

**Democracy For
Shetland'S
Charitable
Trust**

**Research Report from Lerwick Market Cross
Democratic Listening exercise
and phone survey**

conducted on 14.5.16

Contents:

Page 2	Contents and comment
Page 3	Statement of Research Validity
Page 4	List of Questions
Page 5	Question 1 (quantitative)
Page 6	Question 2 (quantitative)
Page 8	Question 3 (quantitative)
Page 9	Question 4 (qualitative)
Page 12	Question 5 (qualitative) SCT
Page 13	Question 5 (qualitative) the campaign
Page 15	Observations
Page 16	Summary

Comment

Speaking on the eve of the report's release, a female member of the action committee who needs to remain anonymous because of SCT's decision to disbar campaigners from becoming trustees, said:

"A've read the report an agree absolutely in what it says.

Having hed almost 2 decades wirking in voluntary sector, I have numerous experiences of underfunding, cutbacks, and heavy-handedness (to say the least!).

It's a shame that folk are faert to spaet up, when things lik dis happen, but dey've seen what happens whan dey do.

Hit a pity dat it seems to be happening more and more here in Shetland.

No matter how it looks on the surface, the nasty side of governance is alive and well and ruling in Lerwick !

List of Questions

Question 1

Who should be the trustees on Shetland's Charitable Trust in the future: councillors, appointees, directly elected trustees or a mix?

Follow up question as required: If a mix what mix?

Question 2

If you could make the trust spend less money on one area so that it could spend more on another where would you like to see it spent less and more ?

Interviewees were presented with four options, reflecting main regular expenditure groupings.

Question 3

Do you think Shetland Charitable Trust ought to put conditions on the funds provided to Shetland Recreation Trust and Shetland Arts Trust requiring them to put on some free concerts and films for pensioners and allowing children from families receiving free school meals to go swimming for free?

Question 4

Why do you think so few folk try to tell SCT what to do with the oil money and why do so few attend trust meetings ?

Question 5

Any other comments on SCT or advice for this campaign?

Statement regarding overall validity and reliability of research method and approach.

29 interviews were conducted face to face at the Market Cross in Lerwick on the very cold morning of the 14th of March. Four names of people from Levenwick, Scalloway and Unst were drawn at random from the Large Print phone book to counter any pro-Lerwick bias.

Although the researcher knew five of the interviewees, these interviews gave a similar range of responses to the other interviews. It was not apparent that any of those interviewed had come to the Market Cross to be interviewed. No member of Democracy4SCT was interviewed.

Similarly although the interviewer knew by chance one of the four phone interviewees chosen at random the spread of answers there similarly was not markedly different to the other interviewees. Of the six people known to the interviewer he could only have predicted the responses of two.

The face to face interview method can see the interviewee trying to give the desired responses. A placard titled Democracy4Shetland'S Charitable Trust, along with other signs but this was not visible to half of those interviews most of whom were interviewed at a distance of at least 6 yards from it. To get out of the wind a little the last five interviews were conducted by Shetland Soap Company where the interviewer was stood directly beside the sign. These are two influences which are acknowledged as potentially influencing the data, however care was taken in the structure and wording of the questions to enable open answers.

E.g. Qu 1. did not lead the interviewee to any particular answer.

E.g. Qu. 3 was deliberately put after Qu. 2 so not as to encourage responses favouring option B.

Where it might be alleged that questions were leading it should also be acknowledged that no interviewee complained about the questions.

The researcher has a research masters of science in social research and thus a high level of training in conducting social science research. This qualification was part-funded by Shetland Development Trust.

It is accepted that large data sets are preferable for quantitative research. Far smaller numbers of participants are required for successful qualitative research as it is intended to relate and explain how people feel and why. When the two methods are mixed a strong indication of the truth emerges.

The research methodology informing Democracy4SCT's overall campaign approach is known as Action Research. This methodology is used to give voice to the disempowered. It does not intend to measure the status quo, but aims instead to change it.

Action Research purposefully seeks out to find out about a situation through challenge. Only this can identify the disposition of power. This methodology is used in many different ways; in health, community work, education, in rural and urban development. It levels the playing field, identifies imbalances of power and gives voice to those negatively impacted.

Question 1 33/33 possible responses

Who should be the trustees on Shetland's Charitable Trust in the future: councillors, appointees, directly elected trustees or a mix?

Follow up question as required: If a mix what mix?

Directly elected trustees:	17/33
Directly elected plus appointed trustees	8/33
Directly elected plus councillors plus appointed trustees	3/33
Councillors plus appointed trustees	3/33
Don't know	2/33
Councillors plus democratically elected	1/33

No appointees (totalled):	18/33
No councillors (totalled):	24/33

Expressed as a percentage including the 2 don't knows

Directly elected trustees:	52%
Directly elected plus appointed trustees	24%
Directly elected plus councillors plus appointed trustees	9%
Councillors plus appointed trustees	9%
Don't know	6%
Councillors plus democratically elected	3%

No appointees (totalled)	55%
No councillors (totalled)	73%

D4SCT's Qu 1 comment:

There is very little public support for SCT's plan. Some who favoured it showed little knowledge of SCT.

- Just under a quarter favoured Dr. Will's proposal.
- D4SCT's proposal was more than twice as popular as Dr. Will's proposal with over 50% of the votes.
- D4SCT's proposal was nearly six times more popular than SCT's plan.

The total number of interviewees which took a position was over three times the number of trustees who voted on Thursday 12th May.

As no member of the public currently has a choice over who represents them on the trust, D4SCT regards the people's say as at least equally legitimate to that of the No-Mandate SCT trustees.

As SCT's proposal will not find favour with OSCR (office of the Scottish Charities Regulator) because of the excessive percentage of trustees, SCT has knowingly presented a time wasting and incompetent plan, making their point of view less legitimate than that of the general public.

SCT seeks a debate about how few SIC councillors should be on the trust. That is plainly not the debate the public require. 75% of the members of the public asked want the debate to be about how few, if any, appointed trustees.

Question 2 32/33 possible responses

If you could make the trust spend less money on one area so that it could spend more on another where would you like to see it spent less and more ?

Interviewees were presented with four options, reflecting main regular expenditure groupings.

A: Sport and Recreation, leisure centres, pools.

B: Shetland's poor and disadvantaged, local charities and the voluntary sector, youth and drink and drugs information and support.

C: Amenity, heritage, archives, museums, visitor's centres

D: Arts and culture, music, theatre and film.

Number of valid responses 32/33

Those seeking to redistribute in favour of A: 0/32

Those seeking to redistribute in favour of B: 21/32

Those seeking to redistribute in favour of C: 1 /32

Those seeking to redistribute in favour of D: 2 / 32

Those not sure: 3/32

Those satisfied with current balance: 3/32

Those suggesting new category of education 2/32 (see comments to answer 4)

Of those seeking to distribute in favour of B the money was to come from: A8, C5, D8.

D4SCT Qu2. Comment

This was a thought provoking exercise as interviewees had to face up to the cold fact that an increase for one sector may need to come from a decrease in another.

Whatever the weaknesses of having a longer description of option B, a very large number of interviewees plainly felt more should be spend those in need. See also responses to questions 4 and 5.

What this exercise shows is that there plainly is a political element to the work of the trust as politics is how we attempt to resolve arguments over distribution of resources. That is not to say the trust should ever be party political but pro-sport, pro-Disability Shetland, pro-Arts or Amenity Trust candidates or pro-social opportunity candidates for election should perhaps be expected to make this clear to the electorate in future.

At SCT's meeting on 12th May it was strongly emphasised that SCT is not to be politicised, as if this was an argument against elections.

By seeking to entrench control of the trust in fewer and less accountable hands and through expenditure and investment decisions, SCT is already highly politicised in favour of the status quo at the expense of those beneficiaries most in need of charitable support.

Cutting back local expenditure makes more sense under generous national governments in order to be able to increase expenditure in times of austerity.

It is important to note at this point that the trust's current appointee selection arrangements rule out campaigners such as Sandy Peterson, John Tulloch and, presumably, supporters of D4SCT. For this reason, although the names of action group members will be confidentially disclosed to members of Shetland's media, many will opt to remain anonymous for fear of being disbarred from future participation in SCT.

The decision to disbar pro-reform candidates is most certainly political.

Democracy4SCT suggests that SCT trustees distinguish between political and party political when discussing the potential politicisation of the trust in the future and would not want to see elections to SCT becoming a party political issue.

Democracy4SCT further encourages SCT trustees to realise that maintaining the current balance of expenditure during a period of government austerity and decreasing local government expenditure is itself plainly a political position.

Although it was brought up by some respondents at this stage, Viking Energy was purposefully not mentioned in the questions. This is because the main driver of Democracy4SCT is that a disproportionate %age of the spend favours those with disposable income with insufficient support for the marginalised.

The issue of managing investments was similarly not addressed by the questioner. See responses to question 4 and 5. Those raising other issues in relation to this question were asked to hold on to the thought and give it in response to qu5.

Question 3

Do you think Shetland Charitable Trust ought to put conditions on the funds provided to Shetland Recreation Trust and Shetland Arts Trust requiring them to put on some free concerts and films for pensioners and allowing children from families receiving free school meals to go swimming for free?

Total responses 33/33

Yes 30, No 3.

D4SCT 's Qu 3. Comment

This question resulted from a recent conversation with a female pensioner from Sandvienne who thought the majority of trustees would have little idea of what it is like to struggle to raise a family, let alone wait for a bus in course weather.

Whether or not it is possible for SCT to place social responsibility conditions on the recipient trusts it is plainly desired.

The strength of responses vindicates D4SCT's position that there is an imbalance of SCT expenditure towards those with a disposable income.

That this invaluable question was included thanks to a conversation with someone on a town bus shows the benefit of including having a broader base of representation in the future, less bent towards middle class professionals who may, or may not, have much of an idea of that games the powerful have played in Shetland for too long.

Question 4 33/33 possible responses

Why do you think so few folk try to tell SCT what to do with the oil money and why do so few attend trust meetings ?

(Coding follows comments in brackets)

General malaise

Apathy

Interest too low

people take it for granted

never really thought of attending, general apathy? perhaps folk feel they've got it so let them get on with it, presumably there is satisfaction

(Apathy, plus one further below, 5)

People never been involved so people dunna ken much about it

Could be called something else to show it funds the other trusts? 1/2 people wouldn't know anything about it. I work with a lot of younger people and I'm sure they wouldn't know anything. People assume they know what they are doing because they are the ones in those positions.

I'm clueless about it. They should be more open, tell us what is going where in the paper, give us regular updates like they do with the new school project, leaflet in the paper

I think a lot of people don't know about the trust and that is why education is so important. I agree. *This from the couple who volunteered the education criteria for question 2. Also see question 5 comments*

(Ignorance 5)

People know that trust has gone through change but I'm not sure it is democratic enough

Still perceived as being run by councillors but not entirely now, but because they know the councillors are elected they have the job to get on with it.

They think it is more reasonable than it was in the past but that doesn't mean it is fine.

General **apathy** (above to Apathy), A feeling that whatever they say it won't be taken into account (below to Insulted) and in the past they were directly elected as councillors but now it has changed and we don't know who the appointees are there's a problem.

(Recent change 4)

Shetland culture

Its a good idea to get ideas from the public, typical Shetlanders, dumb and scared of speaking out

You speak up you are slapped down, if you raise points people take it personally if you say something needs to happen

They feel more important people are taking the decisions, people are doing that for us
(Fear 2, Shetland culture 4)

SCT seen as a clique, would be pointless, folk sense things are shit but they (SCT) are not listeners.

Pointless as we know they don't listen, folk know what they say won't make the least bit of difference, won't be heard by the clique so can't be arsed, why speak if your face doesn't fit?

They don't listen, they are going to do what they want to no matter who says otherwise

They have no faith and don't trust them

Don't feel they have a say, hard to get message across and be listened to.

Never get a chance to be heard, everything is secret til the last minute

Don't know that they can, requests fall on deaf ears.

Can't be bothered, think it is all cut and dried.

People feel it is pointless and are confused about their role and how they can feedback and lots of the political fighting that goes on forgets that this is about local people with local issues.

Don't get a right chance of a say.

No faith if they turned up and spoke it would be listened to, disadvantage is everywhere you go but here it is in a minority, its not as if people don't care, lots of fund raising for country wide events like Relay for Life... people do care but lose enthusiasm, quite a few do not agree with what goes on, and perceive majority of this does not affect them even though the trust is a bit of a laughing stock.

(12 insulted by conduct of the trust – ignored, pointless, won't listen, clique, *one more above*).

Don't know **(2)**

Difficult getting there from Unst
(Transport 1)

Timing and childcare, but would need to be able to influence them first.
(Timing and childcare 1)

The majority are comfortable enough financially, think it doesn't matter really, not reliant on anything, so will let anything happen and don't realise til afterwards (1 see also question 5 comment)

Those most affected are too busy struggling to get by.
(Wealth distribution 2)

D4SCT'S Comment

These answers should in fact actually really worry those involved in the running of SCT, as Shetland residents. The trust is in a position to change Shetland culture, remove the fear of speaking out and ought to be directly empowering those at the margins who lack a voice, but if this was attempted prior to genuine democratic reform it would not be trusted.

A third of respondents feel insulted by the conduct of the trust. Another third thought apathy and ignorance were to blame, but who is to blame for the apathy and ignorance? Presumably those who haven't wanted to listen to what people have to say and have left them feeling excluded and insulted. There are a troubling proportion of quietly angry voices here.

A more engaged and responsible SCT would have noticed and overcome this long ago.

Think of it, over two thirds felt the reason for low involvement was down to apathy, ignorance and the high-handed and superior conduct of the trust who are not thought to care about what the residents of Shetland think or care for their views either.

What is particularly problematic, as question three showed, is that genuine engagement with people provides better solutions, so the trust is doubly failing because of its elitist approach.

They cannot proceed properly without opening the trust to ordinary Shetlanders with some experience of feeling excluded from decision making and of fuel, transport and other forms of poverty. Such people are experts by lived experience, whereas all the trustees spoke about in the meeting on the 12th of May, regarding future trustees, was their skill set.

The last two points are echoed in an answer to question 5 which states that the large number of very wealthy folk in Shetland means the poor scarcely get noticed, yet sharing our community with people living in poverty affects us all.

There is a clear indication that people feel the trust knows best and have closed minds.

There is a self-perpetuating cycle here which SCT should apologise for.

As chair of the trust, the Queen's representative in Shetland, Lord Lieutenant Bobby Hunter should take responsibility for this interlocked pattern of pitiful engagement, insulting highhandedness and failure to identify and meet the needs of those most in need of support. Public perception of his approach is an obstacle to both reform and to the proper function of Shetland's Charitable Trust.

Question 5 32/33 possible responses (Raw data, not coded)

Any other comments on SCT or advice for this campaign?

Regarding SCT:

They are making themselves look bad, there must be democracy in Shetland, folk should have more input.

They should think carefully before making cuts, disabled and elderly are always needing help.

It would be wise for them to have nothing to do with Viking Energy.

It would be good to get back to the heart of what the Charitable Trust is meant to be about and future proof Shetland and Shetlanders.

Did you see that that letter in the paper wondering how much Viking Energy was worth ? We've puttin in £8 million (one man to his friend)

People need to know it is their thing.

Stop funding Viking Energy, I've no interest in us putting all our eggs in one basket. Its inappropriate.

These cuts are all to do with Viking Energy. Bobby Hunter is hanging on to those he feels will approve of Viking Energy, the cabal are scared.

(2 further more personal comments about Bobby Hunter were noted but were unprintable)

More democracy would make it far more accountable, the people who run things are a law unto themselves.

They should have public forums and listen

Just have a couple of councillors

No money should have been put into Viking Energy to begin with.

It is an embarrassment. It is supposed to be money for the good of everybody and thats not happening. Disability Shetland relies on volunteers and only needs a little help to help the volunteers help the disabled. Instead the money is going to silly wages for office workers. You go into the Clickimin centre and the staff are just huddled about with their hands in their pockets.

It makes sense letting some bairns go swimming for free. What's the point of having a pool half empty?

No really

Nope

Help keep the debate open to the public and seek people's feedback.

It would be OK if it was run right.

They should listen more to the people of Shetland. At the end of the day it is the people of Shetland's money.

It is really important the money is used to support the general quality of life in Shetland, especially vulnerable people.

Look after it, not spend spend spend.

The SIC should be running the Clickimin centre. That money could then go to help those that need it.

Community is very important. In our area, Tingwall, the only public building is the community hall, its the main focus, not all halls are needed, we've got rotten blocks and there is no source of direct income we can identify even though the council uses the hall.

(Education couple) Education funding is a priority, especially when local funding is being cut by Holyrood. Get education right at the beginning, an equally high quality education for all gives everyone the equality of opportunity, this means you don't spend money later on picking up the pieces and give bairns a good start in life before its too late, even knitting instructors and free musical tuition, the Art's Trust has cut John Haswell's drama post so there is much less drams for the bairns, and free musical tuition which is essential for those whose parents can't afford it,

I'd like to see where the money goes to, Never seen that published before. Maybe can find it out, I don't know, but don't know where to look.

I've a feeling its a bit unaccountable.

Regarding the campaign:

Keep going and make them change

Keep going

Good you are carrying it out.

This campaign is very important. Democratic oversight was Shetland's opportunity to do interesting things autonomously. Shetland's body politic loses power if Shetland Charitable Trust is not elected.

D4SCT Qu 5 comment

Whilst it is interesting that 5 (+2, a sixth) of respondents raised Viking Energy without any prompting, showing suspicion that recent cuts were actually intended to free up money to be invested / gambled on the scheme (and Democracy4SCT's action committee is split on that issue) the other comments should not be neglected.

29 out of 32 interviewees implied or levelled criticism.

From the data set it feels like SCT would be wasting any money spent on addressing image problems if there is not a speedy and genuine commitment to democracy first.

As education is foundational for democracy, levels the playing field for social civic and economic participation thereby maximising participation, increases life chances and speeds economic growth, perhaps this should be a criteria in any future research, as disproportionate money needs to be invested in those at risk of low attainment. Some strong cultural elements of education (knitting, drama, supported music tuition), which can improve attainment, have recently been cut.

The final contributor makes a strong point. Locally politics is worrying weak in that our ability to address issues of the distribution of resources, voice and power is compromised because of the do-gooding and conniving of some in power. Removing democratic accountability will further strengthen Shetland's self-regarding, group-thinking, know-it-all establishment. Increasing it, however, will strengthen civic society and result in better and more imaginative ideas being tested and better fairer outcomes for ordinary people.

Observations

A mixed data set is powerful because it is possible to identify the reasoning behind the numbers. Connections and patterns emerge. There is frustration and distrust. Little wonder. The trust's anti-democratic governance restructuring plan continues to be portrayed as reform. The data confirms that perspective will be regarded by many as political spin.

Although it was ably spelt out, trustees did not engage open-mindedly with the thinking behind Jonathan Will's compromise proposal. The much vaunted skill set of the appointees had apparently dissolved. It was clear that significant financial information was held back from the public gaze. Perhaps this explains the gagging letters sent to trustees Wills and Duncan. There is speculation in the letters page of the Shetland Times that the millions of pounds out into the Viking Energy proposal will never be recouped.

The oil funds were handed over to democratic oversight in Shetland. As the hay days passed it became clear the council should not be dominating the Charitable Trust, yet now the trust's own proposal is to considerably reduce the level of accountability selected trustees offer.

What is feared by those who oppose democratic accountability? It is clear professionals with the desired skill set lack the imagination to know and have little experience of what Shetland's poor and disadvantaged need. Do all trustees oppose any change to the current pattern of expenditure which favours those with disposable incomes, as Jonathan Wills said he did at last week's meeting? Are they reluctant to share power with those the trust is meant to favour? Will they stand in the way proper democratic debate because it might result in unpredictable change?

A great deal of social and economic disruption resulted from the oil era. These millions, used flexibly and intelligently are meant to be able to offset it. That would require the trust to adopt an entirely different culture, one of enquiry, openness and service, which cannot possibly result from the trust only listening to the members favoured by the chair.

The trust's recent history, since the requirement by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator, has been one of a reluctance to embrace reform and needless delay. That itself is also a political position. The selection of the Institute of Directors as guides for this next step was political. Each remit given when legal advice is asked for is also political. Legal opinions can be bought to measure and, once acquired, obfuscate what is actually in the public's interest.

This use of smoke and mirrors is presumably not detected by the appointed trustees who are eager to please the power-holders in the organisation, confident that by doing so they serve the public good.

Summary

There are some clear headlines from this random sample.

- Less than a tenth wanted the new governance arrangement the trust is currently proposing.
- Less than a quarter Dr. Will's plan.
- Over half of all those interviewed wanted direct elections.

Democracy for Shetland'S Charitable Trust has a green light to proceed with its planned petition for a fully democratically elected trust

- Roughly two thirds of people would like to see more money spent on support for the disadvantaged with the money coming from reductions in expenditure on the Recreation Trust and the Arts Trust in equal measure followed by the Amenity Trust.
- More than nine out of ten interviewees would like to see conditions put on the money handed out from Shetland Charitable Trust to the Arts Trust and the Recreation Trust so that pensioners or those on low incomes would be able to access films, concerts and children receiving free school meals could go swimming for free etc.

This all shows Shetland Charitable Trust is very out of step with the people of Shetland. This broad conclusion from the quantitative data is very much strengthened by the qualitative data provided in response to questions four and five.

- Two thirds register apathy, ignorance or insult from a trust that does not communicate adequately or care to listen. That a third apparently thought that stating their view to the trust would be pointless as it does not listen shows that, for whatever reasons, the trust has fallen prone to “group think”, fails to understand the benefits of being representative and has no need of dissenting voices.
- The trust seeks to portray itself as “politics free”. This is totally inaccurate. By continuing a pattern of spending which is not supported by the inhabitants of Shetland, the trust favours those with disposable incomes above those with none. Choosing to support the status quo in the pattern of funding long after it is acceptable to the majority is a political choice. The trust has been captured by a cabal which defines for the community what is acceptable and what is not. It seeks the legal and “independent” advice it wants and then hides behind it.
- Without any prompting from the researcher or the questions, over a seventh of interviewees registered discontent that the trust had invested in Viking Energy. That decision is thought to have limited spending on other goals closer to the trust deed. It was even alleged that the chair of the trust was seeking to restructure the trust to ensure appointees on the trust who are supportive of Viking Energy would remain. It would seem existing appointees may have been selected on that basis. If so the trust has been most certainly politicised. The appointee system is vulnerable to manipulation and can entrenching vested interests.

It is to be assumed that any external reading of this research data would clearly recognise a pattern of reaction to the trust which goes beyond disquiet and towards suspicion and alienation. Yet it is clear from respondents that they feel that this is their money, that they are entitled to a say but that they would not get a fair hearing. It seems self-evident that Shetland Charitable Trust in its current form, or in the new form it seeks, is no longer fit for purpose. It shows little interest in engagement or changing to meet social need. It is mistrusted. These failings are not minor and cannot be

expected to be redressed under the current leadership or the new governance plan.