

UHI Research Database pdf download summary

Viking and Norse Heritage Tourism in Scotland

Timoney, Steven; Sanmark, Alexandra

Publication date:
2020

The Document Version you have downloaded here is:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to author version on UHI Research Database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Timoney, S., & Sanmark, A. (2020). *Viking and Norse Heritage Tourism in Scotland*.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UHI Research Database are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights:

- 1) Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the UHI Research Database for the purpose of private study or research.
- 2) You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- 3) You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the UHI Research Database

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at RO@uhi.ac.uk providing details; we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Viking and Norse Heritage Tourism in Scotland



Report written by Dr Steven Timoney (Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands) and Dr Alex Sanmark (Institute for Northern Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands)

January 2020



Cover image: View of the Brough of Birsay from the Orkney Mainland. Wikimedia Commons: Chmee2

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Aims.....	1
3. Research design	1
4. Methods.....	2
4.1. Current provision	2
4.2. Undeveloped resources	2
5. Current provision	3
5.1. National organisations	3
5.2. Local museums and heritage centres	4
5.3. Heritage trails.....	6
5.4. Tours and itineraries	7
5.5. Events.....	8
6. Potential resources for development	9
6.1. Norse settlements.....	9
6.2. <i>Thing</i> sites	10
6.3. Churches	10
6.4. Other sites of interest	10
6.5. Place-names.....	11
6.6. Written sources.....	11
6.7. Folklore	11
7. Opportunities.....	12
7.1. Developing existing sites.....	12
7.2. Easing tourism pressures – developing new sites	12
7.3. Expanding knowledge	12
7.4. Engaging with opportunities – Scotland’s Year of Coasts and Waters	13
7.5. UHI Expertise.....	13
8. Summary	14
9. Selected bibliography.....	15
Appendix I - Historic Environment Scotland Properties in Care related to Viking and Norse heritage	16
Appendix II - List of responding local museums and heritage centres	17
Appendix III - Viking Age/Norse archaeological remains	19

1. Introduction

This report is a scoping study investigating the current Viking and Norse heritage tourism offer in Scotland, and identifying opportunities for development of the offer. This was a collaborative project, produced jointly by Dr Steven Timoney, Perth College and Dr Alex Sanmark, Institute for Northern Studies, both University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). The report outlines the results of the research and the key findings, covering an appraisal of the existing offer, and identifying opportunities for new developments in the Viking and Norse heritage tourism offer. It provides valuable data that will allow third sector organisations and SMEs to identify opportunities to develop new products and tourism offers that incorporate Viking and Norse heritage.

The research was supported by a small grant from the UHI Tourism Sector Group Challenge Fund.

2. Aims

The main aims of the project were to:

- define the current Viking and Norse heritage tourism offer in Scotland, including national and regional organisations and SMEs
- identify undeveloped Viking and Norse heritage sites and resources
- propose opportunities to develop the Viking and Norse heritage tourism offer

3. Research design

A review of existing Viking and Norse heritage sites, visitor facilities and infrastructure was undertaken to identify the current provision, and any potential opportunities for development in the future. This involved:

- A web search using keyword terms to identify organisations and sites which form part of the current offer
- The creation of a longlist of national, regional and local organisations and other stakeholders involved in the, presentation, communication and promotion of Viking and Norse heritage to the public in Scotland for consultation
- The creation of a longlist of Viking and Norse heritage sites in Scotland to ascertain the current offer
- A keyword search of the Historic Environment Records (HER) for Scotland, in particular Canmore, the catalogue of archaeological sites managed by Historic Environment Scotland to identify any sites with potential for future development
- a desk-based assessment to identify the location and scale of undeveloped Viking and Norse heritage sites, and identify any opportunities for development of new tourism offers
- A review of recent research publications for Viking and Norse heritage sites not included in the HERs
- A review of toponymic data related to Viking and Norse place-names

4. Methods

4.1. Current provision

A longlist of national, regional and local organisations involved in the promotion of heritage to the public was created. National organisations, including Historic Environment Scotland, Forest and Land Scotland, and the National Museums of Scotland, were identified as providing visitor experiences that included elements of Viking and Norse heritage.

At a regional/local level, an initial list of 253 organisations was created. An initial check of organisation websites to assess the focus of their visitor offer reduced the longlist of 253 organisations to 57 local museums, museum services, and heritage centres whom were identified as potentially having elements of Viking and Norse heritage within their exhibitions, and/or artefacts in their collections. All of these organisations were contacted directly and asked to respond to the following two questions:

- Does [name of organisation] have any displays or elements of exhibitions that focus on the Vikings or Norse in Scotland?
- Does [name of organisation] have any Viking or Norse artefacts in the collection?

4.2. Undeveloped resources

For this element of the project, a longlist of all certain Viking and Norse heritage sites included in Historic Environment Records (HER), and recent research, was compiled. Searches of the terms 'Viking' and 'Norse' in HERs resulted in 395 and 445 hits, respectively. These numbers are not representative of the actual number of sites as many are labelled both 'Viking' and 'Norse' and there is therefore a degree of overlap between the two. These searches also include many 'possible' Viking/Norse sites, as well as unrelated heritage sites (e.g. ships named 'Viking'). In addition, many of these hits refer to artefacts, some of which have been lost, and of which the remainder is now in museum collections. The most significant of these artefacts are already on display and form part of standard exhibitions, and have therefore also been excluded from this study. Place-names deriving from Old Norse have been included in this study, as they are an important resource that is not fully used within the current tourism offering. No overarching survey comparable to the HER search was conducted as there are too many place-names indicating Viking/Norse settlement, but they are found in all areas of Scotland where there are Viking/Norse archaeological remains. The place-names referred to in this study have been found in published place-names surveys, such as Orkney Farm Names (Marwick 1952) and Shetland Place-Names (Stewart 1987).

5. Current provision

5.1. National organisations

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is the public body 'established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment' ([Historic Environment Scotland](#) 2019). Amongst the 300+ Properties in Care (PICs) managed by HES, a number are Viking or Norse (see Appendix I). Some of the most well-known are Jarlshof in Shetland, and the Brough of Birsay and Maeshowe, both in Orkney. Jarlshof is a multi-period site, located at the southern tip of the Shetland mainland, very close to Sumburgh Airport. Excavations have revealed Norse long houses, situated within remains of Bronze-Age houses, Iron Age wheelhouses and a broch, as well as a later medieval farmstead, and a laird's house from the 16th century. The Brough of Birsay is a high-status settlement associated with the Norse Earls of Orkney, situated on a small tidal island. Here, partly reconstructed Norse long houses, a small church from c. 1100, as well as the remains of a monastery, are found. Maeshowe is a Neolithic chambered cairn, within which around 33 Norse runic inscriptions are found (Fig. 1). This is the largest collection of runic inscriptions outside Scandinavia and provides a unique insight into the minds of 12th-century Norse men and women.

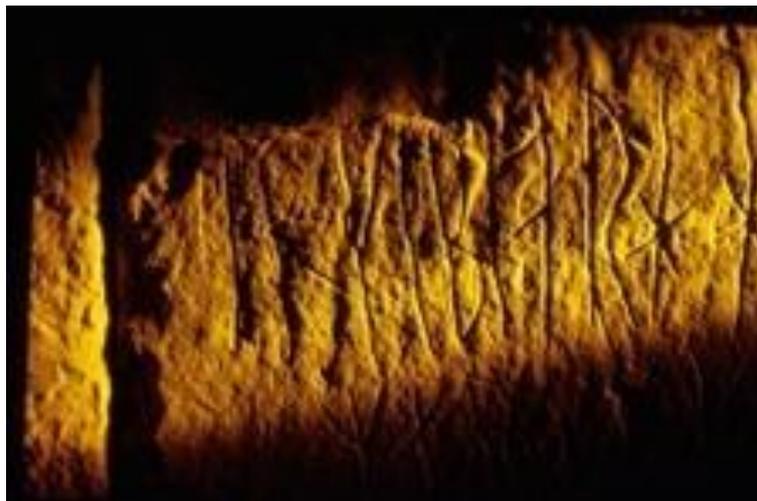


Fig. 1 One of the runic inscriptions from Maeshowe, Orkney.

The National Museum of Scotland (NMS) in Edinburgh has a section of the Early People gallery which focuses on the Viking and Norse period in Scotland. The displays incorporate a wide range of artefacts from across Scotland, including highlights such as nine of the Lewis Chessmen (Fig. 2), the St Ninian's Isle Hoard, and the Hunterston Brooch.



Fig 2. Lewis Chessmen in the National Museum of Scotland

NMS is also currently developing a new exhibition to display and interpret the Galloway Hoard. The hoard, discovered by a metal detectorist in Dumfries and Galloway in 2014, contains over 100 objects. This hoard is very important as it contains a large number of rare and unique Viking-age objects, such as gold bird-shaped pin and a decorated silver-gilt vessel, as well as various types of brooches. The exhibition will be in the National Museum of Scotland, and subsequently on tour to Kirkcudbright Galleries, the McManus Museum and Galleries, and Aberdeen Art Gallery through 2020-21. At the end of the exhibition tour, the Hoard will be on display in the National Museum of Scotland, with a portion of the hoard on long-term display at Kirkcudbright Galleries.

Other national organisations incorporate elements of Norse or Viking heritage at specific sites. Forestry and Land Scotland care for a number of sites that include content on the Vikings and Norse. Interpretation at [Camas Torsa](#), Ardnamurchan, highlights the site as a Viking stronghold, with its Gaelic-Norse name meaning ‘the bay of Thor’s river’. [Craig Monie](#), by Loch Ness, reflects more place-name evidence, with the crag named after a Viking prince who was mortally wounded at the site.

In the Glencoe Visitor Centre, the National Trust for Scotland has an exhibition panel on a Viking incursion into Glen Coe, and the Gaelic story of the Battle of Achnacon.

5.2. Local museums and heritage centres

The 57 local museums, museum services, and heritage centres compiled on the shortlist were contacted, with 34 responding (Appendix II). Of these 34, 15 confirmed they had exhibitions or elements of exhibitions which included content on the Vikings and Norse; with 17 confirming they held artefacts from this period in their collections, though did not necessarily have them on display.

This covers a range of provision, from individual artefacts included as examples within displays on the wider early-medieval period, to sections of exhibitions focusing on the Vikings and Norse. For example, the Bute Museum presents a number of artefacts within a cabinet space entitled ‘Viking Age’ (Fig. 3) with simple artefact labels providing some additional information. Others, for example Shetland Museum and Archives, have an exhibition focusing on the Vikings and Norse in Shetland (Fig. 4).



Fig 3. Bute Museum artefact display © Bute Museum



Fig. 4. Shetland Museums and Archives exhibition © Jenny Murray, SMA.

Other developments include a website for the South West of Scotland: www.futuremuseum.co.uk/. This is a partnership project between East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council, and independent museums in the southwest of Scotland. The website provides online access to the collections of the local authority areas. A section of the website is divided into 'key periods' following chronological order. Under the 'Early Medieval (400AD - 1099AD)' period there is a section titled 'Vikings' which provides an [overview of Viking activity](#) in the south west of Scotland, and links to pages for Viking and Norse artefacts in the collections.

[Vikinger!](#) is a paid visitor experience run by KA Leisure, a not-for profit organisation that runs a variety of local authority facilities in Largs, North Ayrshire. Vikinger! is promoted as a "historical and action-packed Viking Experience" (Vikinger! website). Visitors are taken on a tour of 500 years of Viking history by a costumed interpreter, dressed as a Viking. It provides a multisensory visitor

experience (sight, sound and smell) involving reconstructions, film and multimedia, taking visitors through the daily lives of Vikings, the Viking gods, and the Battle of Largs (1263).

The [Orkneyinga Saga Centre](#), Orphir, “tells the story of the Norse Earls of Orkney” through interpretation panels and an audio-visual display based on the Orkneyinga Saga. The Centre is run by Orphir Community Council. Plans for redevelopment of the Centre are currently in progress, with new displays and a film to be produced. The Centre is located next to the site of Orphir Round Kirk and the excavated remains of a Viking/Norse longhouse and mill. This is the only known round church in Scotland, and is said to have been built by Earl Hakon after his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 1120s. The ‘Earl’s Bu’ at Orphir is mentioned in several chapters of the Orkneyinga Saga (see chapters 55, 66, 67, 94), and is described as a large estate, where the Earls of Orkney held big feasts, especially at Christmas.

Norse thing sites, i.e. court and parliament sites, have been identified in most areas where the Norse settled. Around 30 thing sites are known (see Appendix III). Three of the most striking sites have been developed for tourism. Dingwall in Ross and Cromarty may be the best known of these. The site is located in the town centre, with some interpretation panels. The remains of the thing site is visible as mound, constructed in the 12th century, and with an early modern monument erected on top. Dingieshowe on the Orkney Mainland is another such example. This site consists of a large mound located on a very narrow stretch of land, and the name is most likely derived from Old Norse *pingeiðshaugr* ‘mound of the thing portage/isthmus’ (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Dingieshowe, Orkney Mainland. Photograph: Fredrik Sundman

5.3. Heritage trails

Shetland Amenity Trust have developed a series of heritage trails as part of the Viking Unst Project. The project involved the excavation of three Viking longhouses at Belmont, Hamar and Underhoull. Evidence from the excavations was used to inform the reconstruction of a longhouse at Brookpoint, with a replica Viking ‘Gokstad’ ship also located there. There are five different themed heritage trails available for visitors to explore, with an accompanying guidebook (Fig. 6):

- Haroldswick: The Heart of Viking Unst
- Viking Belmont: A thriving hill farm
- Hamar: “Scotland’s best preserved Viking longhouse”
- Underhoull to Lund: a Viking World
- Sandwick to Framford: Enticing to Vikings



Fig. 6 Viking Unst Project trail resources.

The [St Magnus Way](#) is a “55 mile pilgrimage route through Mainland Orkney, inspired by the life and death of Magnus, Orkney’s patron saint.” The route is split into five sections, and resources are provided via download to mobile devices, or through Bluetooth beacons on the route.

The Orkneyinga Saga Trail is a trail designed to show key sites on the Orkney Mainland mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga. The panels are now rather old and weathered, and the booklet designed to accompany the trail is out of print.

5.4. Tours and itineraries

There are a wide range of tour companies offering tours and itineraries for visitors that incorporate visits to Viking and Norse heritage sites. Others offer bespoke activities associated with Viking and Norse culture and traditions. A sample of these is highlighted below.

[Smithsonian Journeys](#) provides a nine day ‘Scottish Isles and Norwegian Fjords’ cruise, which offers customers the opportunity to “uncover the ancient and tumultuous Viking legacy of remote seafaring destinations as you sail from the northern Scottish Isles to their Norwegian homelands.”

[Nordic Visitor Scotland](#) provide tailored tours for visitors to Scotland and Scandinavia. For example, their Ultimate Tour of Scotland, a 21-day tour that visits the Western Isles and Northern Isles, includes stops at Jarlshof and Maeshowe (“where 12th-century Vikings left one of the largest collections of Norse runic inscriptions”).

[Brodgar](#) offers visitors the opportunity to ‘be a [Viking for the day](#)’ and various other Viking-related visitor experiences. They also list the Orkney [Viking Week](#) (17-23 August 2019) which brings together a series of events and activities around the theme of the Vikings.

[Rabbies](#) provide a variety of small-coach tours for visitors to Scotland and other parts of the UK. This includes multi-day tours to Orkney, the Inner Hebrides, and the Outer Hebrides which include visits to key Viking sites.

[Sail Scotland](#), the national marketing organisation for sailing and marine tourism, promotes ‘The Viking Trail’ as a “beautiful and accessible route linking the stunning West Coast of Scotland through the Caledonian Canal to the world class cruising areas in the North of Scotland and the Orkney and Shetland Isles.”

Visit Orkney have devised a [Viking Itinerary](#) which uses the Orkneyinga Saga as its main theme, guiding visitors around key Viking and Norse attractions on the islands.

5.5. Events

In Shetland, the season of fire festivals runs between January and March. These festivals all celebrate the Shetland Viking heritage and involve processions with people dressed in Viking costume and end with the burning of a galley built specifically for this purpose. The most famous of these festivals is the Lerwick Up Helly aa (held the last Tuesday of January). An [Up Helly aa exhibition](#), housed in the Galley Shed in Lerwick, is open between May and September. Additional temporary events and activities focusing on the Vikings and Norse have been provided by organisations, including the [Vikings: Fearsome Craftsmen](#) touring exhibition and a [Viking Family Fun Day](#) in Inverness. In Largs, where the Vikingar! exhibition hall is located, there is a long-standing tradition of an annual lecture held by a Viking scholar, and an associated Viking market. All of these events and activities reflect the popularity of Viking and Norse heritage experiences.

6. Potential resources for development

This section provides a review of existing resources which are currently undeveloped, focusing on archaeological remains, customs, beliefs, traditions, knowledge, and place-names.

In terms of archaeological evidence, the Norse heritage is rich. Some of the most well-known heritage sites that form part of the current tourism offer have already been discussed above. The remaining sites can be subdivided into five major categories: burials, settlements, thing (assembly) sites, churches, and other. In addition to the sites identified from the HERs, around 30 thing sites have been added. A review of all longlisted sites was carried out and the ones deemed to have some degree of potential to attract visitors were kept, with artefact findspots and possible Viking/Norse sites removed from the list. In this way, the search results were narrowed down to 94 Viking/Norse heritage sites for further evaluation (see Appendix III).

Around 53 certain Viking Age burials have been identified across Scotland (see Appendix III). Single burials are rarely striking enough to merit a visit on their own, but have the potential to be included in heritage or nature trails. Some of the burials with the most potential are the burial mound near Castletown in Caithness, the boat grave in Swordle Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula (Fig. 7) as well as the burial mounds at Kildonan on the Isle of Eigg. These sites all have visible mounds/stone settings in striking natural settings. The large mound by Castletown, located close to the seashore, is a possible Iron Age broch mound, in which a Viking Age burial was discovered in 1786. The boat grave in Swordle Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula was excavated as recently as 2011, and as this is a modern excavation, much information is available about this burial. At Kildonan, the two mounds excavated in 1875, are still visible, including stones from the cist grave in the larger mound.



Fig. 7 The reconstructed boat grave in Swordle Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula. Photograph: [Shane McLeod](#).

6.1. Norse settlements

Norse settlements tend to be harder to locate on the surface than burials, and unless reconstructed, may not be of great interest for visitors. Three settlement sites, in addition to those discussed above have been identified for their potential for increased tourism activity. One of the most striking is the Brough of Deerness on the Orkney Mainland. This is a sea stack, accessible via steps carved into the

rock surface, and therefore only suitable for certain groups of visitors. Here, excavations have revealed Pictish buildings, Norse longhouses, as well as a chapel dated to the late 10th century. This is clearly a high-status site, perhaps linked to the Norse earls of Orkney, and with some of the earliest evidence of Norse Christianity in Scotland.

Another settlement for potential development, although rather remote, is the stofa at the Biggings on Papa Stour, Shetland. Excavations revealed the remains of a wooden building (known as a stofa), dated c.1200-1400, for which the large logs must have been imported from Norway, as is known from later tradition. Parts of this building have now been reconstructed, using Norwegian logs, and the site is well sign-posted.

Norse settlement remains are also found at Westness in Rousay, Orkney. At least two longhouses are known, and there is also a Norse cemetery and a boat house. Two separate archaeological projects are currently ongoing, with excavations every summer. There are open days and other activities connected to the excavations, which together with the forthcoming excavation results, all add to the attraction of this site.

6.2. Thing sites

A thing site with potential for development is Thingsva in Caithness, situated 3 km west of modern Thurso. The name is derived from Old Norse þingsvað 'Assembly slope'. This is a substantial broch mound, c. 35m in diameter and 4m in height, clearly visible in the rather flat and treeless landscape, and located next to a prehistoric turf covered cairn. [The Caithness Broch Project](#) was set up in order to promote the many brochs of Caithness, and Thingsva is one of the sites that they are most interested in developing in the future.

6.3. Churches

Although the Vikings are connected to paganism and Old Norse religion, the settlers in Scotland adopted Christianity at least from the mid/late 10th century. Churches of particular interest in relation to Viking/Norse heritage include:

- St Boniface's Church on Papa Westray
- The chapel remains on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland
- Blane's Church, Bute
- St Magnus Church, Egilsay
- St Mary's Chapel, Crosskirk, Orkney
- Westside Church, Tuquoy, Orkney

6.4. Other sites of interest

St Molaise's Cave, Holy Island, contains a series of Norse runic inscriptions, principally personal names, and forms an interesting parallel to the inscriptions in Maeshowe. In George Square, Edinburgh, a rune-stone from 11th century Sweden has recently been erected outside the Department of Scandinavian Studies. Another very interesting site is Catpund, a steatite quarry, on the Shetland Mainland. Quarrying marks seen along the banks show where bowls and other vessels were chiselled from the rock. Similarities with vessels from Jarlshof indicate that much of this work was carried out in the Norse period. At Rubh' an Dunain, Loch na h-Airde, Skye, a Viking/Norse stone

lined canal and harbour/boatyard have been identified. Two nausts (stone-lined boat docks) have also been found as well as boat timbers, probably from a clinker-built four-oared rowing boat, which has been radiocarbon dated to c.1100. As a result of this research, other potential Norse harbour sites in Scotland are in the process of being identified.

6.5. Place-names

Toponyms constitute an important legacy of Norse Scotland, although this may not be obvious to the wider public. The largest Norse influence is seen in Orkney and Shetland where almost every single place-name is of Norse origin. Moving south to Caithness, Norse toponyms still dominate, although there are also some names of Gaelic/Pictish derivation, while in the Hebrides and along the western seaboard, place-names are of mixed Gaelic and Norse character. In the west of Scotland, the identification of Norse place-names is particularly problematic as they have gone through a transition into Gaelic. Despite these differences, similar types of Norse place-names have been identified, such as farm names deriving from elements such as -bólstaðr, -staðir, -býr and -skail. Some such examples include Isbister, Kerbister, Ullapool and Langskail. Place-names can also provide insight into Norse administrative organisation, as seen e.g. in Dingwall from Old Norse þingvellir, 'thing field' and also place-names containing herað, the Old Norse administrative unit equivalent to the hundred, such as the Herries in Islay and Na Hèarradh, the Gaelic name for the Isle of Harris.

6.6. Written sources

There are few written sources that can provide insight into the Viking/Norse period in Scotland. The Icelandic sagas are among the most important written sources for Iceland and Scandinavia, but here Scotland features only marginally, with the exception of the Orkneyinga Saga. This text describes the life of the Orkney Earls over a period of 300 years, from the first Norse settlement in the 9th century. The author seems to have been from Iceland, but clearly had close links with Orkney. The drawback of this source is that areas in Scotland outside Orkney do not feature to a great extent.

6.7. Folklore

Folklore is another form of heritage showing the legacy of the Viking Age in Scotland. Folkloristics involve the study of tradition (as opposed to the dissemination of formal written knowledge), which can survive for a very long time and therefore often contain practices and tales that go back to the Viking Age. It has been shown that folklore in e.g. Shetland has been influenced by Old Norse religion and beliefs, seen for example in the traditions surrounding the giantess (Old Norse *gýgr*). It is clear that the Norse cultural component is strong in the folklore of the Northern Isles. Indeed, it seems that Shetland's folkloric traditions are primarily Norse, but with a Scottish admixture.

7. Opportunities

The existing Viking and Norse heritage tourism offer reflect the development of most of the key archaeological sites and artefacts that exist in Scotland. The wider resource does, however, present a variety of opportunities for development of resources which are currently undeveloped or under-developed. In the previous section, examples of potential sites for development, such as Viking burials, settlements, thing sites and churches have been provided. The discovery of the canal and boatyard at Rubh' an Dunain, Loch na h-Airde, Skye, and the excavations at Westness on Rousay also reflect how the resource is constantly changing, as new sites are discovered, and more information about existing sites is uncovered. These all provide opportunities to engage the public and develop new sites and activities for tourism.

7.1. Developing existing sites

One such site is Dingwall, which has great potential for future development. This assembly site has given its name to the town, but even locally, this is not widely known. The site has limited interpretation panels and there is no mention of the site in the Dingwall Museum. This is partly due to the relatively recent identification and excavation of the assembly mound. As a result of this recent work, much material exists, which could be incorporated into existing provision as well as enabling the development of new offers.

7.2. Easing tourism pressures – developing new sites

It is widely recognised that heritage sites have a carrying capacity in terms of the number of visitors they can support while avoiding damage to the resource. As tourism numbers increase, so the risks of long-term damage to many of the iconic heritage sites increases. The opportunities to develop new heritage provision in the Northern and Western Isles, which have encountered rapidly increasing visitor numbers in recent years, provides opportunities to reduce impact and load at honeypot sites by diversifying the offer, and providing the potential to take visitors away from pressure sites. The boatyard and canal at Rubh' an Dunain, Loch na h-Airde, Skye, present an opportunity for development of new tourist offers. Given the current pressures the island has experienced from rapid tourism growth in the last few years, it presents an opportunity to diversify the tourism offer, and move people away from the key honeypot sites on the island.

7.3. Expanding knowledge

Most of the existing undeveloped Viking/Norse heritage sites are dispersed, and many of these sites are not easily recognisable, tangible remains on the ground. There is, however, the opportunity to develop interpretive provision in the form of heritage trails utilising using interpretation panels, alongside developing app-based content, to lead visitors through the landscape. Information could also be developed for tour guides to enable the development of new tour offers taking in new parts of the Scottish landscape. In this way, a stronger story concerning life in the Viking Age could be conveyed. For this purpose, all the different types of evidence could be used in conjunction, i.e. archaeology, place-names, tales from Orkneyinga Saga and other written sources as well as folklore.

7.4. Engaging with opportunities – Scotland’s Year of Coasts and Waters

2020 is Scotland’s [Year of Coasts and Waters](#) (YCW). It will involve “a programme of activity designed to support the nation’s tourism and events sectors [...] to spotlight, celebrate and promote opportunities to experience and enjoy Scotland’s unrivalled Coasts and Waters, encouraging responsible engagement and participation from the people of Scotland and our visitors” ([VisitScotland 2019](#)). Given the nature of the Viking and Norse influence on Scotland is primarily associated with the islands and mainland coast, this provides an opportunity to tie in events and activities with the national programme. Although the YCW events fund is now closed, there will still be opportunities to develop events and activities that can be listed on the main VisitScotland webpages, alongside wider promotion through the use, for example of the hashtag #ycw2020 on [social media](#) platforms. VisitScotland has produced an [industry guide](#) to support organisations and businesses in making the most out of the event.

7.5. UHI Expertise

Dr Alex Sanmark is an expert in Viking studies, and Dr Steven Timoney has expertise in planning, developing and delivering heritage interpretation and tourism projects. As such, they are well-placed to support new developments in Viking and Norse Heritage tourism. Additionally, Annie Thuesen, PhD student at the Institute for Northern Studies (2018-2021), is currently carrying out a study of Viking/Norse sites in Orkney, evaluating which sites are the most suitable for future development, from the perspective of sustainable tourism. One of the reasons behind this study is the overcrowding and visitor impact on the most popular sites in Orkney, above all the World Heritage Sites that form part of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney.

8. Summary

As this report has shown, the main, tangible and iconic Viking and Norse heritage sites and artefacts have been developed for tourism. There are, however, a number of sites on the ground, such as Viking burials, settlements, thing sites and churches which could be developed to provide new visitor activities and attractions. Alongside this, Norse and Viking cultural heritage in the form of folklore, place-names and the Orkneyinga Saga present opportunities to add value to existing provision, and develop new offers.

The discovery of new sites, such as the boatyard and canal on Skye, and the additional knowledge and information provided by excavation of Viking and Norse archaeological sites, such as those at Westness, do present new opportunities for development. So too do some of the existing, undeveloped archaeological remains, which present opportunities to develop new offers including heritage trails and guided tours. The wider benefit of expanding the tourism offer to reduce the impact on the most popular sites is clear, while also presenting new opportunities to engage visitors with a key part of Scotland's cultural heritage.

9. Selected bibliography

Crawford, B. and Ballin Smith, B. (1999) *The Biggings, Papa Stour, Shetland: the history and excavation of a royal Norwegian farm*. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; Det Norske videnskaps-akademi; *et al.* Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi.

Marwick, H. (1952) *Orkney Farm Names*. The Orcadian.

Sanmark, A. 2017. *Viking Law and Order. Places and Rituals of Assembly in the Medieval North*. Edinburgh University Press.

Stewart, J. (1987) *Shetland Place-Names*. Shetland Library and Museum.

Sullivan, A. (2016) Cultural Heritage & New Media: A Future for the Past. *John Marshall Review of Intellectual Property Law* 15: 605–646.

Appendix I - Historic Environment Scotland Properties in Care related to Viking and Norse heritage

Brough of Birsay, Orkney

Cubbie Roo's Castle and St Mary's Chapel, Wyre, Orkney

Earl's Bu and Church, Orphir

Eynhallow Church

Jarlshof Prehistoric and Norse Settlement, Shetland

Maeshowe chambered cairn

St Blane's Church

St Magnus Church, Egilsay

St Mary's Chapel, Crosskirk

Westside Church, Tuquoy

Whithorn Priory and Museum

Inchcolm Abbey

Appendix II - List of responding local museums and heritage centres

- Aberdeen Maritime Museum
- Annan Museum
- Arbroath Signal Tower Museum
- Arbuthnott Museum
- Arran Heritage Museum
- Bernera Museum
- Biggar & Upper Clydesdale Museum
- Bute Museum
- Campbeltown Museum
- Dingwall Museum
- Dumfries Museum
- Gairloch Museum
- Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
- Historylinks
- The Hunterian Museum (Uni of Glasgow)
- Inverness Museum and Art Gallery
- Lismore Heritage Centre
- John Gray Centre
- Mallaig Heritage Centre
- McManus Museum and Art Galleries
- Museum nan Eilean (Uist & Barra)
- Museum of Islay Life
- Old Scatness - Shetland Amenity Trust (see Shetland Mus response)
- Orkney Museum
- Paisley Museum - Renfrewshire Leisure (all museums)
- Sanquahar Tolbooth Museum (see Dumfries)
- Scalloway Museum
- Shetland Museum and Archives (Shetland Amenity Trust)
- Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- Tigh Chearsabhaigh Museum & Arts Centre
- Tain and District Museum (Tain Through Time)
- Tarbat Discovery Centre
- Aberdeen Maritime Museum
- Annan Museum
- Arbroath Signal Tower Museum
- Arbuthnott Museum
- Arran Heritage Museum
- Bernera Museum
- Biggar & Upper Clydesdale Museum
- Bute Museum
- Campbeltown Museum
- Dingwall Museum
- Dumfries Museum
- Gairloch Museum

- Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
- Historylinks
- The Hunterian Museum (Uni of Glasgow)
- Inverness Museum and Art Gallery
- Lismore Heritage Centre
- John Gray Centre
- Mallaig Heritage Centre
- McManus Museum and Art Galleries
- Museum nan Eilean (Uist & Barra)
- Museum of Islay Life
- Old Scatness - Shetland Amenity Trust
- Orkney Museum
- Paisley Museum - Renfrewshire Leisure (all museums)
- Sanquahar Tolbooth Museum (see Dumfries)
- Scalloway Museum
- Shetland Museum and Archives (Shetland Amenity Trust)
- Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre
- Tain and District Museum (Tain Through Time)
- Tarbat Discovery Centre

Appendix III - Viking Age/Norse archaeological remains

A. Burials

1. Boat grave in Swordle Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula. There is a useful webpage with details of this burial: <https://www.thevikingarchive.com/ardnamurchan-viking-ship/>
2. Midross, Carrick Golf Course, Argyll
3. Boiden Mound, Carrick Golf Club, Argyll
4. Carronbridge, Dumfries & Galloway
5. Whithorn Priory, Dumfries & Galloway
6. (Old) St Cuthbert's churchyard, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries & Galloway
7. Seacliff, Auldham, East Lothian
8. Auldham Cemetery and Chapel/Seacliff (item 11) available at http://www.johngraycentre.org/collections/getrecord/ELHER_MEL1743
9. Tote, Loch Snizort Beag, Isle of Skye
10. Cnoc-nan-Gall and Machrins Machair, Colonsay
11. Kiloran Bay burial, Colonsay
12. Cruach Mhór, Laggan Bay, Islay
13. Ballinaby, Islay
14. Newton House (former distillery site), Islay
15. Burial mounds (and An Sgurr) at Kildonan, Isle of Eigg
16. Carn a' Bharraich, Oronsay
17. King's Cross Point burial mound, Arran
18. Burial mound near Castletown, Caithness
19. Balnakeil burial, Sutherland
20. Huna Hotel, Caithness
21. Possible burial site, Reay, Caithness
22. Westness cemetery (above high water mark), Rousay
23. Scar burial site, Sanday
24. Styes of Brough, Sanday
25. Sand of Gill, Pierowall, Westray
26. Other cemetery/ies at Pierowall, Westray
27. Lamba Ness, Sanday
28. Papa Westray
29. Crowe Point on Sanday
30. Buckquoy burial site, Orkney Mainland
31. Brough Road site, Orkney Mainland
32. Howe, Orkney Mainland
33. Broch of Gurness, Orkney Mainland
34. Knowe of Moan burial, Orkney Mainland
35. Bay of Skail, Orkney Mainland
36. Cnip cemetery site, Isle of Lewis
37. Nisabost burial site, Isle of Harris
38. Ardvonrig', Barra
39. Bhaltos burial, Lewis
40. Fairy Knowe, Housegord, Weisdale, Shetland Mainland
41. Wick of Aith, Fetlar

42. St Ola's churchyard, Whiteness, Shetland Mainland
43. Sumburgh Airport, Shetland
44. Langay, Harris
45. Clibberswick, Unst, Shetland
46. Stenness Orkney

B. Settlements

1. Jarlshof, Shetland
2. Quoygrew, Westray, Orkney
3. Freswick Links, Caithness, Orkney
4. Brough of Deerness, Orkney
5. Broch of Gurness, Orkney
6. Brough of Birsay Orkney
7. Papa Stour, Biggings, Shetland

C. Thing sites

1. Sand in Sandsting, Shetland Mainland
2. Aith in Aithsting, Shetland Mainland
3. Lunna in Lunnasting, Shetland Mainland
4. Dale in Delting, Shetland Mainland
5. Gardiastaing in Rauðarþing, Yell
6. Suggested area for the thing site in Þvæitaping, Shetland Mainland
7. Gnipnathing potentially for the Nesting, Shetland Mainland
8. Loch Benston, potentially for the Nesting, Shetland Mainland
9. Tingwall, Orkney Mainland.
10. Dingieshowe, Orkney Mainland
11. Kirkwall, Orkney Mainland
12. Maeshowe, Orkney Mainland (with runic inscriptions).
13. Ting, Westray
14. Tingly Loup, Sanday
15. Hoxa, South Ronaldsay
16. Doomy Hill, Eday
17. Gruddo, Rousay
18. Thingsva, Caithness
19. Sordale Hill, Caithness
20. Tinwald, Dumfriesshire
21. Tiongal, Lewis
22. Eileann Thinngartsaigh, Harris
23. Glen Hinnisdale, Isle of Skye
24. Gruline, Isle of Mull
25. Grulin/Sunderland Farm, Islay
26. Grulin, Eigg
27. *Edin, Bute
28. Cnoc nan Gall, Colonsay