

Mr Lawson Bisset, Chair
Scalloway Community Council

By email:
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lawson.bisset@gmail.com

13th February 2026

Dear Lawson,

Response to queries relating to the closure of Scalloway Pool

Thank you for your letter dated 21st January 2026. Thank you also for your patience awaiting this reply. Shetland Recreational Trust CEO Robert Geddes shared your letter with Trustees as soon as it was received.

I acknowledge receipt of your objection to the closure of Scalloway Pool. Your questions are important and I will attempt to answer everything you have asked on behalf of the volunteer trustees of the Shetland Recreational Trust.

I must begin acknowledging your position and that of East Voe, Trondra, Burra, others plus that of the Save Scalloway Pool Campaign Group. The closure of Scalloway Pool is unwelcome. Trustees of Shetland Recreational Trust, who have had the unpalatable responsibility to instruct the closure, did so only because SRT has been unable to find an alternative and therefore must act to ensure we can continue delivering sport and leisure services across Shetland. Trustees did not begin looking to close a facility. We began trying to avoid doing so. One of our Trustees learned to swim in that pool.

Your concerns of consequences, of loss to the village, of negative impacts socially, educationally and to the community are valid and shared by SRT. However, SRT's stark economic and staffing realities outweigh everyone's understandable wish for the pool to remain open.

I appreciate the widespread wish to pause while options are reconsidered. Trustees see people's hope that someone else might find new answers where SRT has not. As much as we sympathise, Trustees' legal responsibility is to protect our charity and ensure overall financial sustainability. That is a legal obligation. If SRT delays the closure and new efforts are unsuccessful then our unsustainability will become insolvency. If SRT allows our situation to deteriorate we will end up with multiple closures with even less warning. That risk is a luxury that SRT Trustees cannot afford. As unwelcome as it is, as difficult as it is for Scalloway and those nearby and affected, SRT needs to act now. That it comes at a cost to your communities is recognised by all involved.

If something significant beyond SRT's control changes hereafter then we would, of course, consider that.

SRT has faced financial challenge since before the pandemic and Trustees have fought for years to preserve our eight Centre model. It is remarkable - and entirely due to the efforts of our incredible staff - that SRT has managed to do so despite Covid, inflation, rising energy costs, reduced external income and the operational changes already made. In 2023 SRT was four months away from insolvency. The decisions made staving-off that disaster were difficult and asked so much of already overstretched employees. In 2024 our financial modelling indicated that around a 17% uplift to previous grant income would be necessary to sustain eight centres at existing service levels. Despite grave concern Trustees deliberately sought only 14% from funders as a minimum level and to demonstrate continued efficiencies and partnership. When the award was confirmed at around 8% it became clear that operating all eight facilities would no longer be sustainable despite the extensive savings and service adjustments already made. In 2025 over multiple discussions, SRT explained to Shetland Islands Council and Shetland Charitable Trust the seriousness of receiving less than the absolute minimum necessary to continue without major change. It was confirmed that no additional funding would be available. Unfortunately, at current expenditure with current income, and even with ambitious customer projections, it's no longer sustainable to run all of our facilities and we face the stark reality of closures.

Your letter starts with three requests. I'm very sorry but we can meet only one of your requests.

Request one:

SRT cannot reverse the decision to close Scalloway Pool merely on the basis that it may be negative to Scalloway, or for concern around sustainability of local services. The essence of those important local concerns cited are ultimately beyond SRT's responsibilities or charitable objectives. The decision to close Scalloway Pool was not taken lightly and, equally so, a decision to reverse would require unprecedented external intervention with significant financial commitment before SRT Trustees could be able to reconsider. There are two organisations in Shetland with wider scopes of interest and with greater financial capabilities than SRT. Shetland Islands Council and Shetland Charitable Trust. Both organisations have been provided with briefings and information on SRT's circumstances over an extended period of time.

Request two:

SRT cannot delay the closure to increase public engagement or to facilitate development of alternatives. For previously expanded reasons, SRT Trustees have had to take critical action over the last couple of years to protect our charity. We changed how we do many things, reduced our management structure (involving voluntary and compulsory redundancies) and reduced opening hours or days at all sites. It has only been with the generous support of our main funder, the Shetland Charitable Trust, that SRT has been able to continue operating. Under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023, Trustees are legally required to act in their charity's best interests and to ensure financial sustainability. Trustees have a legal obligation to make difficult decisions to serve the best interests of the charity first and before any public or beneficiary.

Although SRT's finances are slightly improved, the situation is fragile with no long-term likelihood of achieving a surplus. SRT cannot delay this closure in the hope that someone else will find a better solution. If such a solution is not found, is falsely promised, is unsuccessful or is undelivered then SRT will be imperilled again. The legal responsibility to ensure the financial sustainability of our charity cannot be delegated and thus neither can the decision of when to enact this critical sustainability measure.

Request three:

I will do my best to provide the rationale and evidence requested. Some details are summarised for sheer volume. Some details cannot be shared if doing so would breach GDPR or privacy considerations for customers of SRT. I will share information about individual centres but, at the instruction of Trustees, I won't go so far that the discussion can become a competition between centres.

Having implemented every type of cost-saving measure available and having unsuccessfully sought additional support from SRT's main funders, SRT has essentially already 'plucked' the low-hanging - plus some higher-hanging - fruit of options possible, leaving only the most severe actions left to consider. The options appraisal undertaken by SRT (presented later) attempted to find a way of continuing to provide such valuable services for our customers. The process informed us that a centre closure was the least-worst remaining viable option to reach sustainability. We considered user data, education service implications, staff management implications, practicalities and reprovision capacity, geographical and transport information, social impacts, financial effects and more to establish what is best for SRT and Shetland as a whole.

I know the answer is disappointing for anyone who cares about Scalloway but our conclusion reached is that the closure of Scalloway Pool has less service reduction, less community or education impact, better reprovision options and it gives SRT more realistic reutilisation of staff than the alternatives. This has been a least-worst decision.

As an introduction, it may be useful to consider some of the stages SRT has faced in reaching this decision. The following timeline is highly summarised:

1982	On 1 st June 1982 Shetland Island Council established Clickimin Recreational Trust to deliver council objectives for leisure provision across Shetland. Governance and funding for CRT came through Shetland Islands Council.
1991	On 10 th May 1991 Shetland Islands Council via its wholly-controlled Shetland Islands Council Charitable Trust granted SRT £1,410,700 in commission to build Scalloway Pool to meet Shetland Islands Council Leisure & Recreation Committee objectives.

2003	Shetland Islands Council Charitable Trust became Shetland Charitable Trust separate from Shetland Islands Council. Funding for SRT continued from Shetland Charitable Trust with Shetland Islands Council paying for education related use.
2016	An annual maintenance grant worth more than one million pounds per year was discontinued removing that money from SRT's budgets.
Pre-Pandemic	SRT faced challenges for a long time mainly related to the age and condition of properties that were inherited from Shetland Islands Council.
2020	The pandemic. SRT closed to the public and later partially reopened. Furlough and support from Shetland Charitable Trust prevented a collapse. Many pools across the UK closed and have never reopened.
2021	SRT operated with occupancy limits. Shetland Charitable Trust continued to provide support to SRT despite SRT being unable to deliver most services. 2021/22 was the first year of a 4-year funding package. Trustees' consistent priority throughout this previous funding period was to maintain all eight centres. Shetland Charitable Trust also introduced a Capital Grant Scheme supporting repairs to buildings. Recognising challenges ahead SRT sought funding to redevelop areas of the estate into, for example, a full soft play centre but applications were unsuccessful due to objections by Lerwick Community Council. SRT launched the More4Life and Access2Leisure memberships to drive activity and income.
2022	UK inflation reached 11% but the main funding grant was not inflation linked. The second-largest expenditure item of energy doubled in cost from ~£500,000 to ~£1,000,000. A back-dated public sector pay award lifted staff costs considerably. Discussions were initiated with Shetland Islands Council about a single agreement to cover all council use of SRT facilities. Trustees acknowledged advice that failure to actively manage risks could put them in breach of their duties, and lead to significant financial and legal challenges.
2023	SRT has more than 4,000 More4Life memberships. Facing still worsening financial reports SRT triggered emergency meetings continuing monthly. Forecasting showed insolvency in four months. Crisis meetings were held with partners, advisors, enterprise agencies, etc. SRT staff produced a turnaround plan with actions to reduce the deficit.
2024	SRT now 6 days per week with reduced operating hours. Staff headcount down >12% and staffing not at required level across all sites. Shetland Islands Council continued reducing use of SRT (PE provision, swimming, exams, etc). Budget planning for next grant round started. Models show uplift necessary or insolvency inevitable. Calculation made that 17% uplift would be required for ' <i>as things are</i> ' service levels. Meetings held with Shetland Charitable Trust ahead of process. Application made for 14% grant uplift as ' <i>absolute bare minimum</i> ' for SRT to deliver service levels at eight sites, with understanding this would still involve further savings. Shetland Charitable Trust awarded SRT £19.6 million for the multi-year term. This is more than ever before but less than applied for - an 8% uplift.
2025	Despite Covid, inflation, rising energy costs, reduced external income and the operational changes already made, SRT has managed to maintain eight sites. SRT approached partners to discuss financial situation. Multiple meetings held with Shetland Charitable Trust seeking solutions. SRT Trustees commission updated options appraisals to reflect finance and staffing limitations. Models show SRT effectively insolvent with no foreseeable balanced budget and exhausted reserves by 2028/29. Initial options appraisals challenged by Trustees and reassessed. Conclusion reached that closure of a single site necessary and Scalloway Pool would be the least-worst option if enacted.
2026	To meet budget and staffing requirements for 2026/27 financial year, staff have to be told and are told of closure in January before anyone else. Closure announcement made on 16 th January 2026. Shetland Islands Council still to agree rural school use agreement for education use of SRT facilities. The closure of Scalloway should mean that no further closures need be considered during the current funding cycle nor in the future if funding remains consistent.

I repeat that answers to the most critical questions were given in our initial FAQ summary and additional information provided here does not change the conclusions reached. Once you have had a chance to consider the information provided as responses to your questions then the myself and SRT CEO Robert Geddes would be willing to meet you to discuss everything further.

Yours sincerely,

David Thomson
Chair
Shetland Recreational Trust Board of Trustees

Answers to comments and questions from Scalloway Community Council letter dated 21st January 2026.

Numbered to match order from SCC letter.

The information enclosed here is offered to help your understanding. I caution against overinterpreting isolated figures or data points. SRT staff and Trustees can call upon additional knowledge and context to judge appropriate weight or sensitivity that might be missed without familiarity.

Requests

1. Answered in covering text above.
2. Answered in covering text above.
3. Answered in covering text above.

As unwelcome as it is, this action ensures a sustainable business model for SRT and will have the least community impact due to the proximity to the nearby available sites, which have capacity to absorb the customer numbers.

Data, assessment and evidence base.

4. Financial Information

- a. Full audited financial statements going back to financial year 2020/2021 and Annual Service Reports going back to 2010 are presented on the SRT website and have been available throughout. Financial Information is also available on the website of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). I refer you to the Financial Review and Risk Management sections starting on Page 9 of the latest 2024/25 statements noting that meeting costs and achieving sustainability are regarded as “High Risk”. I also refer you to the Chair’s introduction of the 2022/2023 Annual Service Report.

SRT is an independent charity yet provides public leisure and recreational services that are normally the statutory obligation of the local authority. Partially due to this unusual background, SRT does not qualify for many local or national funding opportunities. We have applied for, and received, support for small amounts of new equipment by working together with local sports clubs.

- b. SRT’s approved budget for the current financial year 2025/26 is shown on the next page. This presents breakdowns including staffing and energy costs. The approved budget presents a target of a £5,756 surplus. That is a 0.086% tolerance.

The level of subsidy from Shetland Charitable Trust is shown. 55% for 2025/26. The pandemic prevents easy historic comparisons but this is relatively low compared to previous due to SRT success in maximising customer income and the subsidy has been nearer 70% in years past.

Projections for future years are presented and discussed in Section 6.

SRT Approved Budget	2025/26 £	% Breakdown
INCOME		
Customer Income	2,228,389	33%
Education Income	628,407	9%
Donations	306	0%
Events Income	105,000	2%
OPERATING INCOME	2,962,102	
Investment Income	15,000	0%
SCT Grant Income	3,690,000	55%
SCT Contingency Grant	1,985	0%
SCT Capital Grants	0	0%
Other Grants	0	0%
TOTAL INCOME	6,669,087	100%
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries	3,996,083	60%
Recruitment	1,394	0%
Maintenance	398,875	6%
Water Rates	148,815	2%
Energy Costs	1,073,115	16%
Insurance	198,268	3%
Cleaning	142,526	2%
Pool Chemicals	62,860	1%
Goods for Resale	89,982	1%
Administration Costs	200,516	3%
Training	15,377	0%
Travel & Subsistence	40,571	1%
Equipment	143,337	2%
Professional Fees	92,879	1%
Other Expenses	11,550	0%
Bank Charges	25,758	0%
Audit	21,425	0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	6,663,330	100%
Surplus (Deficit)	5,756	0.09%

5. Usage Data

- a. Number of users by category are presented here:

Scalloway Pool Data between 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025			
Department	Usage	Income Associated	
Education	2947	£	23,000.85
Clubs/Associations	504	£	1,074.70
Swim Lessons	5881	£	25,935.00
Individual Lessons	146	£	2,921.05
Holiday Activities	243	£	407.10
Casual Public Swims	3672	£	4,735.50
TOTALS	13393	£	58,074.20

- b. Evidence of demand relative to other facilities is presented on the next page. Scalloway Pool represents 1.78% of SRT activity. Over the past few years SRT staffing has been right on the edge of safe operating levels with zero resilience. This is evident with the frequency of facility closures or reductions of available activities or facilities.

Site	Usage	%
Clickimin Leisure Complex	592,273	78.71%
North Mainland Leisure Centre	27,685	3.68%
Scalloway Pool	13,393	1.78%
South Mainland Pool	19,307	2.57%
Unst Leisure Centre	20,534	2.73%
West Mainland Leisure Centre	37,167	4.94%
Whalsay Leisure Centre	27,402	3.64%
Yell Leisure Centre	14,739	1.96%
	752,500	

6. Comparative information

- a. It is complicated to present the level of subsidy received by one facility against others. The Shetland Charitable Trust does not provide grants for individual facilities and SRT receives a single lump-sum grant which is used as required. The allocation to sites is not accounted separately and varies depending on other factors such as changes in customer use. The subsidy functions to equalise the price to customers despite the differing costs of providing the service at different locations. Looking at cost per £1 of direct income generated, then SRT centres can be ranked as follows for amount of subsidy required:

1. Clickimin - £2.03
2. West Mainland - £2.74
3. Whalsay - £2.85
4. North Mainland - £2.86
5. Yell - £3.52
6. Scalloway - £3.62
7. Unst - £4.01
8. South Mainland - £4.55

This calculation is taken from a previous SRT Annual Report

- b. The closure of Scalloway Pool is projected to achieve £952,062 of savings over the remainder of the current grant award period. A simplified version of SRT's financial projections is presented on the next page, showing both modelling for the continuation of 8 sites and the reduction in loss achieved with the closure of Scalloway Pool. These figure are a point in time and constantly change. It is very important to understand that the saving achieved by closing Scalloway Pool are less than the additional income that would be required to continue to operate Scalloway Pool for the same period. Merely maintaining the existing staffing levels is unacceptable and unsustainable.

8 Sites	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
INCOME					
Customer Income	2,871,537	2,887,582	2,953,997	3,021,939	3,091,443
Grant income	3,690,000	3,800,000	3,915,000	4,032,000	4,153,000
Other Grants	107,550	110,209	112,459	114,755	117,098
TOTAL INCOME	6,669,087	6,797,791	6,981,456	7,168,694	7,361,541
EXPENDITURE					
Salaries	3,996,083	4,261,185	4,363,453	4,463,813	4,562,017
Operating Costs	2,268,376	2,320,549	2,373,921	2,428,521	2,484,377
Maintenance	398,875	412,038	425,635	439,681	454,191
TOTAL INCOME	6,663,334	6,993,772	7,163,009	7,332,015	7,500,585
Outcome	5,753	(195,981)	(181,553)	(163,321)	(139,044)
7 Sites	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
INCOME					
Customer Income	2,871,537	2,845,320	2,910,762	2,977,710	3,046,197
Grant income	3,690,000	3,800,000	3,915,000	4,032,000	4,153,000
Other Grants	107,550	110,209	112,459	114,755	117,098
TOTAL INCOME	6,669,087	6,755,529	6,938,221	7,124,465	7,316,295
EXPENDITURE					
Salaries	3,996,083	4,091,989	4,190,197	4,286,571	4,380,876
Operating Costs	2,268,376	2,217,605	2,268,610	2,320,788	2,374,166
Maintenance	398,875	412,038	425,635	439,681	454,191
TOTAL INCOME	6,663,334	6,721,632	6,884,442	7,047,040	7,209,233
Outcome	5,753	33,897	53,779	77,425	107,062
SAVING difference 7 v 8	0	229,878	235,332	240,746	246,106
					952,062

The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) advises that deliberate deficit budgets will only be justifiable in financial emergencies (pandemics, extreme inflation, energy price shocks, etc.) if it is required to fund a major investment in assets or service expansion with associated income growth, or if the deficit plugs a short-term funding shortfall. A five-year projection with losses in all years cannot be considered a short-term issue. If SRT trustees anticipate insolvency before the end of known funding commitments, then we do not pass the required 'going concern' test and OSCR would have grounds to intervene.

- c. As the owner of the facilities and provider of the services it is within SRT's judgement whether other centres have the capacity to absorb displaced demand. There is capacity to accommodate the additional activities. No one wishes to lose a facility. Shetlands operating model is unique. To have eight leisure facilities for a population of circa 23,000 people is a luxurious model. To put this into context, a study by Scottish Swimming at end of 2023 evidenced that the average number of pools per head of population is 1 for every 25,000 people. For the Highlands region this figure was 1 for every 13,000. In comparison, Orkney has 2 public swimming pools of note and smaller school pools located on outer isles, 2 of which are out of action currently due to maintenance requirements. These smaller sites are owned by the council but run by community groups.

7. Capital Expenditure

- a. All SRT sites receive minimum levels of ongoing maintenance and attention. Scalloway Pool has received regular work and SRT Trustees considered proposals for significant capital investment at Scalloway Pool in 2023. These efforts fell as part of wider action to avoid insolvency. Minor capital expenditure was approved in 2025 to ensure operations would not become impossible regardless of potential strategic decisions. These were refurbishment of the male toilet (~£33,000) and work to the fire escape access ramp (~£30,000). If SRT had not undertaken these small work items the pool may have had to close in 2025 for health and safety reasons.

- b. SRT has internal reports considering the condition of the Scalloway Pool building and we believe that the property will need at least £1.2million of refurbishment work in the near to medium future. This isn't untypically large among SRT's aging Centres. A list of the main fabric concerns are presented on the next page. These figures include work that would only be relevant to continue as a swimming pool. Funding for capital refurbishments is not included in SRT's main operating grant and is not available to support the running of services or centres. SRT has access to a separate capital grant scheme that requires contracts for building works. Further building condition information will be collated and can be included in the discussions to find a community-led future for the building.

Scalloway – High Level Windows	132,000.00
Scalloway – Entrance	110,000.00
Scalloway – Air Handling Units	215,000.00
Scalloway – Pipework	110,000.00
Scalloway – Electrical	244,000.00
Scalloway – Boilers	115,000.00
Scalloway – Building Management System	84,000.00
Scalloway – Finishes	149,000.00
Sub Total	1,159,000.00

8. Relevant Reports.

- a. SRT has been facing up to our financial challenge since before the pandemic. The decision to close Scalloway Pool is the final step in years of monitoring and reaction. The decision came after a sequence of discussions where information was presented, reviewed and challenged by Trustees. Instruction was given to staff to reconsider, refine and defend information used, or to seek additional data Trustees believed might be useful before a final decision was reached. The following is a summarised version of the SAF matrix options appraisal that Trustees used to determine that the closure of a single site was the least-worst option to achieve financial sustainability in accordance with Trustees' legal responsibilities.

Options	Factors					Weighted Average	Ranked Position
	Impact on SRT outcomes	Practicality / Feasibility	Impact on Finances	Stakeholder Reaction	Timescale to implement		
<i>PREVIOUSLY IMPLEMENTED</i>							
General staffing reductions	Reduced by 12%						
Management tier removals	All staff above Centre Manager and below Chief Executive removed						
Energy supply renegotiations	Multi-year contract for certainty entered						
Remove subsidy from education provision and some users	Explored and dismissed as excessively punishing of schools across Shetland						
Cleaning provisions removal	Duties pushed onto other staff depending on goodwill						
Close rural centres 1 day per week	Opening hours were adjusted to minimise service reduction						
Minor efficiencies	Lower temperatures, reprioritised maintenance operations						
Plant improvements	Spend to save e.g. hyprolysers reducing chemical costs						
Sale of loose assets	Vans, trailers, plough, etc.						
<i>REMAINING OPTIONS</i>							
1 Negative, 3 Neutral, 5 Positive							
FINAL WEIGHTING	30%	15%	30%	10%	15%		
Maintain current model	5	2	2	5	5	3.65	2
Reduce operational days and hours - likely to 4 day service	4	3	2	4	5	3.40	3
Close all rural swimming pools	2	2	4	3	3	2.85	4
Sale of Technical Services workshop	2	2	3	2	1	2.15	6
Closure of single site	4	4	4	3	3	3.75	1
Closure of multiple sites	1	3	5	2	1	2.60	5
Options	Impact on SRT outcomes	Practicality / Feasibility	Impact on Finances	Stakeholder Reaction	Timescale to implement		

The summarised appraisal version presented has been adjusted to incorporate prior efficiencies and actions that SRT Trustees knew to have been implemented and thus did not need shown or considered at the time. Over several months SRT staff prepared and refined estimates, forecasts, advice and supporting information for all of these criteria for each option considered.

The modelling identified the closure of a single site as the least-worst option.

A second matrix was then used to analyse each site of the SRT with criteria assessed.

This data was considered and Scalloway Pool was identified as the least-worst site for closure based on the judgments for all of the criteria above.

Options	Factors						Weighted Average	Ranked Position
	Impact on Finances	Impact on SRT outcomes	Reprovision of services	Reprovision of staff	Impact on community	Stakeholder reaction		
	1 Negative, 3 Neutral, 5 Positive							
FINAL WEIGHTING	30%	25%	15%	15%	10%	5%		
Clickimin Leisure Centre	5	1	1	1	1	1	2.20	5
North Mainland Leisure Centre	3	3	2	3	2	3	2.75	2
Scalloway Pool	2	2	4	5	2	4	2.85	1
South Mainland Pool	2	2	4	4	2	4	2.70	4
Unst Leisure Centre	3	3	1	1	1	1	2.15	6=
West Mainland Leisure Centre	3	3	2	3	2	2	2.70	4
Whalsay Leisure Centre	3	3	1	1	1	2	2.15	6=
Yell Leisure Centre	3	3	1	1	1	2	2.15	6=
Options	Impact on Finances	Impact on SRT outcomes	Reprovision of services	Reprovision of staff	Impact on community	Stakeholder reaction		

Trustees requested that a further comparison was run in more detail against two chosen sites identified by the matrix. These were isolated, drilling down the following:

<p>Usage data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Club/association usage • Swim lessons • Individual lessons • Holiday/children's activities • Casual public swimming 	<p>Financial future scenario data was also analysed for all budget headings for sites. This included data for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income loss in closing a site • cost savings associated to closing a site • assumption on customer income % relocated to next nearest site • assumption on membership income % relocated
<p>Utility costs of sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy costs • Water rates • Statutory testing costs 	<p>Customer usage profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visits per week • Hometown • Proximity to nearest site from hometown
<p>Finally, data was provided on private vehicle transfer and public transport services for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • travel distance • travel time • frequency and availability of public transport 	

These are the main and critical documents used by SRT to make the specific recent decision. Trustees also had access to internal data from historic operations reports that were relevant but out of date to support the assessments. New information was collated to allow consideration of transport implications.

Trustees sought advice from publicly available information such as the local and national health and deprivation indexes and the Shetland Place Standard. Data from the Shetland Partnership Plan (participation, people, place, money) and the locality profiles were considered when analysing data of each site:

Participation – services available to the community and the impact of removing that service. Where would the next available service be?

People - health and wellbeing of people in each community. What provisions are available should we remove a facility. How would this impact health and wellbeing? And where would be the next nearest provision?

Place – providing employment in communities, reprovision of staff should a site close, health impact survey to identify any communities with higher levels of deprivation

Money - identify if any community suffers more so than others

The locality profiles identified that statistics are broadly similar across Shetland for areas of poverty and benefits.

9. **Alternative Provision**

- a. There is capacity in other centres to accommodate relocated school swimming activities. Scalloway Primary School is the only school at this site that does not already require bus transport to attend. It may be possible by relocating to Clickimin and using the much larger teaching pool, the overall time away from school requirement and cost could be reduced, even allowing for transport. Shetland Islands Council are responsible for that educational requirement and have reduced the amount of school swimming taught since 2023. SRT Trustees have instructed staff to determine reprovision options for affected users but specifically to prioritise school swimming where staff or pool time limitations appear.
- b. All members with current bookings will be contacted to have alternative future options explained. The Scottish Swimming Learn to Swim programme will continue to be available at other SRT sites and provision has been made to manage any capacity challenges and ensure that the current level of service is still offered moving forward. Depending on how staff conversations go we will finalise timetable and programmes prior to the 1st April 2026 period.
- c. As the owner of the facilities and provider of the services it is within SRT's judgement whether other centres have the capacity to absorb displaced demand. There is capacity to accommodate existing Scalloway Pool users in their entirety. Once we have completed further consultations with affected staff then SRT will be in a position to communicate with users of the affected facility to offer alternative provisions. We can give customers of Scalloway Pool preferential booking times to allow access to classes at a convenient time depending on where they travel from.

Additional and Specific Social and Community Evaluation.

11. **Displacement**

- a. A User Origin Locality Breakdown for Scalloway Pool was considered by Trustees during our processes. This shows that 53% of the users of Scalloway Pool travel from outside of the immediate village area plus Trondra and Burra. I cannot share this breakdown without consent of individual customers. We know from feedback that one of many attractions to the Scalloway Pool are our staff who we plan to keep and relocate for them to continue being available to customers. After the closure of Scalloway Pool, Shetland

will still have seven public swimming pools for people to choose from, one of which is physically identical to Scalloway Pool.

- b. The issue of users with particular challenges was a matter that greatly concerned SRT Trustees. ASN services are offered at all SRT sites. While SRT does everything it can to support members of the public with particular social needs, we have to admit that these customers are possibly beyond the remit of Shetland Recreational Trust and this should be considered by organisations with a wider or more relevant remit. As far as possible, SRT will look at replicating similar sessions to those previously delivered in Scalloway Pool. From a business model, access to a pool because it is 'quiet' isn't a sustainable model. SRT will continue to deliver 'quieter sessions' in terms of calming with no spectators but can't continue to operate entirely private or quiet pools without funding from organisations with those ambitions. During the deliberations Trustees identified the value of women-only sessions and we will work with partner agencies and customers to look at provision of adequate women-only sessions across our estate.

12. Socio Economic Exclusion

- a. All of SRT's facilities offer many activities for all age ranges. This will continue. SRT is proud of our Access2Leisure Concession Scheme introduced to support low-income individuals and families, as well as those with health and mobility issues, to access facilities across the whole of Shetland. We are the only large organisation in Shetland to offer such a scheme. As part of considering the options, SRT Trustees considered the analysis zones for Shetland of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) to review measures of health, employment, income, housing, education, crime and access to basic services. Scalloway is in the 6.0 Decile of overall deprivation.
- b. The issue of public transport options between sites was considered by Trustees with data available from ZetTrans publications. Shetland Islands Council may wish to consider public transport standards and options if these are not attractive to the public and those with limitations. The transport network within Shetland isn't perfect but the links between Scalloway and Lerwick are amongst the best.

Public Transport Availability

South Mainland Pool - Usage Area (highest %)	Public Transport to CLC (available buses per day)	First Bus (time)	Last Bus (time)	Day of Week (Mon-Fri, Sat, Sun)
Virkie	13	06:47	20:05	Mon-Fri
Sandwick	15	07:21	20:31	Mon-Fri
Cunningsburgh	15	07:28	20:38	Mon-Fri
Dunrossness	13	07:04	20:14	Mon-Fri
Lerwick	-	-	-	-
Bigton	4 (feeder bus)	07:56	17:26	Mon-Fri
Levenwick	14	07:11	20:21	Mon-Fri
Quarff	15	07:34	20:44	Mon-Fri
Scousburgh	13	06:42	20:02	Mon-Fri

Scalloway Pool - Usage Area (highest %)	Public Transport to CLC (available buses per day)	First Bus (time)	Last Bus (time)	Day of Week (Mon-Fri, Sat, Sun)
Lerwick				
Scalloway	12	07:28	19:38	Mon-Sat
Burra	4	07:55	18:04	Mon-Fri
Gulberwick	14	07:37	20:47	Mon-Fri
Tingwall	9	07:30	18:55	Mon-Fri
Whiteness	6	07:30	18:40	Mon-Fri
Sandwick	15	07:21	20:31	Mon-Fri
Weisdale	6	07:25	18:35	Mon-Fri

*Data from timetable on Zettrans website as at June 2025

Private transport journeys were evaluated based on user data from where customers travel from to use sites. This travel data was compared to another similar mainland site and nearest alternative site option are shown here:

Private Vehicle Transfer Times

South Mainland Pool - Usage Area (highest %)	Drive time to SMP (in minutes)	Drive time to CLC (in minutes)	Drive time change (in minutes)
Virkie	17	32	15
Sandwick	5	21	16
Cunningsburgh	6	15	9
Dunrossness	14	30	16
Lerwick	20	5	-15
Bigton	11	26	15
Levenwick	9	25	16
Quarff	12	9	-3
Scousburgh	14	29	15

Scalloway Pool - Usage Area (highest %)	Drive time to SP (in minutes)	Drive time to CLC (in minutes)	Drive time change (in minutes)
Lerwick	11	5	-6
Scalloway	5	11	6
Burra	13	22	9
Gulberwick	8	8	0
Tingwall	6	9	3
Whiteness	12	15	3
Sandwick	20	21	1
Weisdale	17	20	3

*drive times taken from Google Maps

10. Wider Community Impact

- a. We will be happy to engage with Scalloway Community Development Company as part of the response to enquiries.

Urgent Request for Information and Meeting

I apologise that this response to your letter could not be provided in the timescale requested. Due to the cost cutting measure, SRT has no staff between the CEO and the Facility Managers delivering front line services. Therefore the volunteer Trustees had to contribute much of this letter.

Extra items that may be useful or answers to common questions raised by others.**Why was there no consultation on the closure?**

As part of the Shetland Partnership, SRT endorses and adopts the Shetland Partnership Participation Toolbox using consultation as a way of seeking views on options or proposals. Consultation is appropriate to seek feedback on options or possible choices, or to refine current thinking. The toolbox is clear that consultation is not appropriate if there is little to no room for change or negotiation. This has been an “Inform” engagement.

SRT Trustees did not want to make the decision to close Scalloway Pool. Trustees felt their legal obligation to ensure financial sustainability to protect the overall charity and its staff required the unwelcome choice be made. Therefore, there was nothing to consult on. To consult falsely, knowing there was no choice would have been wrong. Trustees knew without asking that the community, led by Scalloway, East Voe, Trondra, Burra and nearby, would not like the decision. The decision had to be made, nonetheless.

Now there will be an opportunity for meaningful consultation on the future of the building. Unfortunately, continuing as a public swimming pool within SRT’s network is not an option but there may be new uses or owners that can be found. In order to encourage some type of future for the building, SRT will begin discussions in the future with partners and community groups to collect views and opinions of how the building can be retained or repurposed as a valuable part of the Scalloway community’s future.

A doubt I can remove is that SRT would never simply sell the building to a highest bidder and the proposed or intended use of the building will be critical to SRT reaching agreement towards any transfer.

Will there need to be further closures?

No. SRT's current funding award lasts until 2030. Without change SRT will be insolvent before then. The closure of Scalloway Pool is enough to bring SRT's financial model back to balance, with enough coming in to cover what needs to go out. That balance should be able to continue into future funding cycles if Shetland Islands Council and Shetland Charitable Trust do not reduce support.

Was anyone else aware of the intention?

Staff have been aware of the financial pressures that SRT has been under for several years. The decision to trigger voluntary and then compulsory redundancies was, until now, the most regretful moment that SRT Trustees have faced. Schools, user groups and communities have been aware of the challenges through direct meetings.

SRT communicates with the Shetland Charitable Trust regularly and are required to provide reports on a quarterly basis. This is normal practise and monitoring of accounts with a view to compliance with Charity Law is high on the SRT Board of Trustees agenda. In 2025 over multiple discussions, SRT explained through meetings and correspondence to Shetland Charitable Trust the seriousness of receiving less than the absolute minimum necessary to continue without major change. It was confirmed that no additional funding would be available.

Media reports dating back decades are available stating the precarious position of the Trust. The front page and inside articles of two Shetland Times editions from June 2015 and May 2023 are appended at the end of this letter. These demonstrate that the precarious nature of Shetland Recreational Trust has been a matter of public discussion for a decade. Key stakeholders such as the Shetland Islands Council and Shetland Charitable Trust have been regularly and repeatedly briefed.

APPENDIX A

Front page and article of the Shetland Times dated 19th June 2015.

The Shetland Times

Established 1872 | Printed & Published in Shetland

www.shetlandtimes.co.uk | Friday, 19th June, 2015 | £1



Out & Aboot feature, pages 15-22

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MARINE	» Minister to look at seabed devolution	13
ARTS	» Reader gives fine performance	33
SPORT	» Distance runners defy the weather	48

"This was an accident waiting to happen as the maps have not been updated"

Mitch Reid, Digital Scotland, P. 6

Simmer Dim bikers get revved up for rally



Scores of bikers rolled off the NorthLink ferry yesterday morning in time for the annual Simmer Dim Rally. This rider had a wave for the Shetland Times as he drove his impressive-looking trike ashore. For coverage of the festival see www.shetlandtimes.co.uk over the weekend and next week's pages. Photo: Dave Donohue

Workers barred from town chip shop

By RYAN TAYLOR

A Lerwick chip shop became the centre of media attention after it restricted the number of oil and gas industry workers allowed in its shop at any one time.

The Harbour Fish and Chip Shop, in Harbour Square, insisted on more than five workers from the nearby accommodation barges be allowed in its premises.

Management took a strongly-worded notice on the door insisting the restriction was being made because of a minority of barge residents "struggling to behave like humans".

Evangelist and Maritime Construction, Petrofac, and Wood Group PSC – two of which (Petrofac and Midstream) are involved in the development of the new Total gas plant at Sullom Voe.

The notice, which billed itself as a safety notice, read: "No more than five of the following employees in shop at one time:

- Maritime Construction;
- Petrofac;
- Wood Group PSC.

"Due to a minority of guests not struggling to behave like humans. Thank you."

*** Continuation page three

Closures not ruled out by SRT

By RYAN TAYLOR

The recreational trust is seeking ways of avoiding the need to close any of its sports centres in the wake of last week's decision by Shetland Council's Trust to close back £3.5 million.

SRT is bracing itself for a cut of more than a fifth of its budget between now and 2020, a reduction equating to more than a £700,000 in the next five years.

The trust's maintenance budget has already been reduced by £200,000.

Staff are being asked to put their heads together to figure out just how deep the funding reductions will cut, and what measures might be considered to help mitigate against them.

*** Continuation page five

News: Roads fall below national standard 4

RNLI: Fantastic lifeboat fund-raiser 23

Wildlife: Concern raised over 'stair' duck 31

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Minister agrees to meet Loganair campaign group

Delight at ministerial agreement to meet Campaign welcomed by politicians

The online campaign aimed at challenging excessive prices on flights to and from Scottish Islands to meet Minister for Transport and Islands, Derek Mackay to discuss the issue.

The group, founded last Tuesday had already been granted a meeting with Loganair's senior management, likely to happen this month.

Campaign leader Scott Preston is expected to meet Mr MacKay MP Alistair Carmichael, MSP Tavish Scott and SIC leader Gary Robinson were all also invited, but were unable to attend.

Responding to a Scottish parliamentary question from MSP David Stewart Mr MacKay said: "I am aware of the issues surrounding air fares in the Highlands and Islands. This government agreed to continue with the Air Discount Scheme (ADS) for the benefit of users of these flights."

"I have sat with representatives from the island authorities who also raised this issue among others. I have agreed to meet MSPs and campaigners and also have asked for a working session to be carried out looking into the issue."

Following his announcement in the chamber, Mr MacKay's department contacted the group to arrange a meeting.

Mr Preston said: "We're delighted that the minister is willing to meet with a delegation from our group. The support from people not just in Scotland but across the world, as well as from politicians across the political spectrum, has been fantastic. Our voice is simply too large to ignore."

"We will now contact the minister to make arrangements. We are aiming to meet with him after we meet with Loganair next week. We have always said that Loganair does not bear full responsibility for the excessive cost of flying to and from the islands and that government flying is a role."

"We have been inundated with stories from those travelling to and from Scotland's island communities. Price remains the single biggest issue for our members, but a number of other issues including reliability, the Air Discount Scheme and the lack of clarity on Loganair's finances."

"The campaign has received cross-party



Derek Mackay (left) will meet campaign leader Scott Preston.



backing from MSPs, MSPs, Councillors and the Our Isles Our Future Campaign. It has been featured on the BBC, ITV, the Press and Journal, The National and a host of other local and regional media outlets."

The campaign was founded with four aims:

- 1) Loganair acknowledges the campaign and the strength of feeling about this issue in the Highlands and Islands.
- 2) Loganair agrees to send a delegation of senior management to meet with the campaign.
- 3) Loganair provides clarity on finances, providing customers with easy access to information about health and student concessionary rates.
- 4) Loganair initiates a policy to give discounted travel to those flying to and from Scottish Islands to attend the funeral of an immediate family member.

Having achieved the first two aims, Mr Stewart said that the campaign hoped Loganair would address the second two as "we feel this is where islanders really want to see changes."

Mr Stewart met Orkney and Shetland MSPs Liam McArthur and Tavish Scott on Thursday and they will be discussing Loganair's "viability problems" with the island's ministers.

Following the exchanges in Parliament Mr Scott said: "The immediate step that the Scottish government could take to reduce air fares for some would be to increase the cuts they have made to ADS. That would be a big help to applicants from the islands and others who have been excluded from a scheme they were previously entitled to use."

Trust says that closures cannot be ruled out

Continued from front page

Recreational trust chairman, Bryan Lewis, said nothing had been ruled in or out when asked if any of the sports centres operated by the organisation would close.

"We had a recent meeting last week and we asked the staff to go away and come back to us by the end of August with a list of more information to us, as trustees, in terms of what impact that will have and what mitigating factors we can put into place to try to secure we keep the things going as it is at the moment or, if that can't happen, what changes we need to be looking at," he said.

"We haven't ruled anything in or out. We're looking at all the different options, and that's what we've asked the staff to look at."

The SRT is also attempting to identify new ways of generating income. "We also need to look at how we generate some income as well as if we need to try and create new savings... while still trying to maintain the kind of day-to-day services we provide."

Shetland Arts is also hearing itself the tough times ahead, as it prepares to lose £20,000 a year for the next five years.

The organisation is applying for new funding elsewhere in the hope that the gaps can be plugged as much as possible.

General manager Graham Howell said it was clear austerity was on the way, and publicly-funded organisations were duty-bound to plan for the tough days ahead.

"Our funding for this year is confirmed. We've got another round of Creative Scotland in 2016 to bid for. Everything will sort of with and flow over the next few months as we work through what our priorities are, but we won't plan to plan for the tough days ahead."

"The only need to be looking around the country to see austerity coming. Any sort of organisation in receipt of public or semi-public funds - if they're not contingency planning all the time then I'm not quite sure what they are doing."

Emerson have accepted that the one could fall over the Bookings

Gallery. Mr Howell cited a Facebook page run from down south calling for the 'Woodside attraction'.

"As I've said since I arrived we're looking at everything. I've been very clear about that since I arrived in December. We're looking at everything."

Separate from all that is a staff restructuring programme, which is expected to result in a number of redundancies. It comes after senior development officer Bryan Peterson was made head of creative opportunities as part of the plan. The role of head of production was given, meanwhile, to Jonathan Kirk.

Mr Howell added: "We're working through the process and we're announcing appointments as they come up."

Meanwhile, members of Shetland Amenity Trust are getting a leave free on things and leaving tomorrow. "We also need to look at how we generate some income as well as if we need to try and create new savings... while still trying to maintain the kind of day-to-day services we provide."

Chairman Brian Gregson said he was unable to disclose the specific details discussed at a private meeting of trustees on Wednesday. However, he said the cuts had not been "totally unexpected", and the organisation had now resolved to carry out its job as best it could.

"The overall feeling in the meeting was we were expecting this."

"Although it sounds a bit it's not a great deal worse than we have been putting up with for the last five or six years anyway."

"The advantage we have this time is that we have now got a budget, and we know how that budget is going to look for the next four years."

"We added some ring-fenced funding we have been receiving from the council to make sure we have the ability to put it where our priorities lie."

He added: "As it is within the general limits of what we were expecting we shall just continue to march, and the word around the table this afternoon was 'steady as she goes'."

- Robinson's working over next sun, page eight

Fares drop a 'win-win for all'

By PETER JOHNSON

A drop in fares might lead to an increase in passengers with no loss of profits, an ex-pilot and one-time Shetland Islands Council transport spokesman has said.

But Gordon Mitchell, who flew Britten helicopters at Sandburgh from the mid-70s until the late 1990s, said that while it was a tough argument to run a profitable service from, cheaper fares could lead to a win-win situation for passengers and airline operators alike.

Mr Mitchell's comments follow a Facebook campaign that has racked up over 14,000 "likes" in little over a week but succeeded in securing meetings with Loganair and the Scottish government's island minister.

Mr Mitchell, who was previously a South Mainland councillor, said: "I can tell you that running into a place like Sandburgh where you can only use small aircraft is usually not a profitable way of running an airline. If you run big aircraft and fill them up, you could

have much bigger profits, but with fewer flights."

Mr Mitchell said that the role of the island, "in his day", was that an airline needed to operate at 60 per cent capacity before it started turning a profit.

Loganair's financial statement for 2014 shows that profits leapt to 5.5 per cent of turnover in year ended 31st March compared with 3.9 per cent of turnover the previous financial year. Loganair's after tax profit for the financial year was £4.77m compared with £3.36m in 2012-13.

The company has benefited from the Air Discount Scheme that gives islanders 40 per cent discount on the price of tickets. It means that Loganair can continue to charge sufficiently high fares to turn a profit without passengers being discouraged from using the service.

Loganair cannot benefit from the economies of scale large companies that fly 100 times more passengers annually can achieve. Given its small scale operation, it would have to make more profit per passenger than a large airline to remain viable.

Mr Mitchell said that he had always agreed for getting more passenger capacity filled up by dropping fares. "In the end it's not an easy route to make a huge lot of

money on. Bringing more passengers onto flights at a cheaper fare in one of these risks and gambles, an airline would have to take," he added.

"The question is whether they are going to risk dropping fares in order to increase volume. It's not a cut and dried, easy situation to talk about. People can make lots of noise but the situation is a lot more complicated than meets the eye."

"I am not saying that they [Loganair] are wonderful, but on the other hand, do have their problems to handle."

There was also the question of how much Flybe changed Loganair for running the Flybe franchise as Flybe moved planes.

Flybe continues to handle the ticketing for Loganair routes, an arrangement that prompted executive chairman David Hutton to say in his strategic report: "As a franchisee of Flybe we face risks related to the continued and uninterrupted operation of Flybe and as we depend on their systems for passenger reservations, revenue accounting and maintenance of risk. It is therefore a considerable comfort that Flybe have successfully recognised these business and have returned to profitability."



Former pilot and SIC transport spokesman Gordon Mitchell says the loans facing Loganair are not as straightforward as 'turn the key'.

Photo: Keith Jones

p.johnson@shetlandtimes.co.uk

Key stage for health and social integration

The integration of health and social care services in Shetland has reached a key stage, as SIC and NHS Shetland have received endorsement of these plans by Scottish ministers.

All local authorities and health boards across Scotland have been required to merge health and social care services in their areas by next April. Shetland's plan for an Integrated Joint Board (IJB) has been approved by the cabinet secretary for health and wellbeing, MSP Shona Robison, and will be legally constituted by 23rd June.

The IJB will develop planning for services, while the council and NHS Shetland will still

be responsible for frontline delivery. Staff will remain with their current employers. The IJB will include representatives of SIC and NHS Shetland, as well as of patients, health professionals and carers.

The council and NHS Shetland have worked closely for many years. The new integration scheme should streamline planning of health and social care services, and will cover Accident & Emergency, GP, health centres, community nursing, social work for adults, care homes and occupational therapy, among others.

Councillor Carol Smith, who has been

appointed as chairman of Shetland's IJB, said: "The recent sign-off by the cabinet secretary for our integration scheme is an important milestone for us, so that our services can be fully integrated by next April."

"Our aim is to shift the balance away from hospital to community based settings, such as at home, wherever possible. The council and NHS Shetland have worked well together in the past and we hope to build on this through the process of integration. The most important thing for me is that we deliver the services that will have the best results for the people in our community."

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APPENDIX B

Front page and article of the Shetland Times dated 19th May 2023.

The Shetland Times

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Energy trust proposal

BY ANDREW HIRST

A new "energy trust" has been proposed to ensure Shetland benefits from the rapidly emerging renewable sector.

Experts at Vow Energy said that, with a green hydrogen production plant the size of Sullom Voe Terminal on the horizon, it was important the community received its fair share of the profits. Vow's managing director Daniel Cross said Shetland's natural resources and current market trends meant such a facility was "inevitable".

The company's new developments director Tom Willis said traditional companies were already looking to capitalise on the area's natural resources.

"If it's not done by us, it's going to be done to us," he said.

The idea of the energy trust takes its inspiration from the way in which Shetland was able to benefit from the heyday of the oil and gas industry.

* Full story on page five



Cruising to a bumper tourist season

It has been a hive of activity in Lerwick Harbour this week, with numerous yachts and cruise ships visiting. The early boost to the tourist season bodes well for the rest of the summer, with eager anticipation for the upcoming Bergen Race and then the Tall Ships Races later in July. Tickets went on sale on Friday for events for the tall ships extravaganza. See story on page 12.

Photo: Iain Reid

Recreational trust warns of job cuts 'to survive next two years'

Leisure organisation is seeking voluntary redundancies | Bosses may resort to compulsory lay-offs to make savings

EXCLUSIVE

BY RYAN NICOLSON

Shetland Recreational Trust (SRT) could be forced to lay off staff as it looks to "survive the next two years".

The startling revelation comes as the SIC is to consider cutting swimming lessons for school children to make savings (see separate story on page 5).

SRT acting chief executive Robert Gaddie has written to all contracted staff offering them voluntary redundancy, according to a confidential letter seen by The Shetland Times.

He warned that if enough people did not come forward, the SRT would have to consider compulsory redundancies to make "substantial" savings.

Mr Gaddie has said the trust - which runs eight leisure centres across Shetland - needs to do something "drastic" to save its future.

"The trust has faced challenges in the past but in this period the pressures of many things outside our control, such as utility costs, means that the level of savings are substantial," he said.

Mr Gaddie said the largest cost the SRT faced was salaries.

"To enable us to survive the next two years we have to look at restructuring," he said.

"Unfortunately that may mean some job losses or reduction in hours. We will first of all be offering every contracted staff member the opportunity to discuss voluntary reductions of hours, and then offer staff who wish to apply the opportunity of voluntary redundancy.

"If the required savings cannot be made with voluntary actions, the last step we have to consider will be compulsory redundancies."

The SRT receives the majority of its funding from the Shetland Charitable Trust (SCT).

In summer grant from the SCT runs for another two years, and Mr Gaddie said it needed to make seven savings during that time.

The trust could apply for more funding, he said, but it would only be awarded in 2025.

Mr Gaddie replaced outgoing chief executive Steven Laiflow at the beginning of April, after Mr Laiflow "resigned for personal reasons".

SRT chairman David Thomson said then that the natural leisure sector was "hangng by a thread", and that Shetland was "not detached from that reality". "SRT faces serious trials this year," he added.

Mr Gaddie took over as acting chief executive immediately, with Mr Thomson saying that the trust "do not have the luxury of several months to find a successor".

The SRT board approved a turnaround plan, including potential compulsory redundancies, at a meeting just three weeks after Mr Laiflow's exit was announced.

The outgoing chief executive had been in post since 2016, and had also faced a difficult financial situation - particularly when leisure centres were closed due to Covid. But Mr Gaddie said in his letter to staff that while the SRT had tried to come up with different ways to bring income in during this time, "the one reason so another three attempts have had limited impact".

** Continuation page three

Cope wins £695k funding boost | Page 2

New Life Church in major planning victory | Page 4

New probe into Viking burn pollution | Page 6

Toilet closure times 'a disgrace' | Page 7

Tunnels timeline revealed in FoI | Page 11

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Swimming lessons face axe

BY CHLOE IRVINE

School swimming lessons for 51 and 52 pupils face the axe. A report to go before the SRT's education and facilities committee on Monday proposes scrapping lessons for secondary-aged pupils, while retaining these for primary pupils.

The council currently uses the leisure centres for school PE lessons. During out of school hours, Shetland Recreational Trust also offer swimming sessions at a cost, which is reduced for those on benefits.

Officials state in the report that swimming isn't a statutory component of the national curriculum in Scotland, and in many cases buses are needed to transport pupils to the nearest swimming pool.

This annually costs £10,000 in addition to the £140,000 price of the current model of school swimming in the academic year 2022-24.

The report recommends reducing universal swimming lessons to P1 to P4, and provide a flexible approach for P5 to P7 in co-operation with SRT.

This could focus on those who are unable to swim by the end of P4.

The proposal is to stop lessons entirely for 51 and 52 pupils.

The report says this would save £23,330 for the current year, and around £35,510 in 2024-25.

While a number of pupils thoroughly enjoy swimming, the report expressed concern for those with a "lack of body confidence" and a "fear of being made a fool of".

Findings from the report suggest a number of school absences are due to the "intensity" some pupils find around having to participate in swimming lessons.

Alongside the cost and impact on pupils, the report highlighted the difficulties teachers face in catering their swimming lessons to a variety of abilities.

Swimming lessons normally have around 20 pupils at a time and in some instances, the range in abilities can be from a "complete club beginner" to a "relative beginner".

However, the possibility of cutting these classes has sparked concern over young people's safety and fitness levels.

Shetland amateur competitive swimming coach Peter Peterson has been left baffled by the recommendations and feels Shetland needs to take a more holistic approach.

"Taking away anything that has the potential to be a life-saving skill is extremely disappointing.

"I can't understand why they can't take a leaf out of our Nordic neigh-



Swimming lessons at the Clickimin, and other leisure centres, could be axed.

bours look by actually prioritising young people's health and activity, rather than it being the first thing they cut.

"If you go to a country like Iceland, swimming is in the curriculum just like maths and English is, it's a legal requirement, children must know how to swim."

Mr Peterson stressed that ensuring young people have the opportunity to have swimming lessons will save lives and tackle health issues such as obesity.

"In the long term, it might actually save these money by having a fitter and healthier society of younger people.

"Cutting the wrong things will cost us more in the future, if it increases costs in welfare, health and obesity, it'll leave us in an even bigger state than we are now.

"You'd think they'd want them to at least have the ability to survive if they were in the water, whether or not they need to be a strong swimmer, they need to know what to do."

The proposals will be brought before councillors on Monday.

SRT not seeking new employees

Continued from front page

"When it became clear that something drastic had to be done, the board agreed to stop all further developments and refocus on the core business of the organisation," he added.

The Shetland Times revealed earlier this month that the SRT had put plans to build a holiday park next to the Uist leisure centre on hold.

The ambitious plans, which would have seen standard camping pods and accessible accommodation built, were first introduced by the SRT almost exactly two years ago.

Uist community councillors agreed to write to the SRT expressing their disappointment about the decision not to take the plans forward.

Mr Geddes apologised to staff for having to deliver the message to them, and said he was sorry that many of them have had to "work under increased pressure due to our staff shortages."

"I'd also encourage you to contact me or your line managers with any ideas or actions you think may help SRT save money in the short, medium or long term," he added.

The SRT website says it currently is not advertising any new vacancies within the organisation.



The pressures of many things outwith our control, such as utility costs, means that the level of savings are substantial.

Robert Geddes



Big thank you from blaze couple

A couple who lost their Wallsaver home in a fire this month have thanked the public for the sending donations.

The GoFundMe page set up by family friend and North Isles councillor Ryan Thomson has raised over £1,700 so far.

Judith and Geoffrey Johnson, who lost all their possessions in the fire, have spoken of the generosity of Shetlanders which has left them feeling overwhelmed.

"We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has so generously donated to the fund kindly set up by Ryan Thomson following the loss of our home," they said in a statement.

"Your kindness has been overwhelming, we have been touched by the incredible support and thoughtfulness shown by family, friends, folk from our local area, Shetland and beyond.

"Words cannot express our appreciation, thank you."

Speaking to The Shetland Times last week, Mr Thomson recalled



The charred remains of Judith and Geoffrey Johnson's home. Photo: Shetland Times

seeing a dog-like "mark" in the distance, and later discovered it was his friend's home on fire.

He described Shetland as "the

best community on the planet" during times of "real crisis" following the huge influx of donations to the couple.



Air ambulance milestone marked

Highlands and Islands MSP James Halcrow Johnson has praised the Scottish Air Ambulance Service on its 50th anniversary.

Mr Halcrow Johnson said it had been a vital resource around the region, providing critical medical care and transport in emergency situations.

"This milestone is an opportunity to recognise this vital service.

"It is an opportunity to thank the dedication and professionalism of the pilots, doctors, paramedics, and support staff who work tirelessly day in and day out as they make our region safe," he said.



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