

Photo: Kevin Serginson

# PEERIE WANDERS

## **Five walks on the Westside**

to get you out & about to improve  
physical health and mental  
wellbeing

## **Westside**

## PEERIE WANDERS

‘Peerie Wanders’ has been designed and developed by NHS Shetland Health Improvement Department in collaboration with Shetland Islands Council. This booklet contains a number of walks to get you out and about to help you on your journey to become more active.

## WHY WALKING?



Walking is a great way to be active and stay healthy—it’s not surprising that walking is the most popular leisure activity in Scotland. Walking is free, it’s good for the environment, and is suitable for almost everyone. You don’t have to be fit to start with—you just have to start! If you pick up your pace, you’ll get more health benefits. Taking notice of the natural world also helps with our wellbeing.

## WHY BE MORE ACTIVE?

The human body needs to be active to function well, but modern living means that most of us are not active enough. Being regularly active can:

- Increase our energy.
- Strengthen our muscles.
- Lower our risk of heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis.
- Improve our mood and wellbeing.
- Help us sleep better.
- Improve our self-esteem and confidence.



## HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE ACTIVE?

The physical activity guidelines recommend that we should aim to do at least two and a half hours of moderate activity each week, which can be broken up into 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Walking, and any other activity that raises our heart rate and makes us feel warmer, counts towards this. Remember any amount of activity is beneficial and something is better than doing nothing.



## GETTING STARTED

The walks vary in length from 1km-5km and are designed for all levels of ability and fitness. The routes may have a red route and blue route: the red route is the shorter route; the blue route gives you an added progression if you want a challenge.

### Tips to help you get started:

- Start with the shortest walk at a pace that feels comfortable for you – don't worry if you can't complete it, just do what suits you.
- As you walk more and become fitter, begin walking at a more brisk pace to get more physical health benefits.
- Keep a note of your walks in the diary at the end of this booklet – you can record how you felt during the walk, how long it took you to complete and any other reflections.



## PEERIE WANDERS - TOP TIPS

- Wear comfortable sensible footwear, particularly if the terrain is uneven.
- Encourage a friend, family member or colleague to join you.
- If walking alone, tell someone where you're going and how long you plan to be.
- If the visibility is poor, wear reflective clothing.
- Check the weather forecast before you go and dress appropriately.



## Look out for Wildlife

On all these peerie wanders, there is the possibility to see a variety of wildlife. Some walks have more opportunities than others, depending on the area, and they will vary throughout the seasons.

The greatest variety will be in the spring and summer when most wildflower species bloom and resident bird species are joined by summer migrants. Although autumn and winter are quieter times of year, there is still plenty to look for. We have provided prompts in each walk of the wildlife you might come across.



### Nature connection prompt

Find a pattern in nature that looks like a face.

RSPB Shetland Audio Trail

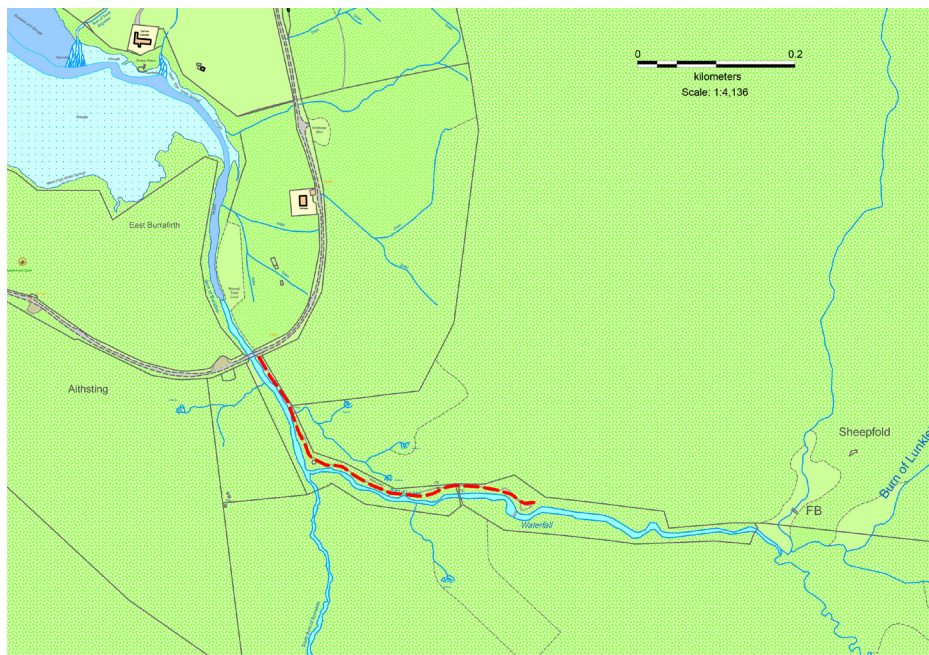


Scan me with your smart phone camera!

For a sound bite of some of Shetland's nature friendly places, have a listen to RSPB's audio trails. You can listen to these directly from your phone by scanning the QR code.







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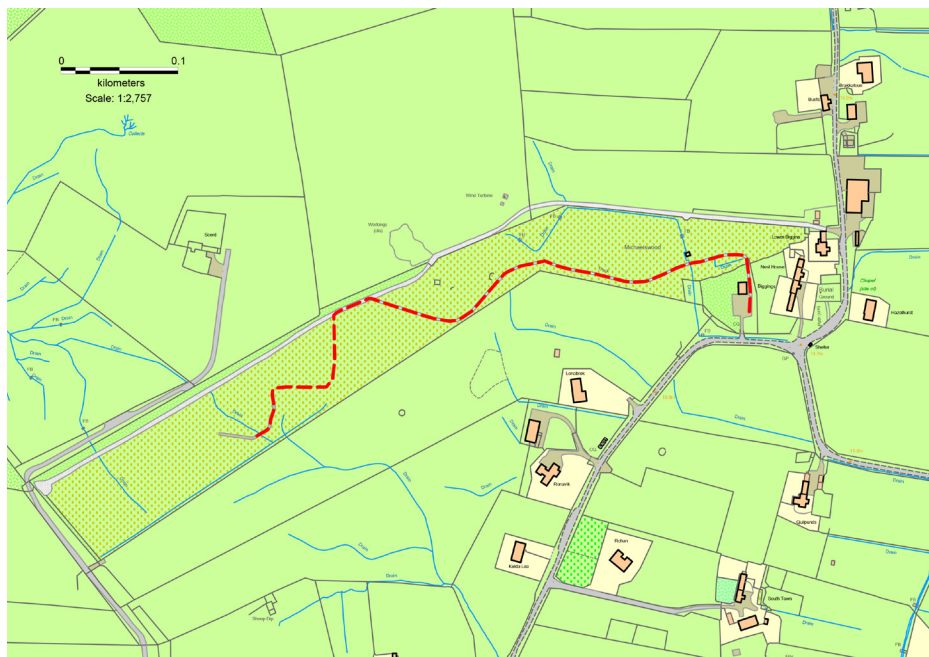
## WALK 1 - Burn of Lunket

Follow the road through the B9071 (locally known as “The Alps”) until you see a sign for the Burn of Lunket. There is a car park to park up and start your walk. Follow the designated path until you reach the waterfall, taking time to enjoy the beautiful scenery. Follow the path back to where you started.

- Length: 1km or 2/3mile return walk.
- Est time: 15 minutes.
- Look out for: wildflowers and willows especially on the steep high banks of the burn. Wrens, meadow pipits, skylarks and ravens.
- Terrain: sections of this walk are uneven path with steps.
- Potential Hazards: uneven ground, steps, boggy and slippery in places, flowing water.



**Nature connection prompt:** Listen to the sound of running water. Where do you think the water is coming from?



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## WALK 2 - Michaelswood



Make your way to Aith where you can park your car and explore what Michaelswood has to offer. Through the rustic arch is a path waiting to be explored full of fun, interactive features. A great place to take the family and get your walking done at the same time!

- Length: 1.5km/ 1mile return walk through Michaelswood.
- Est time: 20 minutes.
- Look out for: a variety of tree species, wildflowers, birds (and of course the dinosaurs!).
- Terrain: gravel tracks. All terrain wheelchairs available.
- Potential Hazards: some steeper ground if you go to the top of the site.



**Nature connection prompt:** Touch the bark of a tree and describe how it feels. Is it rough or smooth? Does it remind you of anything?



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## WALK 3 - Loch of Hellister

Take the A971 West following the main road until you have reached Hellister (where Shetland Jewellery is located). On your right you will see a large loch, The Loch of Hellister. Park your car nearby and begin your walk around the loch.

- Length: 2.4km/1.5mile.
- Est time: 45 minutes.
- Look out for: wildfowl and waders, red breasted mergansers, goosander, wigeon, mallard and teal, curlew redshank and oystercatcher.
- Terrain: uneven grass, boggy in parts, stiles.
- Potential Hazards: slips and trips on wet ground.



**Nature connection prompt:** Lie on your back and look up to the sky. Imagine what it must feel like to be a bird soaring up there.



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## WALK 4 - Huxter Mills

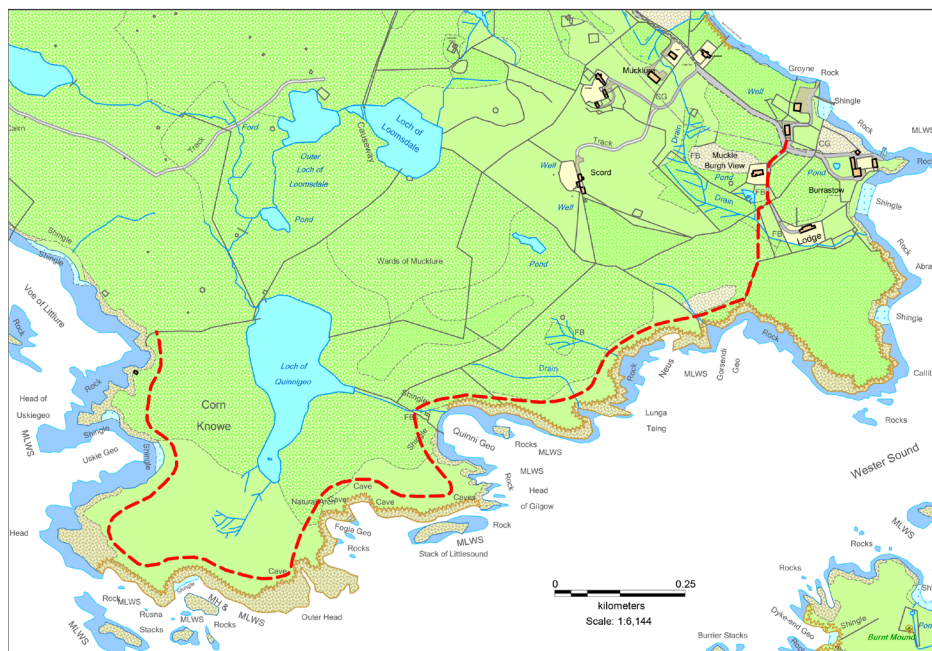
Follow the A971 until you reach Sandness. Once you get to Sandness, continue following the road until you reach a house on top of the hill with a parking area nearby. From here, look out for the blue arrow signs which will guide you down to the Mills.

- Length: 1km.
- Est time: 30 minutes.
- Look out for: coastal scenery, old stone water mills, wildflowers, wheatears, skylarks, pipits and wrens. You may spot seabirds off shore.
- Terrain: rough grass and a slope down to the mills, with stiles.
- Facilities: there is a toilet at the nearby Melby Pier.
- Potential Hazards: coastal slopes.



**Nature connection prompt:** Try to find a pattern in nature looks like a face. It might be in mud, on a wall or in a cloud formation!





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## WALK 5 - Little Ure Burrastow

This is a longer walk with a challenging terrain. Head out to Walls, parking near the Burrastow pier and begin your walk. Head South, following the coast and the marked trail. This walk will require you to turn back, so only go as far as fitness allows, however the views at the end are worth the trek.

- Length: 5km
- Est time: 2 hours
- Look out for: spectacular cliff scenery, seabirds, coastal wildflowers, and common and grey seals in the sheltered lagoon at Littlure.
- Terrain: uneven natural terrain and sheep tracks, stiles.
- Potential Hazards: uneven paths and gradients, coastal slopes and cliffs.



**Nature connection prompt:** Find something in nature that you cannot identify. Take a photo of it, and later you can use books/ library/ friends/family/internet to try and discover what it is!

## TAKING CARE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Shetland is famed for its natural beauty and wildlife. By following the guidelines outlined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code you will respect the needs of those who rely on the countryside for their living, whilst preserving the natural environment.

1. Use stiles and gates to cross fences and walls. Fasten all gates that you have opened.
2. Do not walk through fields of cultivated grass as this is a very important crop in Shetland.
3. If you have to cross cultivated land, do so by the edge of the field.
4. Avoid livestock and do not disturb them, especially during lambing time (mid-April until late-June).
5. Whilst you may walk a dog, you should keep it on a short lead in the countryside, avoid livestock and be a responsible dog owner and pick up after your dog. Obey any notice forbidding dogs.
6. Do not leave litter or start fires.
7. Do not disturb nesting birds, especially those which nest on the ground.
8. Respect wildlife and refrain from picking wild flowers.
9. When parking on country roads do not obstruct access roads or access to fields. Park further away if need be.
10. Take care when walking near cliff tops as the edges can be crumbly and dangerous.

## OTHER THINGS TO NOTE



All the walks in these leaflets have been safety assessed by Shetland Islands Council, however, as they are all based outside in the countryside there are factors to watch out for that may not be noted. This include potential livestock (including Bulls), cliffs, swooping birds (during mating and hatching season), animal faeces and walks taking you close to the sea. These are factors that neither NHS nor SIC can predict due to the nature of the land that these walks take place on, so take extra care looking out for potential hazards.

PEERIE WANDER WALK DIARY

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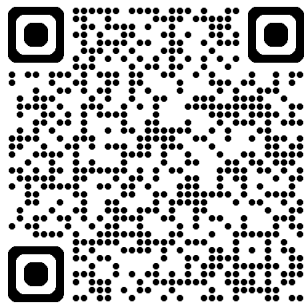


## PEERIE WANDER WALK DIARY

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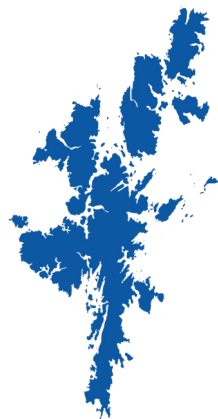
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These walks have been developed by NHS Shetland Health Improvement Department in collaboration with Shetland Islands Council. The refresh of these booklets have included input from RSPB Shetland, Shetland Amenity Trust, NatureScot and Ability Shetland. Print funded by ZetTrans & Paths for All, March 2025.

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FOR A HAPPIER,  
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND



**Shetland Amenity Trust**  
Caring for Shetland's heritage

