering Royal Mail for parcels as couriers sometimes charge extra for delivery to Shetland. Items do take longer to post. As the most northerly Post Office in Britain, our Post Office also boasts a special stamp for mail, which you can request, and wow relatives with! Mail order goods come very quickly despite the distance.

Couriers and Haulage

Henderson's from Yell are the haulage company that deliver most courier packages from various companies/couriers to Unst, and are usually in Unst on Tuesdays and Fridays. Haulage companies in Shetland sometimes have links to companies. For example if you wish to order furniture from IKEA, Shetland Transport offer a fortnightly pick up service from IKEA Edinburgh.

Mainland couriers and haulage companies can charge extra to bring goods to Shetland. It is therefore worth getting quotes from different companies and investigating what options are available to you. Often deliveries can take longer than companies estimate.

For moving there are also local removals companies.

Contact Details:

Sandisons, Baltasound	01957 711444	R.S. Hendersons,Yell,	01957 744227
Shetland Transport, Lk,	01595 695792	Streamline, Lerwick,	01595 692869
Northwards, Lerwick(LK)	01595 694452	Reid Removals, Lk	01595 696268
Northlink Ferries, Orkney,	01856 885500	Nicolsons, J.A. & J.D.	01950 477573

FINDING A JOB – WORK

Shetland has a high employment rate generally and there are a wide range of opportunities. In Unst main sectors of employment are in the public sector, (mainly education and social care) tourism and the service industry, aquaculture, construction and transport. Within Tourism seasonal work may also be available. There are also small local companies focussing on a diverse range of products although opportunities within these companies are less frequent. It is possible to commute to Yell or the North Mainland of Shetland, for example in the Oil Sector. Commuting to Lerwick is possible, but it is approximately 2 hours journey each way. Commuting without a car can be more difficult. Vacancies can be found at the following:

- **SIC Vacancies on myjobscotland** - <https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/shetland-islands-council>.
- **Shetland Jobs Facebook Page** where jobs available throughout Shetland are often posted – www.facebook.com/ShetlandJobs.
- **The Shetland Times** which is published on each Friday of the week lists a number of jobs available throughout Shetland. Online at <http://www.shetlandtimes.co.uk/category/situations-vacant/>
- **Shetland News:** <http://www.shetnews.co.uk/jobs/>
- **NHS:** <https://jobs.scot.nhs.uk/>
- **Shetland Recreational Trust:** <http://www.srt.org.uk/jobs>
- **Unst Partnership Ltd's** Facebook page occasionally carries job adverts.

SETTING UP A BUSINESS

You may be looking to set up a new business or relocate your current business on your move to Unst. Well, it's possible! There are a number of successful businesses on the island who offer unique services. Entrepreneurial support is available at Business Gateway: <http://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/shetland>

Once you're here:

- Although a fantastic service, please bear in mind that public transport is limited for travel within and out with the island. Please check this meets your needs. Taxi services are available if local transport does not work with timescales. LOCAL TRANSPORT section of this guide will provide more info.
- Visiting local organisations to enquire about work, regardless of advertisements or not, can often put your foot in the door for work on the island. Unst Partnership can put you in contact with these.
- Do you need broadband for your business? Please check it is available where you wish to live.
- Shetland Islands council have a FAQ site for applying for posts: http://www.shetland.gov.uk/about_jobs/FAQs.asp

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

BALTASOUND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Although a small island, the education is outstanding at Baltasound Junior High School (BJHS) with grades often being achieved above the UK average. This is the only school on the island, located in Baltasound. The school provides a nursery for those aged between 3-4 years old, and continues education through to Primary 1-7 and Secondary 1-4. As an inclusive school, BJHS also support pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) and continuously works towards the provision of a coordinated support plan for all pupils who require additional support. The community library offers a massively attended 'Bookbug' and is open to the public throughout the week.



S5-6 takes place in Lerwick at the Anderson High School. Students travel to Lerwick on Sunday nights, and return Friday evening, through a council bus service. This can sound daunting but this opportunity is described as the best schooling years by previous island students where lifelong friends are guaranteed to be made! Students stay in supervised, homely, safe, central hostel accommodation for free with all meals provided for them (apart from lunch). Other students from remote islands also stay here, and it's often described as "the best times" by young islanders.

The school plays an integral role in community life and is a 'hub' for Unst with its enthusiasm stretching across the island. Through school projects, concerts, clubs and initiatives, BJHS ensures a wide range of opportunities are available that allow children to work in the community and include the outdoor environment as much as possible. Local transport provision makes it easy for children to attend. - Local transport will collect and return children home safely each day.



Once you're here:

- For BJHS website please visit <http://www.baltasound.shetland.sch.uk/>.
- To speak to BJHS directly, please call 01595 807020
- Please be aware term times can be different compared to where you currently reside. Please take a look at these on the BJHS website. Wouldn't like you to miss a holiday!
- BJHS also have a Facebook page – 'Baltasound Junior High School'

SHETLAND COLLEGE: NORTH ISLES LEARNING CENTRE

The North Isles Learning Centre is based at Baltasound Junior High School two days a week, Tuesdays and Fridays, and at Mid Yell Junior High School on a Wednesday.

Courses on offer at this college, based on Unst:

- Digital Photos: Still Image Editing
- Digital Photobooks & Calendars
- Mixing Sound, Video and Photos
- Using Sage Financial Accounting Software
- European Computer Driving License (ECDL) – level 1/2 or Group Award.
- Developing Skills for Employment
- PDA in Office Administration
- PDA in IT for Business

The college also offers support learning & SVQ's free of charge.

The college also offers a number of media facilities. These include: 4 computers, mobile classroom, video conferencing equipment, 2 digital cameras, scanner, colour printer, Wi-fi, LCD projector and digital video recorder.

Once you're here:

- Main contact on Unst: Josie McMillan 0159771341 josie.macmillan@uhi.ac.uk
- Main website for UHI – www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk
- For more information on courses, fees, timings and extra information, please visit

<http://www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk/study-with-us/college-centres/north-isles-learning-centres/>

HEALTH

HILSGARTH SURGERY

Hillsgarth Surgery is Unst's local surgery with a Doctor and Nursing service. You can find out more at www.unsthealthcentre.co.uk/

When you move to Unst, the surgery asks that you register as soon as possible. Forms can be collected at reception and you will be asked to bring some form of identification. All new patients will get a copy of the practice leaflet and are offered a health check with the practice nurse, which will provide useful information whilst we wait for your medical records to arrive from your previous doctor. This health check also ensures that any required tests are up-to-date and that the surgery has an accurate note of any repeat medication you may be taking.



The surgery is open Monday to Friday 9-4pm, closing at 1pm on a Wednesday. The surgery also offers appointments on a Saturday morning twice a month by prior arrangement. When the surgery is closed there is a recorded message informing you how to contact the on-call doctor at home. The surgery asks that you do not ring out-of-hours for repeat prescriptions, appointments or non-urgent medical matters. The duty doctor is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and should only be contacted out-of-hours in an emergency.

The surgery staff comprises of two doctors, a practice nurse, district nurse, health care assistant and reception team, including staff who dispense prescriptions. A mid wife and health visitor and health improvement officer also conduct regular appointments at the surgery. The nearest hospital is Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick, approximately 2 hours away. In case of emergency, ambulance or air ambulance will be called to transport patients to Lerwick. Please always call our Unst Doctor first.

Dental Care

Dental care for Unst residents is provided by the Dental Care practice in Mid Yell which is attached to the Yell Health Care Practice. It provides NHS Dental Care. To find out more about registering please contact directly. The number is 01957 702031. There is normally a fairly lengthy waiting list for a check-up but if you are in pain you will be seen promptly. There are private and other NHS dentists in Lerwick.

MOBILE/BROADBAND COVERAGE

MOBILE COVERAGE

Although a northerly location, mobile coverage on the island is workable. The best network providers are Vodafone and Orange/EE, although there are areas on Unst where neither is very effective. It depends on where you are

- Vodafone: Most places, except Baltasound
- Orange/EE: Most places, except Uyeasound.

Please take into consideration where 'home' will be in order to receive mobile signal if required. 4G and 3G are available in some areas of Unst. Most people on the island use mobile devices through wifi but using 4G to toggle with a mobile or tablet is becoming more common. Some people have a satellite service, which is dearer depending on the package you have. Ferry terminals and SIC buildings, including Unst Leisure Centre, offer access to "SIC Guest" which is a free public broadband service.

BROADBAND

Broadband connection in Unst depends on your location and admittedly, can be poor in some areas. Although not present on Unst at the moment, it is hoped the island will gain "Superfast full fibre" connections in the future (2023-24).

At the present time, broadband connections on average are as follows:

- **Haroldswick:** Present in areas nearest Baltasound. Norwick, Burrafirth you may experience poor connections. About 1-2 Mbps.
- **Baltasound:** This is where connection is the strongest, but is still below the UK average speeds. Speeds still allow you to work comfortably. About 5-8 Mbps.
- **Uyeasound:** The internet here is poor, however many still manage and some have gone over to satellite. A little more patience may be required here compared to Baltasound. Some people end up going to the ferry terminal at Belmont to access SIC Guest. About 0.5 Mbps.
- **Wireless EE 4G** seems good in many areas of the island now but you are best to test it out with a mobile phone for signal strength.

LIVE,
BREATHE,
LOVE UNST



DAILY LOCAL FACILITIES

3 local shops for groceries:

- The Final Checkout at P&T Coaches (Cash Machine)
- Skibhoul Stores and Bakery (National Lottery Machine)
- Hendersons Stores

Cafes:

- Victoria's Vintage Tea Rooms
- The Final Checkout Café at P&T Coaches
- Hot drinks and biscuits available from the Heritage Centre and Unst Boat Haven during opening hours in summer months

Restaurants:

- The Balta Light bar/function room has bar meals usually on Thursday-Saturday night
- The Baltasound Hotel –usually residents only.

Public Bar – limited opening hours during Winter months:

- Balta Light Bar and Function Room, Hagdale, Baltasound

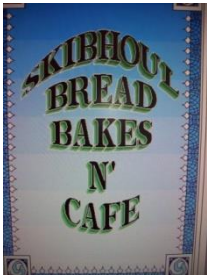
Halls:

- Uyeasound Hall, Uyeasound
- Baltasound Hall, Baltasound
- North Unst Public Hall (Also known as Haroldswick Hall), Haroldswick

Other facilities:

- Sunday Soup n' Sandwich lunches – once a month in the Baltasound hall.
- Unst Leisure Centre – Swimming Pool, Games Hall, Fitness suite, Spinning bikes, Bike Hire
- Baltasound Junior High School
- Unst Post Office – Postal and Banking facilities
- Fuel at Final Checkout or Skibhoul Stores
- Taxi Hire with Jamiesons Ltd
- Garage car hire, repair and taxi service at Jamiesons Ltd
- Avril (Hairdresser) Wed-Friday, next to Skibhoul Stores Tel 01957 711428
- Unst Partnership secondhand Shop , Unit 1, Hagdale, Baltasound near to Garage and Final Checkout. Open Thurs & Sat 2-4pm

LOCAL SHOPS



Skibhoul Stores – Baltasound

Skibhoul stores provides daily groceries, fruit and veg as well as freshly baked rolls, bannocks and unique oatcakes from their bakery. Fuel and cashback also available, with the shop also being a National Lottery retailer. 01957 711 304.



Henderson's Stores - Baltasound

Henderson's Stores is locally known as Ethel's. This shop sells fresh groceries and just about everything else, including household goods, tools and paints, as well as local crafts, gifts and toys! Ethel's also offers the 'cashback' facility. 01957 711411.



The Final Checkout - Baltasound, Hagdale

The Final Checkout offers a selection of groceries along with other household tools. The café serves fresh soup of the day daily along with other café menu meals – take away or sit in. Cashback service available. Shop/cafe open on Sundays. 01957 711890.

Baltasound Post Office - Baltasound

As well as being the post office, with postal equipment and stationery for sale, cards and gifts can be purchased here. Avon goods are also available. The PO also offers **Banking facilities** to deposit cash and cheques and to withdraw cash. 01957 711655.

Once you're here:

- Local shops may not get daily deliveries. Please ask shops what their delivery days are, as more fresh produce is available at these times. **Usually Tuesday and Thursday afternoons** are when fresh goods come in.
- The Shetland Times, produced in Lerwick, is available to buy at most outlets on every Friday of the week along with the rest of Shetland.
- As a friendly, safe and trusting community, people often leave boxes of fresh eggs at the end of their road for people to collect if they wish. Please respect this system, and leave the small fee they charge. After all, you are getting the freshest eggs possible! There are now various homebake/cake and egg boxes around the island.

LOCAL HALLS

There are three public halls in Unst, all run by voluntary committees.



North Unst Public Hall in Haroldswick

Bookings Secretary: Tamara Clark, 711350

Facebook page: North Unst Public (Haroldswick) Hall



Baltasound Hall, in Baltasound

Bookings Secretary: Sandra Hesketh 711 392

Facebook page: Baltasound Hall - Unst Working Men's Society



Uyeasound Hall, in Uyeasound

Bookings Secretary: Janice Priest 755 317

Facebook page: Uyeasound Hall

Like the halls, many groups in Unst are run by volunteers. These include a Scottish Women's Institute, a local Church of Scotland Guild as well as activities including Bingo, Cards and an Older people's friendship club. There are also many voluntary groups that focus on Sport, (in the Sports and Leisure section).

Events in halls include discos, music, Scottish dances, afternoon teas, soup n' sweets, craft sales and much more! These are often to fundraise for local activities or national charities. There is also a Farmer's Market in Baltasound Hall, usually on the last Sunday of each month, under review at present.



Once you're here:

- To find out about events look for posters in local shops or search Facebook.
- Ask people you meet about groups, they will probably know who to contact!
- Groups are happy to welcome new volunteers and it can be a great way for you to get to know people in the community.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY LIFE

Childminding

There are no "out of school" child-minding services at present. Children can now go to the school nursery from age 2. Contact the school for details (01595 807020).

Activities for Children and Young People

As for general activities in Unst, many activities for Children are run by volunteers. Most events locally also welcome children.

Unst Youth Centre - runs junior youth club for P4 – P7 and senior Youth Club for S1 plus. This happens on Mondays in term time. Contact: the Youth Centre Leader via Shetland Youth Services 01595 744490.

Unst Leisure Centre run various activities for children after school. Pop in to ask staff about this. There are **Junior Sports Clubs**, including football, swimming and netball, find out about these by asking at the Unst Leisure Centre.

Brownies happens on Thursday evenings during term time. Contact: Verona Helen Johnson, 755302.

Rainbows happens on Wednesday evenings during term time. Contact Anona Hughson 01957 711411 or at nony13@btinternet.com

Unst Under 5's runs on a Friday morning at the Baltasound Hall. Contact: Louise Hunter on 755 256.



TRADITION, HERITAGE AND HISTORY



The heritage and history of Unst play a large role in community life here on Unst through its influence on job, tourism and way of life.

Crofting has been a major part of family life on Unst for centuries and is evident through the stone built croft houses, with barn and byre attached, which can be seen on island. Crofting still remains a prime income for many families on Unst and as a result, you will be able to easily pick up local meat, fresh eggs and peat castings.



Unst is also extremely well known for its **knitting and spinning** traditions, which many people continue to do. More information on Spinning and Knitting can be found at Unst Heritage Centre, where they will show you how to do it. You might even get to try it yourself!

In 1861, Unst had a population of 3000 and by 1869 there were 28 fishing boats registered in Uyeasound. During three months in 1905, almost 250,000 crans of herring were landed at Baltasound – this period was called '**the herring boom**'. More information about the boom can be found at the Unst Boat Haven. As

As the footfall of **Vikings**, Unst has the highest density of rural Viking sites anywhere in the world. A project named Viking Unst, run by Shetland Amenity Trust, provide insight into this part of Unst's heritage. Locals celebrate Norse heritage through the fire festival, Up Helly Aa, which takes place twice on the island during February. Please see EVENTS section.



Cookery also played its part in Unst's history, which is still present on Unst. You will often find 'Reestit Mutton Soup and Bannocks' at a local event, especially during the winter months.

Once you're here:

- The Unst Heritage Centre and Unst Boat Haven located in Haroldswick are central hubs for discovering more information on Unst's heritage, history and traditions.
- Due to having such a unique past, this element of Unst is a big draw for tourists and they are often keen to learn as much as possible.
- If you have an open fire, buying peat from a local is possible!

THE OUTDOORS

Unst may be the Treasure Island of Robert Louis Stevenson, and it is certainly a treasure trove for the naturalist. This is partly due to the island's varied geology, but the natural environment and wildlife present on Unst won't disappoint. Whilst out taking in the windswept nature of the island, you will be welcomed by unique geology, rugged coastline, history and beaches.

In 2011, Unst became the first ever island to gain **Walkers Are Welcome** status. With printed Guides in the Hotel, Saxavord, Belmont House and Gardiesfauld Hostel, you will find 20 different walks around Unst which vary from 1 hour treks to full day clifftop explorations. There is also an online version at <https://unstwaw.weebly.com/> Please take responsibility on these walks by looking at weather forecasts, wearing appropriate clothing, carrying necessary equipment and packing snacks!

The roads on Unst are often busy with locals and visitors **cycling**, especially during the summer months. Please cycle on the left hand side of the road and wear appropriate clothing. There are no cycle paths, so if driving please give cyclists room. **Bikes and equipment available to hire from Unst Leisure Centre**

As discussed earlier, crofting plays a large role in community life and therefore there is land mass and animals spread across the island. The law is relaxed when it comes to land access, but it is important to respect the animals and land. Especially, during the lambing season which takes place in April and May. You may come across the odd Unst "traffic jam". Please be cautious whilst driving if there are new born lambs around (April-June).

Fishing is also a sport that many locals take part in. There is an Unst Angling Club, where competitions are held throughout the year. Many travel north for the annual 'Simmer Dim Fishing Competition' which sees competitors fish from 8pm – 8am during the lightest night of the year. Making use of the surrounding waters and lochs on Unst, you will be able to take part in fly, trout or sea fishing. If you'd like to learn the tricks, join the club, find out more information or take part in competitions please get in touch with the club. New faces are always welcome! **See their Facebook page "Unst Angling Club" for more details.**



The geology of Unst is also extremely unique as the island is straddled across two tectonic plates. On the west of Unst, you will find schists and gneisses

whilst the eastern side of the island shows serpentine and gabbroic rock. More information can be found at the Unst Heritage Centre, and Norwick Beach information board.

Unst is home to an abundance of wildlife, making it a 'go to' location in Europe to capture magical moments in the outdoors. Rare birds, Shetland Ponies, otters and killer whales are just some of the encounters you may experience whilst living here. More information available at

<http://www.visit-unst.com/>

Hermaness Nature Reserve is a reserve of international recognition, and is a key tourism attraction for visitors. With views looking out to Muckle Flugga and the wildlife present, the views only add to the experience. Catch glimpses of the third largest colony of flying pirates in the world – the bonxies (or Great Skuas). The cliffs are home to over 100,000 breeding sea birds – puffins, fulmars, gannets and much more. The walk will take approximately 2-3 hours.



A visit to **The Keen of Hamar** in Baltasound is a botanical highlight for those interested. Edmonston's Chickweed is the most sought after flower, as this is the only place in the world that it grows. The reserve is described as 'a lunar landscape' due to its barren nature, however appearances are deceiving. There are information boards on the Keen telling you what to look for.

So you have a dog, where can you go for a stroll? Although dogs are allowed in most places on Unst, there are some places which do not allow dogs: Hermaness Nature Reserve, Keen of Hamar, Burrafirth Beach and Skaw Beach. We would suggest avoiding Loch of Cliff too, as algae has been found in the waters here. With this in mind, the hills are generally open for the dogs to be let loose, but please be aware that sheep roam all over the island. Lund beach and Norwick Beach are often hot spots. **Please do not leave dog litter behind, and if there are animals around, having your dog on a lead is essential.**

Once you're here:

- <http://www.visit-unst.com/> has dedicated Outdoors, Wildlife and Nature sections for more information.
- If walking around Unst, please take into consideration the **Good Walking Code**. Walkers Are Welcome website – unstwaw.weebly.com
- Unst Angling Club key contact is Desley Stickle - 01957 711605.
- During summer months the roads can often be extremely busy with walkers and cyclists, please be aware when driving.

BEACHES

It's not unusual for you to find yourself the only person amongst the vast sand on some of Europe's most popular remote beaches.

Skaw Beach



The most northerly beach in the UK, making you the most northerly person in the UK when you visit. This easterly facing beach sits at the tip of Unst. With open seas and a burn for the children to play in, this beach is a popular choice for families.

Norwick Beach



The golden sand, vast space and an exploration of 'the teen' make for the perfect afternoon on a nice day. You'll often find walkers and dog walkers out enjoying the view and rolling waves.

Lund Beach



Located in the Westing, this beach faces out to the west. Often a spot for those seeking a beautiful summer sunset, this beach offers up natural sand dunes for the children to play while you take in the sights. **Please leave gates as you find them.**

Easting Beach



En route to Muness, a small road off to the left marked "Hannigarth" will lead you to a visitor's carpark. Park up and make the walk down the hill to the Easting beach. A vast space of golden sand, this beach also hosts archaeology sites. This is a popular beach for setting up camp for the night.

Burrafirth Beach



You'll pass Burrafirth Beach on your way to Hermaness. Find a parking spot, and walk across the green to reach a vast beach. With views out the bay past the shore station, it is a popular location for locals and visitors.

Once you're here:

- Please be aware of tides and don't venture too far out to sea – if you're brave enough!
- Please don't leave children or dogs unattended. Please respect the beaches and remove any litter.



SPORTS AND LEISURE

Sport plays a large part of island life on Unst. The local Unst Leisure Centre is one of eight leisure facilities operated by Shetland Recreational Trust. The centre is a fantastic facility on the island to keep yourself active!

Facilities include:

- 12.5m x 5m indoor swimming pool with lagoon
- 3 court games hall
- Squash court
- Gym: 8 cardio machines, dumbbells to 25kg, pulley machine, and dual pulley machine, two benches, medicine balls, resistance bands.
- Personal training service
- 2 pool tables and a football table
- Community room
- Viewing balcony
- Vending facilities
- Outdoor multi-court
- Outdoor full sized grass football pitch accompanied by a training pitch.



There are various programmes, events and activities which run over the course of the year. For more information please take a look at their website - <http://www.srt.org.uk/unst> – or contact them on 01595 807701.

Clubs

There is no lack of sports clubs on Unst. Please see a list of clubs below if you would like to get involved:

- Unst Badminton Club
- Unst Football Club
- Senior Citizens Leisure Club
- Unst Bowlers Club
- Northern Neesiks Swimming Club
- Unst Netball Club
- Unst Yoal Club
- Unst Sailing Club and ... Unst Squash Club



Once you're here:

- Unst Leisure Centre is extremely good at keeping their Facebook page updated with changes, new activities and information. Give them a follow!
- Local clubs are always keen for new members to join. Don't be afraid to pop along to a training session or get in touch with the key contact. Most clubs here operate on a small fee per session, rather than annual membership fees.

WHAT HAPPENS IN SUMMER

The first thing you should know about a summer in Shetland, the sun hardly sleeps. Our northerly location makes the nights light, and very unique. There are 19 hours of measured sunlight leaving days and nights open for activity.

The second most important thing we should mention? Unst becomes a tourist haven. May – October is the busiest months, with visitors flocking to the island to see all it has to offer. Locals approach this with a friendly outlook, and a passing “hello!” is not uncommon.

Unst is also host to a number of events throughout the summer months, with UnstFest and Shetland Reel Music Festival (See EVENTS) along with a number of other activities. Weddings are often saved for summer months in an attempt to get the best of the weather and the light nights. A Shetland wedding will last 2/3 days!



The weather is, of course, still unpredictable. The average summer's day will be free of rain but will still provide a light breeze, still jumper weather. On days with blue skies, sun and a raise in temperature the island becomes an outdoor wonder: the roads will be busy, ice cream will sell fast and the outdoors is the best place to be.



As an island surrounded by water, mist and fog is also an element of Unst summer weather. Please check weather forecasts if you're due to fly out of Sumburgh Airport, as fog can cause delays.

Once you're here:

- Although the temperatures rarely go above 20 degrees, the sun is strong on Unst due to the clean air and little pollution. Sun cream is still advisable, especially on children.

WHAT HAPPENS IN WINTER

Our summers are light, our winters are dark. Throughout the winter months, you can expect only a few hours of sunlight. The nights provide perfect opportunity to spot The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis), which you may be able to see from your back garden when they appear.



The weather during winter can often be fierce with high winds, rain and snow. Snow is the most unpredictable – some years Unst welcomes a few feet, other years there is none. Travel disruptions can often occur with ferries and flights; please be aware of this if making major travel plans.

Winter is a time of year where many locals get together for social occasions. We'd suggest making the most of these little gatherings! These may include Christmas Craft Fairs, Baltasound Junior High School Christmas concert, Christmas Farmers Markets and afternoons where The Final Checkout offer mulled wine and hot chocolate to mark the start of the festive.

A Festive on Unst: 24th December – 2nd January

The festive on Unst is a time for family and friends to gather. **Christmas Tree Party for children?** Many visit local chapels on Christmas Eve to take in Midnight Mass. Christmas Day and Hogmanay on Unst is very family orientated, with families spending the morning and afternoon dinner together before an evening of traditional '*first footing*' (visiting). This can go on until the early hours of the morning. Boxing Day is also family orientated, say goodbye to the leftover Christmas dinner! Local halls and the local bar often put on events between Christmas and New Year where the community comes together to celebrate. Known to be a good night, people from outwith the island often make the trip to Unst for these occasions.

On Unst, some also celebrate Old Christmas (Auld Yule) on the 6th January. This is the day that was Christmas before the change to the Gregorian Calendar in Britain. The modern Christmas is still the main celebration on Unst, however many gather on the 6th to show respect to Old Christmas.

Once you're here:

- A special 'festival' ferry timetable is released for 24th Dec – 2nd Jan. Please keep an eye out for this.
- Sign up for SIC ferry alerts to your mobile/email. You can do this at – <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/ferries/>
- 'First Footing' is where locals visit other friends and family. Knocking and waiting at the door for an answer is a rare occasion, the relaxed nature of locals means self entry to most homes along with a quick "Hello!"

EVENTS

FEBRUARY: UYEASOUND UP HELLY AA/NORWICK UP HELLY AA

Up Helly Aa is a fire festival celebration of Shetland's Norse heritage. Led by the Guizer Jarl, and a squad of Vikings, a handmade galley and a fire lit procession are just part of the day and night celebrations. There are two Up Helly Aa's on Unst: Uyeasound Up Helly Aa and Norwick Up Helly Aa. Please speak to locals, and collect a programme in January before the festival. Information can be found at <http://www.visit-unst.com/>



JULY: UNSTFEST

UnstFest is a 7-10 family festival which takes place on Unst each year. Since its inception in 2008, the festival has significantly grown to become a main focus of the Shetland calendar. A highly anticipated programme of events is released in May/June each year before it begins in July. Each day provides endless opportunities for fun with workshops, carnivals, family days, competitions, sporting events, carnival, live music and much more. Please see <http://www.visit-unst.com/> for more information, or keep up on their active Facebook page 'UnstFest'. **2023 dates are 17th-23rd July.**



AUGUST: UNST AGRICULTURAL SHOW

The Unst Agricultural Show encompasses classes for livestock and pets, as well as craft, art and baking competitions for adults and children. As well as these events, there are stands and activities at the show, including agricultural and local information stands, a beer tent, barbecue, teas, 'A Chicken Race and more. Whatever your interests the Unst Agricultural Show is a great day out for the family. The Unst Show happens in the Show Park and the North Unst Public Hall in Haroldswick. It is usually held on the **last Saturday in August**. (In addition, a **Shetland Folk Festival** comes to Unst every three years in **April** and there is a **Shetland Accordion and Fiddle Festival** concert in **October** most years.)

