



↑ Fethaland David Gifford



↑ Loch of Houtland Euan Myles



↑ Da Lang Ayre David Gifford



↑ Rare oyster plant David Gifford

## Useful information

### Bus services

See the North Mainland timetable on the ZetTrans website [zettrans.org.uk](http://zettrans.org.uk)

### Visitor information point

Tangwick Haa Museum, Eshaness | +44 (0)1806 503389

### Public toilets

Hillswick | Ollaberry | Eshaness

### Post offices

Hillswick | Ollaberry | North Roe

### Shops

Hillswick | Ollaberry

### Fuel

Hillswick | Ollaberry

### Health centre

Hillswick | +44 (0)1806 503277

### Police 101

### 2024 | Disclaimer

All details believed to be accurate at the time of going to print.



[shetland.org/northmavine](http://shetland.org/northmavine)

# Northmavine

The wilds of the north



Shetland  
Islands of Opportunity

# Welcome to Northmavine

Northmavine draws people from near and far to discover its outstanding coastline, superb walking country, rich variety of wildlife, rocks and plants, and its fascinating array of historical and archaeological remains.

The coastline throughout Northmavine is remarkable, with magnificent cliffs, extraordinary rock formations, beautiful, deserted beaches and tranquil sheltered voes. Inland this hilly landscape, peppered with trout-filled lochs, provides excellent walking, angling (with permit) and unrivalled views.

While Northmavine has fewer traditional visitor attractions than other parts of Shetland it makes up for it in the abundance of spectacular walks, appealing to everyone from long-distance hikers to casual strollers. Witnessing the mighty force of the North Atlantic lashing against the dramatic coastline is an unforgettable experience.

## Exploring the area

Almost an island in its own right, only the narrow isthmus at **Mavis Grind** joins it to the rest of the mainland of Shetland. It has often been said that here you can stand on the shore of the North Sea and throw a stone into the Atlantic Ocean on the other side – though you would need a strong arm!

From Mavis Grind you enter a vast and magical landscape dominated by Shetland's highest summit, **Ronas Hill** (450 metres). To the east lies **Sullom Voe**, Shetland's largest sea inlet, and to the west is **St Magnus Bay** and the Atlantic Ocean, which has battered the land into a scene of breathtaking beauty.



↑ Mavis Grind David Gifford

## Things to see and do

### Birds and wildlife

The wildness and range of different habitats in Northmavine make it a perfect place for watching wildlife, so don't forget your binoculars. The coast at **Eshaness**, the **Ness of Hillswick**, **Fethaland** and the banks (cliffs) around Ronas Hill are home to thousands of seabirds, with many important breeding colonies including numerous colonies of Arctic Tern.

There are many vantage points from which to watch grey and common seals basking in the sun or playing in the sea. The isle of **Uyea** is a significant pupping ground for grey seals. The quiet and watchful might spy an otter working its way along the shoreline, particularly on Hillswick Ness or between **Ollaberry** and **Sullom**. Looking out to sea you might even catch sight of whales, dolphins or porpoises.

Inland, the vast expanse of moor, peat and lochs attract many different birds. The fierce Great Skua and Arctic Skua are widespread in Eshaness and on Ronas Hill. A keen eye could glimpse the quick flash of a Merlin hunting its prey, while the mournful call of a Golden Plover is a common sound in summer.

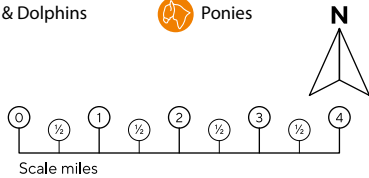
### Flora

Wild flowers are abundant throughout the summer, especially in the meadows around Ollaberry, **North Roe** and the Ness of Hillswick. There are several rare species, such as the oyster plant, at **Urafirth**. Many unusual alpine and Arctic-alpine plants grow on Ronas Hill, while cliffs and crevices support some of the last remaining native trees and shrubs, which covered these windswept isles thousands of years ago before man introduced grazing animals.

↓ Otter spotting David Gifford



- Main Roads
- Minor Roads
- Track
- Ferry Routes
- Cliffs
- Beach
- Loch
- Trout Fishing
- Otters
- Seals
- Whales & Dolphins
- Information Point
- Toilets
- Viewpoint
- Site of Interest
- Museum
- Broch
- Historic Building
- Birds
- Ponies

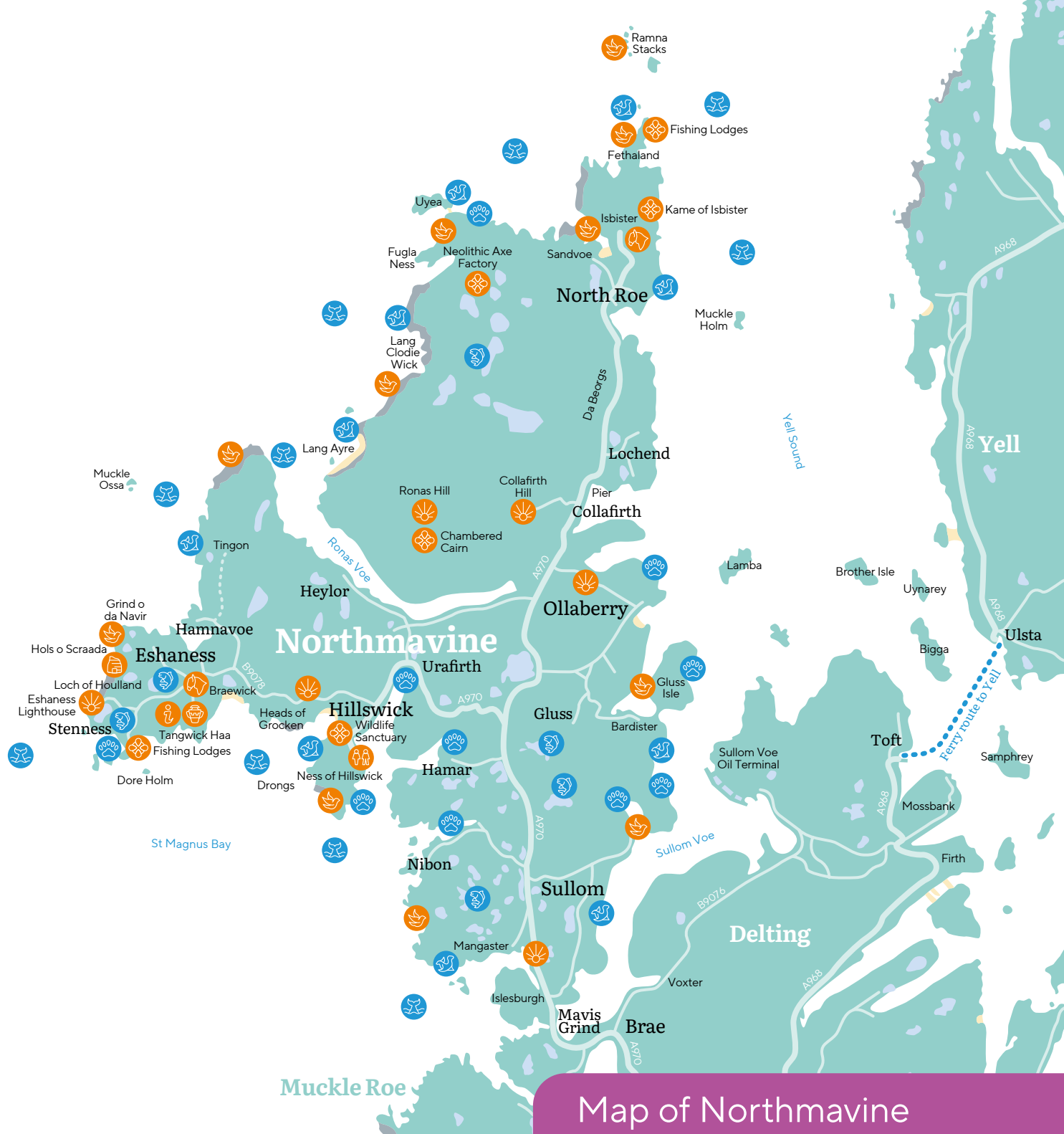


## Geology

The fire and ice of volcano and glacier have forged Shetland's world famous geology. Some of Britain's oldest rocks, nearly three billion years old, are at **Uyea**. The volcanic rocks – black basalts and purple andesites – that form the cliffs at **Eshaness** contain agates and amethysts. **Ollaberry** has perhaps Britain's finest example of a tear fault, part of a fault line that extends to Inverness and along the Great Glen to Fort William.

Shetland's outstanding geology has earned it UNESCO Global Geopark status. Find out more about Shetland's awe-inspiring geology at [shetland.org/geopark](http://shetland.org/geopark).

↓ Uyea David Gifford





↑ Tangwick Haa Museum  
VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins



↑ Arctic Tern David Gifford

## History and culture

Many fine examples of times past can be seen in Northmavine. Easily accessible is the shore front at **Hillswick** where the man-made beach was used for drying fish. Here, The Booth, a former Hanseatic trading post, has stayed in business for more than 300 years. Since the turn of this century, it has been overlooked by the large, wooden pavilion from Norway, displayed at Glasgow's Great Exhibition, in 1899, and now the St Magnus Bay Hotel.

Further afield on **Stenness** Beach stand the ruins of fishing lodges, reminding us of the "far haaf" open sea fishing, which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. Men would set out to sea for days on end in open rowing boats called sixareens, not returning until they were laden with fish.

**Fethaland** was once Shetland's busiest haaf fishing station. Sixty sixareens were based here and the ruins of 20 lodges still stand, retaining the atmosphere of the time. Close by, a circular mound is believed to be the remains of a 4,000-year-old homestead.

The fishing industry lives on at **Collafirth** pier, built in 1988 on the site of an old Norwegian whaling station and now home to one of Britain's largest fishing boats. Smaller inshore boats work from **Hamnavoe** and Hillswick as well.

For a flavour of what life was like in Northmavine in years gone by, head west and pay a visit to the **Tangwick Haa Museum** in Eshaness. The Haa is a former laird's house which showcases exhibits, artefacts and photographs from the area and is open during the summer months.

## Walking

Most of the beauty spots in Northmavine are accessible by car and you'll be able to take in most of the sights by road over the course of a day. However, if you have more time, we recommend taking a couple of days and traversing the picturesque coast and landscape by foot.

The spectacular Atlantic coastline from the **Ness of Hillswick** north to Uyea has no comparison elsewhere in Shetland. Here the unrelenting power of the ocean has carved an astounding display of cliffs, stacks, geos, blowholes, natural arches and caves.

**Eshaness Lighthouse** is a superb place from which to savour the cliff scenery. From here an easy walk leads you to two particularly impressive features. Please remember to take care when walking along this coastline.

The **Hols o Scraada** (Old Scratch, or the Devil) were formed when the roof caved in at the end of a deep and narrow sea cave stretching more than one hundred yards in from the coast. Further on stands the **Grind o da Navir** (Gate of the Borer) – a huge, vertical-sided gateway in the cliffs. Here the sea has ripped a huge chunk of rock out of the cliff face and hurled it inland. Nearby lies the **Loch of Houlland**, where the ruin of a broch provides an excellent example of Iron Age architecture.

The more adventurous will ascend Shetland's highest summit, **Ronas Hill**, to discover the mountainous terrain at its peak, where a fine example of a chambered cairn awaits them. From here, on a clear day, the view is unsurpassed, taking in all of Shetland from Fair Isle to Muckle Flugga.

Plenty of time should be reserved to explore the huge red cliffs west of Ronas Hill, Shetland's largest beach at **Lang Ayre** and the many lochs in the area. Up here it is wise to be well equipped with map and compass as mists can appear suddenly to restrict visibility. Be warned – the climate here can be every bit as extreme as the Cairngorm plateau.

Other impressive walks can be enjoyed around the Ness of Hillswick, between Hillswick and **Braewick**, around Fethaland, out to Uyea, along **Ronas Voe** past **Heylor**, at **Nibon** and **Mangaster** and **Gluss Isle** and **Bardister**, near Ollaberry. All offer a wide range of wildlife, rock features and archaeological remains, as well as beautiful scenery.

For a range of walks in this area visit the Walk pages on [shetland.org](http://shetland.org).

