

Sunday Workshop documentation



Introduction

This workshop was held in the community room at Sanday Community School on Sunday 17th June 2018. Twenty seven people participated; 11 from the SUII team and 16 Sanday residents. The workshop followed a day and a half of site visits to eroding coastal heritage around Sanday including Newark settlement mound, Lopness prehistoric settlement, Meur Burnt Mound, Quoyness chambered cairn, Augmund Howe cairn, Pool settlement mound and Stove prehistoric settlement. The majority of workshop participants had taken part in the site visits. Sanday based workshop participants included Sandonians, long-term residents and residents new to the island. Most, but not all, had worked with SCAPE on archaeological projects.

Sanday has a very high concentration of spectacular coastally eroding heritage and Sanday residents have had a long involvement with various archaeological research projects and excavations on the island, over the last 30 years. There is a high degree of awareness of the archaeological heritage amongst the general population of Sanday. The aim of the workshop was to bring the SUII team of heritage researchers and practitioners together with Sanday residents to talk about the themes of significance, threat and prioritisation for the islands coastally eroding heritage in the face of anticipated accelerated loss as a result of climate change.

Summary of discussions

Workshop format

Participants were divided into 4 mixed groups with sub-groups within the Sanday residents and SUII visitors split up between tables. Each table discussed the same 6 pre-defined questions, based upon the SUII Learning from Loss programme objectives. Each question had a 15 minute discussion slot.

- Q1. *What is significant about Sanday's coastal heritage?*
- Q2. *What are the main threats facing Sanday's coastal heritage?*
- Q3. *If we can't take action at every site, how do we prioritise?*
- Q4. *What are your aspirations for Sanday's coastal heritage by 2030? What needs to happen to achieve them?*
- Q5. *In order to achieve future aspirations what are the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders?*
- Q6. *What would be the impact upon Sanday if we lost our coastal heritage?*

At the end of the small-group discussion period, the nominated note-taker from each group reported back their key discussion topics to all.

Main findings of the workshop

Q1. Significance

The strongest response to what is significant about Sanday's coastal heritage across all groups was its sheer quantity, quality and diversity; its connectedness with Sanday's past, and its indivisibility from both the natural and historic landscape and seascape. *"Coastal heritage makes the island"*. Groups with long-term residents and residents born on the island talked about the heritage inspiring respect for past lives. Groups with newer residents placed more emphasis on the potential of the resource to add to knowledge; but the excitement of unexplored history was voiced across the board.

- the past is alive
- makes the island what it is
- connection with past
- sheer quantity and quality
- interconnectedness with natural places
- interconnectedness with landscape and seascape
- respect
- potential to add to knowledge – unexplored history

Summary of discussions

Q2. Threats

All groups identified climate change explicitly as a driver for observed accelerating coastal erosion due to changing weather patterns and sea level rise. As important were threats resulting from human behaviour. This fell into two main categories. Poor agricultural or land management practise such as over grazing and stock erosion; and ignorance of, or apathy towards, heritage both of which could result in inadvertent or thoughtless damage and loss of heritage. Wildlife and vegetation were recognised as potentially damaging but controllable, and one group mentioned a lack of resources in the context of mitigating climate change impacts upon heritage because of competition from other more 'valuable' assets such as roads and housing.

- accelerating coastal erosion as a result of climate change – sea level rise, storm-surge
- human behaviour – poor agricultural practise fly tipping/rubbish
- ignorance/apathy
- one group mentioned lack of resources in the context of responding to effects of climate change because of competition from other more valuable assets such as roads and housing.

Q3. Prioritisation

The criteria upon which to prioritise action were clearly articulated across all groups as: vulnerability; rarity; potential for new knowledge creation; and potential for economic benefit. Also strongly voiced was desire for a specialist role in guiding priorities with a mechanism for consultation so that opinions from the local community and stakeholders inform decisions. It was recognised that it would be difficult to prioritise for the many eroding coastal heritage sites on Sanday where very little is known about them.

- vulnerability, rarity,
- potential to create new knowledge and potential for economic benefit.
- specialist role in prioritisation, community and stakeholder input into decisions.

Q4. Aspirations for 2030

Implicit in the responses was the fundamental role of the Heritage Centre as a place for the realisation of many of the aspirations voiced. The retention of charismatic finds on the island was identified as highly desirable, although the challenges and costs involved acknowledged. Three groups independently mentioned the Scar whalebone plaque. This touches upon not only the potential economic benefit of retaining 'golden' finds, but also a sense of local pride and (in)justice "*interesting things are always taken away*". Making more of heritage for wider economic benefit came through strongly in discussions about aspirations. Ideas of how to achieve this include retention of charismatic finds, development of the reconstructions at the Heritage Centre and a large-scale, long-term excavation. The potential of coastal heritage to tell stories of change on Sanday and link to the global story of climate change was identified by 2 groups as an aspiration for a new interpretation project at the heritage centre. The need to engage with children and provide more opportunities for community involvement in heritage activity was thought by one group to be needed to develop local buy-in and stewardship of heritage. One group aspired to a 2030 strategy

Summary of discussions

for Sanday's coastal heritage, which would be community-led but collaborative in development and implementation.

- Heritage Centre fundamental – focal point, living history, reconstructions
- retention of charismatic finds
- economic benefit
- coastal heritage to tell stories of change on Sanday - link to global story of climate change
- more involvement in heritage activity
- engage children
- big destination project
- strategy for Sanday's archaeology – community led with specialist support

Q5. Roles and responsibilities to meet aspirations

Every group thought that partnerships between the community, national heritage agencies and the local authority and other relevant organisations (e.g. SCAPE, UHI) were essential. However, a few examples of existing tensions in some of these relationships were given. National organisations need to be able to communicate more effectively and show respect for local priorities if they are to fulfil their guidance and leadership role – which is wanted. Realistic expectations of community involvement and risk of volunteer fatigue was highlighted by one group in discussion for this question and one group outside of the discussion. The responsibility of islanders to invest in increasing capacity for visitors if the economic potential of Sandays' heritage was to be realised was also discussed by one group.

- partnerships local and wider
- mixed relationship with LA
- disconnect between local priorities and national priorities
- communication should be easier with big organisations
- island responsibility to invest in increasing capacity for visitors if economic potential to be realised.
- realistic expectations - risk of volunteer fatigue – mentioned by one group in discussion around this question and one group outside of discussion

Q6. Impact to Sanday if no coastal heritage

Not a very well-framed question and unsurprisingly the immediate response was that Sanday would not exist anymore either. However when thinking through a less dramatic scenario of coastal heritage loss, the second most immediate common response was of loss of identity and character, followed by loss of potentials. E.g. potential knowledge and potential economic benefit for the island's future. Most groups discussed the role of different types of recording as a practical response in advance of heritage loss.

- no Sanday
- loss of identity and character
- loss of potential knowledge, potential economic benefit
- role of recording in advance of loss