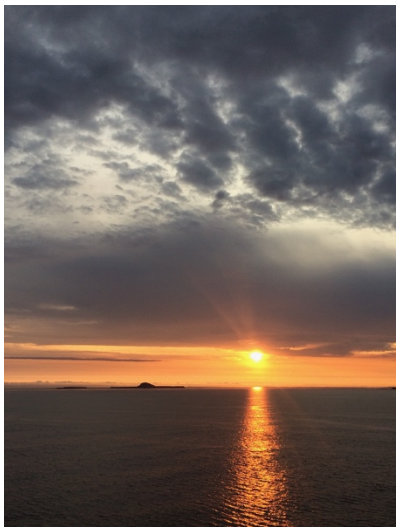
Social Values Assessment Report: Staffa and Treshnish Isles

Siân Jones and Elizabeth Robson



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Cover photographs

Top row left to right: Bac Mòr (Dutchman's Cap) at sunset from Staffa; Harp Rock, Lunga with Bac Mòr on the horizon; NTS bird sightings board, Lunga. Bottom row left to right: Visitors photographing Fingal's Cave, Staffa from tour boat; Columnar basalt columns, Staffa; puffin, Staffa. All photo credits: Siân Jones.

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Key Findings

The purpose of this social values assessment was to **understand the meanings, memories, stories, experiences, and feelings associated with Staffa National Nature Reserve (hereafter 'Staffa') and the Treshnish Isles by people today**, and the ways in which these contribute to people's sense of identity, belonging, and place.

Key findings are:

- Staffa and Treshnish Isles (S&TI) are located in a complex web of relationships with surrounding island communities, creating social values linked to place-based identities and attachments for those who live and work around them.
- They also attract special interest groups (e.g. Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group) from further afield, members of which can develop intimate relationships with the islands, generating social values and strong group identities rooted in their experience of place.
- Staffa is seen as a separate entity from the Treshnish Isles, but at the same this island group is often differentiated, with individual islands singled out in terms of identity, attachment and connections with surrounding island communities.
- Together, S&TI are an integral part of the 'spirit of place' for surrounding island communities and special interest groups; valued both as a backdrop to people's daily lives and for the dramatic seascapes they create with their diversity and distinctiveness.
- Whilst widely seen as places of otherness and wonder, S&TI are also immersed in various forms of 'everyday heritage' embedded in people's routine lives, ranging from childhood experiences to work and leisure.
- Expressions of 'everyday heritage' include intimate familiarity with specific aspects of the islands and their coastal waters, infrastructures supporting working practices, and forms of oral history and social memory.
- Infrastructures relating to S&TI, and the forms of maintenance and care surrounding them, create forms of connection and continuity through webs of relationships between people and things, the boats associated with the islands being a key aspect.
- Knowing and sharing stories and traditions creates bonds between those with more intimate connections to S&TI and distinguishes them from others in surrounding island communities, thus informing people's identities and relationships.
- Relationships with the sea and with nature are integral to the aesthetic and landscape values surrounding the islands, but values relating to the experience of nature are also complicated by people's understandings of human impacts and associated social values.
- S&TI are simultaneously valued for being timeless and unchanging, as well as lively components in people's land/seascapes, changing at different times of the day, in different seasons and above all with different weather and atmospheric effects.
- Despite the ways in which they are embedded in people's daily lives and livelihoods, S&TI maintain their extra-ordinariness, capable of evoking wonder for surrounding communities and special interest groups.
- There is a rich body of social values relating to sensory, affective experiences; for Staffa, these relate to the geology and the effects of light, colour and acoustics, and for the Treshnish Isles, they mainly relate to the overwhelming numbers, noises and smells of the birds during nesting season.

- The weather is an integral element in the social values associated with S&TI, ranging from its impacts on everyday heritage and sense of place, to how islands continue to evoke a sense of wonder for those who live and work on and around them.
- Despite their current uninhabited status, S&TI still evoke strong feelings of attachment and rights for some, because of their role in people's lives and livelihoods, which can create tensions around knowledge, infrastructures, maintenance and care.
- Social values also intersect with debates and concerns about tourism and sustainability, whether these focus on local livelihoods, the experience of visitors or the impact on the birds and natural habitats.
- Finally, for some older members of surrounding local communities and special interest groups, there is a sense of loss surrounding changing ways of life, the rapid growth of tourism, and associated ways of valuing and relating to S&TI as places.

Context

The following is a summary of the property and wider research context. A more detailed description is given in Annex I: Property Description.

The properties:

Staffa National Nature Reserve (Staffa) and the Treshnish Isles are located to the west of the larger island of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides off the West Coast of Scotland (see Annex II: Maps). They are characterized by their unique landscapes and seabird colonies.

The 41.8-hectare Isle of Staffa, acquired by the Trust in 1986, is renowned for its steep basalt cliffs, the famous Fingal's Cave, and a significant puffin colony. It is a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Staffa attracts approximately 100,000 visitors annually and has a landing jetty and various other infrastructures (such as steps, handrails and footpaths) to support visitor access.

The Treshnish Isles, incorporated into the Trust's portfolio in 2023, consist of a cluster of islands and skerries. The 59.9-hectare island of Lunga is the primary destination for the estimated 50,000 visitors who come to view its renowned seabird nesting colonies, especially the puffins and the auk colonies at Harp Rock. A floating pontoon is moored off Lunga and used to facilitate landings on the beach. The Treshnish Isles are designated as a SSSI and are a Special Protection Area under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. The remains of a medieval castle on Cairn na Burgh Mor and Cairn na Burgh Beag are designated as Scheduled Monuments.

The wider area:

S&TI are encircled by the islands of Coll and Tiree to the northwest and the smaller island of Iona to the south, sitting where the sea lochs of Loch na Keal and Loch Tuath open out into the ocean (see Annex II for maps). They fall within the Loch na Keal National Scenic Area and the sea around the islands is part of the wider Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area (MPA) for Basking Sharks and Minke Whales.

As major tourist destinations, the islands are important resources within the economy of the neighbouring inhabited islands, which have populations ranging from a few hundred to several thousand people. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, the data zones covering the surrounding islands rank above the national average in all areas except for geographic access and housing.

Management arrangements:

The National Trust for Scotland manages S&TI as part of a broader regional property cluster that includes the Isle of Iona and Burg on the Isle of Mull. The team for these properties includes an Area Manager who lives on Iona, one permanent Ranger with dual responsibilities for south Mull, and three seasonal Rangers, who have a significant focus on S&TI. A regional Senior Seabird Officer also provides extra support with the seabird colonies on the Treshnish Isles.

The islands operate under an open-access model with no permanent on-site visitor infrastructure and minimal on-site interpretation (one panel on Staffa). Interpretation is provided by the Ranger Service and the boat tour operators.

On-going activities:

At the time of the assessment, recent and on-going Trust initiatives included:

- Research and monitoring of the island's sea bird colonies and other species, such as corncrake.
- Archaeological survey and excavation work, including a multi-disciplinary project on Staffa, conducted over a number of years (2014, 2017-2019) in partnership with Glasgow School of Art, University of Stirling, and University of Glasgow.
- A series of projects (2022 onwards) to update visitor infrastructure on Staffa.

Other on-going activities organised by other organisations or groups included:

- Sea bird monitoring and ringing by the Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (TIARG), annual expedition based on Lunga but including counts on most of the other islands.
- Fishing boats; and
- Tour boat companies and independent vessels bringing visitors to the islands.

Assessment Process

Approach

It was decided from the outset that Staffa and the Treshnish Isles would be amalgamated in a single social values assessment, because of the close physical proximity of these uninhabited island properties. Many though not all of the communities of locality, attachment and interest are associated with neighbouring inhabited islands, including Iona, Mull, Tiree and Coll. So, from the point of view of participants, engaging them about both island groups at once was less of an imposition on their time, while for the researchers it also made the research more efficient and effective, revealing both the distinctiveness of the social values associated with the properties and common themes.

Due to their close historical and present-day links with Iona, this assessment was also closely coordinated with the research for that property assessment, which involved both researchers in two intensive week-long trips in May and June 2025. A further intensive week-long research trip to northwest Mull was undertaken by Jones in July 2025. Co-ordinating the assessments enabled us to engage a range of people with interests in one or more of the islands while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

The total time spent on field research activities that contributed to the S&TI assessment by both researchers is roughly equivalent to 28 days FTE. Analysis and report writing took a further 21 days FTE, mainly involving one researcher.

Recruitment and selection of participants

The focus for this study was on engaging those with an established connection to or interest in S&TI, as opposed to the experience of visitors/ tourists. Based on Jones' prior research experience on Staffa and

desk-based research in advance of this assessment, it was decided that Iona and northwest Mull would be the best research bases for fieldwork. A select number of key stakeholders, including tour boat companies, fishermen, and others with specific interests in Staffa or the Treshnish Isles were contacted in advance of research trips. Information was also disseminated to local Trust staff and volunteers, and notices were placed a community notice boards and social media groups (posted by a member). During research trips, further contacts were made by word of mouth and introductions.

The selection process involved a mixture of targeted sampling focusing on a range of different kinds of key stakeholders, alongside snowball sampling based on participant recommendations to expand the range of communities of attachment and interest involved. In total, 27 participants were recruited first and foremost because of their relationship to Staffa and/or the Treshnish Isles. A further 6 people who were approached for the Iona assessment also contributed some data relating to Staffa and/or the Treshnish Isles (see Annex III: Participants). **The sum total of participants was therefore 33 people**.

Research methods

This assessment made extensive use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The majority of the interviews lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours (though some were 2-3 hours). Most interviews were held in person, either in public places or in people's homes/workplaces, while two interviews were undertaken online in Teams. People were asked about their relationships to S&TI, how regularly they visit and the activities that take place when they are there. They were also asked about the significance of the islands to them, and any memories, feelings, experiences, or stories they associate with them. Finally, people were asked about their experiences engaging with different communities around the property and what they think is important to preserve or change for the future. Whilst semi-structured by these themes, interviews were free-flowing and conversational in style, facilitating in depth exploration of values and attachments through participants own language and experiences.

Interview design was tailored so that while the primary focus was S&TI, there was a small section where participants were also asked about Iona, if they had an association with that island. Likewise, interviews carried out primarily for the Iona assessment, included a section on S&TI. This linkage with Iona was less relevant during the research carried out in northwest Mull.

The interviews were complemented by participant observation during visits to S&TI to familiarise the researchers with the landscapes and features being discussed and observe people's interactions with these places. An intensive 24 hours was spent doing participant observation on Lunga with people participating in the first week of the 2025 seabird ringing and related research. Whilst this preceded the TIARG expedition proper, some TIARG members were also present. Participant observation was accompanied by directed conversations with those involved. Conversations and observations were written up as fieldnotes.

Ethics

Participation in this assessment is voluntary and based on the principle of informed consent. People were advised before participating about the purpose of the research, what participation would involve (time and activities) and how any data they shared would be used, stored and disposed of. Participants involved in interviews and focus groups were given written information to keep and asked to sign a consent form. Participants engaged during participant observation were given information verbally. Participants could withdraw at any stage from the process and consent was regularly reconfirmed with people involved in more than one activity.

Another key principle is that of protecting participants and causing no harm, both during the activities or in the sharing and handling of resulting material. This assessment does not directly address sensitive topics, but any subject matter introduced by participants that appeared to be emotionally charged or distressing was treated with sensitivity during activities. Participation was kept confidential and all

participants have been given participant codes in this report. Careful consideration has been given to issues of identifiability and content when using direct quotes and to how potentially conflicting values and views are presented.

Personal and research data has been kept secure and not shared beyond the research team. The methods and approaches adopted in this assessment were reviewed and approved by the University of Stirling General University Ethics Panel prior to commencing activities.

Findings: Communities

The assessment identified a number of overlapping communities for whom S&TI have social values. Being uninhabited islands, these include the resident communities of surrounding islands in the Inner Hebridean archipelago for whom S&TI form part of their wider land/seascapes. It also includes sub-sections of these communities whose working lives have resulted in specific kinds of attachment and interest, as well as more scattered special interest and leisure groups.

More specifically, these include:

- Surrounding island communities, in particular Iona, Mull and Ulva, but also Gometra, Little Colonsay, and Coll and Tiree.
- Owners, skippers and crew of tour boat operators.
- Crofting/farming families from Iona who had grazing rights on Staffa and Treshnish Isles.
- People involved in fishing.
- Treshnish Islands Auk Ringing Group (TIARG) and other seabird researchers.
- Other researchers, including archaeologists and geologists.
- Writers, artists and artisan crafts people.
- Leisure and interest groups (e.g. bird watchers, kayakers, sailors).

Individuals may identify with more than one of these groups simultaneously or move between them depending on time and context. This is also not an exhaustive list and alternative community identities may be significant in other discussions.

The iconic status of Staffa as a tourist destination dating back to the late eighteenth centuries has drawn neighbouring island communities into close relationships with it. Historically local boat operators have taken visitors out of Ulva Ferry on Mull, whereas Iona and Staffa were linked through steamship tours out of Oban and further afield, with boats from Iona acting as tenders. Today the main local boat tour operators operate from Iona (Staffa Tours and Staffa Trips) and Ulva Ferry (Turus Mara). There is a stronger relationship between northwest Mull and tours to the Treshnish Isles, although today both Iona and Mull tour operators offer trips either separately or combined with Staffa. The scale of these businesses and the predominantly local nature of the crew, means that a significant number of people in these island communities develop working, 'everyday' relationships with the islands. There are also some RIB operators from Coll, Tiree or Oban, but these are much smaller scale.

S&TI have also been important for grazing and fishing. Historically, the Treshnish Isles were part of the Treshnish Estate in northwest Mull, which has created a close association in terms of social memory as well as their placenames. Animals grazed on the islands were taken on and off from Croig harbour and Calgary Jetty. In the late 20th century grazing rights were acquired by Gordon Grant of Iona, with animals transported from there, bringing closer ties to the Treshnish Isles which had previously been primarily linked to Mull.

Commercial vessels from surrounding inhabited islands also fish in the vicinity of Staffa and Treshnish. The islands' rocky coastlines are particularly important for creeling, which requires an intimate knowledge of the currents and subsurface rock formations. There are oral histories about conflicts between fishing families from Haunn and Oban over access to the Treshnish Isles. One of these families also made use of a building on Fladda as a bothy to stay in during the week in the summer months. Today, there are people who fish around the islands out of Bunessan, Croig, Oban, Ulva ferry and Iona, with Staffa being more of a focus for small boats out of Iona and Bunessan due to its proximity.

Treshnish Islands Auk Ringing Group (TIARG), a geographically dispersed but tightknit group of bird ringers, represent a specific community of attachment and interest (http://www.tiarg.org/) who trace their activities back to the early 1970s (the TIARG web site celebrates 50 years in existence). Focusing on puffins, razorbills, and guillemots on Lunga, the group tracks population changes—noting record puffin numbers recently—and contributes to conservation studies. In terms of this assessment, the nature of TIARG's work produces an intimate knowledge of specific aspects of the island and the annual expeditions have created the context for the generation of rich body of relatively discrete social values associated with the group's identity, social memory and sense of place.

Finally, there are looser groups of people for whom Staffa and Treshnish Isles hold social values as a result of specific interests and leisure activities. These are not communities in a formal sense but include people involved in activities such as bird watching, marine life monitoring, kayaking and yachting who may or may not be associated with group activities or organisations. Another constituency that should be considered is those people who are professionally or academically engaged with the islands for their archaeology, geology, and other natural features. Although scientific values are likely to be uppermost in defining their relationships to the islands, it is increasingly recognised that social values can also play an important role in mediating such relationships.

Findings: Social Values

What follows is a summary of the values identified and the activities and experiences that generate and sustain them. See Annex IV: Statement of Social Values for a detailed discussion with more extensive quotes.

The assessment reveals that participants see the Treshnish Isles as a distinct group separate from Staffa, but that they also differentiate between individual Treshnish islands because of their varied character. Furthermore, S&TI are embedded in overlapping relationships with communities on surrounding islands and there are many common themes in terms of social values. The following summary (and the full statement) is therefore **structured thematically**, exploring aspects of social value that crosscut both properties.

Variations between the properties in terms of social values are noted, but these are generally a matter of degree and emphasis. In terms of sensory experience and landscape values there is a clearer distinction; the main difference being the weight placed on geological features at Staffa and the more heavily touristed nature of the island, whereas for the Treshnish Isles, and Lunga in particular, the seasonal seabird colonies loom large. These differences are explored under the relevant sections below.

1. Place-based identities and attachments

Staffa and the Treshnish Isles are situated in a **complex web of social, economic and cultural relationships with surrounding inhabited islands**, including Iona, northwest, the Ross of Mull, Gometra and Ulva (relationships with Coll and Tiree would benefit from further research). These relationships range from the place of S&TI in people's everyday land/seascapes, to their important status as tourist destinations and sites of special interest informed by their geological formations, cultural histories, marine life, and seabird

colonies. **These bring local communities into diverse relationships with the islands**, creating social values linked to place-based identities and attachments.

Whilst uninhabited in the present day, S&TI are part of the ***genius loci* or 'spirit of place' for the inhabitants of surrounding islands**. Even for those who have rarely or never visited them, they are prominent features of the land/seascapes off the west coast of Mull, both taken for granted, "*they are just there*" (fieldwork diary) and also recognised for their unique, distinctive character or atmosphere.

As a result of their place in local economies, such as tourism, fishing and historical livestock grazing, S&TI are **also part of people's working lives and/or those of their forebears,** creating more intimate relationships and specific forms of identification and attachment for some. For those involved, the **sea is a medium of connection rather than separation**, an arena in which complex webs of relationships are created between island communities, informing people's identities and sense of place; "*we're all friends, it gives you a sense of connection*" and "*the boats are part of it"* (CS6_INT_013).

In addition to transient visitors, S&TI also draw **special interest groups**, such as archaeologists, geologists, speleologists, nature conservationists and ornithologists. These groups can develop intimate relationships with the islands, generating social values in addition to scientific and other special interest values. The **Treshnish Islands Auk Ringing Group (TIARG)** has an association extending over 50 years, creating a **strong sense of group identity**, "*that closeness and camaraderie*" (CS6_INT_012), and **place attachment**, "*it's another home*" (CS6_INT_015).

2. Values connected to everyday heritage

Despite being places of otherness and wonder for many, S&TI are also immersed in forms of **'everyday heritage'** associated with **ordinary, mundane and/or quotidian activities**, and the stories, images and material traces arising from them (Ireland et al. 2023). Integral to the place of the islands in people's working lives and family histories, forms of everyday heritage give rise to **social values that exist alongside, and sometimes in tension with, the extraordinary status of the islands**.

S&TI **feature in valued childhood and teenage activities** that inform people's identities and treasured memories. Tour boats moored in the bay, or departing and arriving heaving with excited tourists, have been an everyday feature of people's childhoods; "*we were always seeing the Staffa boats coming in and out*" (CS6_INT_003). Iona interviewees also recalled playing in a derelict Staffa tour boat as kids, which also created a sense of connection to what "*was almost a fictional place"* (CS6_INT_011).

The islands have also been destinations for **family outings and picnics** for some in surrounding communities, "*we did jollies out there you know, just family trips*" (CS6_INT_003). **Photographs are an important aspect of this everyday heritage**, informing family and community identities. Alongside those of boats, photographs of family trips adorn the walls of homes and family photo albums; "*there's photographs in the house of me at Staffa when I wasn't very old and actually also going to Lunga as well*" (CS6_INT_010).

By far the largest component of everyday heritage relating to the islands, however, stems from their place in **people's working lives**. For generations, communities on surrounding islands have been engaged in tourism, fishing and livestock grazing on and around S&TI. For some this has resulted in an **everyday familiarity with the islands rooted in the quotidian rhythms of particular activities**; "*I've spent a lot of my life sitting off Staffa [in one of the tour boats]*" (CS6_INT_013)

An important aspect of this everyday heritage is the **intimate knowledge of the islands** that accrues as part of people's working lives. Those involved in **landing people or animals** on S&TI acquire an understanding of the impact of weather, tides, and forms of shelter: "*inside the [natural] harbour at Fladda, it was a really safe place"* (CS6_INT_016), but *"the Dutchman was difficult, you had to get the weather to get in there*" (CS6_INT_010). Those involved in **fishing around the islands** have an intimate knowledge of their

underwater features; *"shooting creels in the very places other people won't want to take a boat, bit more dicey, shallow and rocky and the tide running*" (CS6_INT_004).

The annual **TIARG expeditions have also produced a rich body of everyday heritage**, relating to the work they do on the Treshnish Isles, especially Lunga which is the main focus of their annual expeditions. **Bird ringing creates a deep familiarity and association** with specific aspects of the slopes and cliffs where the birds nest. The expedition camp is also important in terms of social values, especially the "*bothy*" (CS6_INT_018), one of the ruined houses on Lunga which they use for communal activities, including cooking and eating. This building has come to embody the **camaraderie of the camp and the shared memories** that define the group.

The **modifications and infrastructures created by people** to support various working practices are a valued aspect of everyday heritage of the islands. These range from reuse of pre-existing structures, such as TIARG's bothy, to the construction of stairs, handrails and landing infrastructures on Staffa: "*The original stairs [to get up the cliff to the top of Staffa] would be a ship's ladder"* (CS6_INT_010). This **reuse of materials and structures** carries forwards earlier forms of everyday heritage, creating forms of connection and continuity through the webs of relationships between people and things.

Colloquial names are also part of everyday heritage for those who work on and around them. Among some fishermen, the Cairn na Burghs are known as the "*north islands*" (CS6_INT_010) and Bac Mhor is widely known as the Dutchman's Cap. Specific rocks and other features also have informal names creating a sense of community and connection to place which is projected back through time, "*yeah, the older guys would have had Gaelic names for everything*" (CS6_INT_016).

The **weather is also important in shaping daily activities and the values associated with them**. It "*completely dictates everything*" (CS6_INT_004) and "*I enjoy that it is completely unpredictable, and I like being challenged by it, […] having to work out practical things*" (CS6_INT_018). **Changing technologies are also important** in this regard, shaping daily practices, "*we had no mobile phones, no batteries to keep our radios charged […] it was very different experience*" (CS6_FG1_002).

3. Storied islands: social memory and oral history

Oral histories connected to Staffa and the Treshnish Isles tend to be rooted in everyday heritage. **Stories of specific characters and incidents** are retold, transmitted and shared beyond those immediately involved, engendering broader forms of social memory. They also link S&TI to communities on the surrounding islands, maintaining forms of relatedness and identification despite the demise of certain kinds of everyday heritage practice, such as grazing livestock or collecting winkles.

Certain individuals, usually older members of communities with multi-generational ties, are singled out as **authoritative storytellers**. "*[X] would know. He's got a memory that's just, you know, he doesn't forget these*" (CS6_INT_016). People who are no longer alive are also referenced as a source for people's "*sense of the past*", because *"he could talk about place names and things… the kind of things that are not on the map"* (CS6_INT_022).

Certain events have become **fabled tales, told and retold in multiple ways**; "*ask him about that, it's great, it's just so kind of bonkers*" (CS6_INT_005). One of these stories is about a bullock that got trapped on a ledge on Dutchman's Cap and the adventures they had trying to rescue it. In transmission, such stories can take many forms or be woven together with others; "*when you speak to [X] sometimes a single story is interwoven with two or three other stories*" (CS6_INT_013).

There is also a strong sense of the **camaraderie and the social dimensions of these expeditions**, of how they roped in other people to give a hand, family and friends and someone with a boat. One retired fisherman recalled how people used to see it as an adventure: "*It'll be good fun. We'll take some whiskey*

with us and some sandwiches and the family might go..." (CS6_INT_017) and "*It was just a bit of a day out. You didn't need to be paid for it. It was just a bloody good laugh*" (CS6_INT_011).

Knowing and sharing iconic stories is something that bonds those with more intimate connections to S&TI and distinguishes them from others in surrounding island communities. **Storytelling therefore informs people's identities and relationships**, but it is also a vital ingredient in the 'crack'/'craic', a form of gossip, fun, and lively conversation that is highly valued socially. Unsurprisingly, humour is also a prominent ingredient in the stories; "*there were quite a lot of high jinks out there*." (CS6_INT_011).

TIARG have their own rich tapestry of oral history to do with the origins of the group, and its formation and development over the course of 4-5 decades. There is a focus on key **personalities and their influence**; "*there were several individuals who were basically a regular team*" (CS6_INT_015). The landscape and ruined village of Lunga, especially the building they use as the "bothy", act as memory props (mnemonics). There is even a memorial stone to one of their earlier expedition leaders who passed away, made from "*a piece of Ross of Mull granite […] which we found on Fladda*" (CS6_FG1_002).

There is also a **longer sense of tradition, linked to the ornithologists and naturalists** associated with the Treshnish Islands. Several TIARG members mentioned Fraser Darling who camped on Lunga with his family in 1937; "*you can get totally romantic about this, but it's just like when Fraser Darling was there, you know*" (CS6_INT_018). And in northwest Mull a resident on the former Treshnish Estate, which was owned by Niall and Lady Jean Rankin, explained, "*there's a slip and […] Rankin had a boat called the Storm Petrel. Obviously, it's not kind of our story, but it feels like it's embedded in the place*" (CS6_IN_022).

Vaguer, fragmented stories about earlier times are also evident: "*I think years ago, they used to sail out from Iona and take the mast off and put the mast across [to Harp Rock] to go and get bird eggs. I have no date on when this happened*" (CS6_INT_013). These stories extend the webs of connections between the S&TI and surrounding communities temporally as well as spatially; "*It's a romantic thing, but the older folk […] talked about the past as though it was just yesterday […] I loved that sense of, you know, connection with everything in the place and the people in the place*" (CS6_INT_017).

Whilst the stories surrounding S&TI create a **web of connections with communities on surrounding islands**, many commented on how **knowledge of these stories is declining**; *the number of people who have the stories first hand from the past is really dwindling now*" (CS6_INT_022). The influence of changing livelihoods is highlighted along with a sense of loss: "*I think it's [knowledge of these stories] largely gone because they don't need the bird eggs. They don't need the winkles. They don't need the rabbits. […] They don't need that adventure of the day"* (CS6_INT_017).

4. Land/seascape values and nature

Staffa and the Treshnish Isles are **distinctive landmarks** in the southern part of the Inner Hebrides, sitting off western Mull with Coll and Tiree to the west and Iona to the south. For surrounding island communities, they are part of people's **everyday landscapes and seascapes**; "*they've been the backdrop to my daily goings on*" (CS6_INT_009) and *"it's like the old tree that you pass regularly as part of your day-to-day activities. These things are important"* (CS6_INT_022). Their presence also leaves a strong impression: "*If you stand on the top of Dun I [on Iona] and you look around […], I think it's one of the greatest views there are, you know, it's pretty amazing.* (CS6_INT_003).

Many also value how these **expansive views of the islands change at different times of the day, different seasons, and with different kinds of weather**: "*I caught this amazing sunrise over the islands over there and I was just completely blown away by it*" (CS6_INT_012) and "*they are so striking, sometimes in winter with snow on them. So changeable*" (CS6_INT_022). Another frequently noted characteristic of the Treshnish Islands, in particular, is how they change shape when viewed from the different angles.

Within these largescale vistas, the islands themselves are also valued as **continuously changing, lively elements in the landscape**. As one Bunessan resident observed "*they are just there…, but the Dutchman's Cap, it's always changing, sometimes its floating, sometimes it's hardly there*" (fieldnotes). And another person who lives on Mull explained that "*it's very affecting because you [are] so familiar with it [Dutchman] and then when you see it change like that, it's, it's quite unsettling to see"* (CS6_INT_007).

Despite recognising them as a group, the **diversity and distinctiveness of the Treshnish Isles** is much commented on: "*They have very distinctive shapes* (CS5_INT_006); "*It's the variety, isn't it?"* (CS6_INT_007) and "*they are all similar geology, but what really struck me by surprise when visiting them was how different they feel*" (CS6_INT_009). The **aesthetic qualities of the individual islands** are also valued; "*there's a quote somebody made about Lunga, 'it's a jewel on a peacock sea'*" (CS6_INT_004). Whereas with Staffa, the aesthetics of the geological formations are foregrounded: "*it is spectacular, the rocks are very unusual […] alongside these amazing caves, and the effects of the swell […] So it is special"* (CS6_INT_004).

Relationships with the sea, and indeed with nature, are integral to the landscape values associated with the islands; "*the fact that it [Staffa] is an island means it's different from just finding a [columnar basalt] cliff face along a river in land or something like that. Because it's in this blue sea, and it has these amazing islands all around it*" (CS6_INT_007). The absence of current human habitation means that they are also valued as places where you can experience the "***raw, powerful experience of 'nature***" (CS6_INT_002); "*you feel quite sort of small and humbled in a way, because nature is clearly in control here*" (CS5_INT_005) and "*here it's all real, it's not an engineered place, […] it's unmediated*" (CS6_INT_012).

The **inconsistencies and tensions inherent in ideas of unmediated nature** are also felt. Archaeological remains and ruined structures on Staffa and several of the Treshnish Isles are powerful reminders that these have been peopled places for centuries, even millennia. Even the experience of the sea bird colonies on Staffa and Lunga are mediated by the presence of lots of visitors; "*it's got some of the most amenable seabirds because they are used to lots of people*" (CS6_FG1_002).

5. Extra-ordinary places: values relating to sensory and affective experiences

For a few, the ways in which Staffa and the Treshnish Isles intersect with everyday activities can counter their affective power, "*well if you're seeing these things all the time you get blasé about them don't you?*" (CS6_INT_010). However, for many of our interviewees who live and work in their vicinity they **maintain their extra-ordinariness capable of invoking wonder for surrounding communities.** "*I thought [Fingal's] cave was spectacular […] there is an atmosphere about it*" (CS6_INT_010) and "*the Treshnish Islands [long pause] are just extraordinary, there's nothing like them anywhere*" (CS6_INT_006).

There are days when the conditions will still generate a **sense of awe even for those whose working lives involve routine interaction**: "*I'm out there [near Staffa], you know, once or twice a week now. […] It still kind of makes me go, wow, you know. Yeah, it really honestly does. Not every day, but days where it's basically a sunny day with a big swell, you still look at it and go, wow"* (CS6_INT_003).

Weather conditions are an integral in perpetuating a sense of wonder for those whose who work around the islands. "*We're out there on days where it is glassy calm and you can you can kind of see the island reflected on the surface of the sea. Or in gales where there's a big [swell], and it's grey and kind of dark as well, and there's big waves coming in and crashing to the top of the columns"* (CS6_INT_005).

For some, the **weather also creates a sense of connection and affinity**, with the islands and their other inhabitants. For instance, one longstanding member of TIARG explained that "*you're seeing what the birds totally experience and what the island experiences. Everything on the island [Lunga] and you. So, you see it in its different facets. […] You've got a far closer affinity to the island because of that*" (CS6_INT_015).

In terms of sensory experience at Staffa, people's primary focus is its geological formations, which are experienced as **timeless and unchanging, but simultaneously dynamic** as a result of changing light and atmospheric conditions. *"Staffa is an incredible place, it's never the same twice, even with the tide moving up and down it's different, the swell is different, the wind's different, the people are different*" (CS6_INT_013). **Colour is also an important aspect of the affective qualities of Staffa;** "*there's a whole lot of colour in the scene that you might not imagine if you're not thinking about it, you just think it's a big lump of black rock, but you know there's much more to it than that*" (CS6_INT_005).

The **sensory qualities of Staffa's caves**, especially Fingal's cave, are also significant for many; "*the light, that's one of the things I love in there, the patterns of light in the water, reflecting against the vertical columns pointing down and away*" (CS6_INT_016). The **acoustic effects** of Fingal's Cave and other caves are also a source of comment: "*There's one around the north side called the Gunshot Cave, which makes the noise like a gunshot […] It's, you know**, there's some pretty amazing sounds out there too, as well as sights***" (CS6_INT_003).

The **Treshnish Islands** are also recognised for their beauty, but it is the **sensory experiences associated with their birdlife** that stand out: "*It's just such a wonderful place, [but] it's mostly about the birdlife. […] [W]hen the birds are there it's just such a phenomenal place*" (CS6_INT_013). And a member of TIARG explains how they are "*completely blown away by it… erm there is nowhere else you can get that close to these birds*" (CS6_INT_012).

The overwhelming **impression of the birds on almost every aspect of the senses** in the nesting season also comes across repeatedly, especially in respect to Lunga; "*the noise and the smell, it just really is amazing…*" (CS6_INT_013). For a longstanding TIARG member the impact of the experience remains despite many repeat visits: "*I never lose that sense of wonder when I see those guillemots, never*" (CS6_FG1_002). An Iona resident recounting an overnight kayaking trip explains that *"it was just absolutely … birds everywhere […] it really was staggering"* (CS6_INT_004).

Another integral component in the affective experience of S&TI is **the journey required to get to them**. "*The fact that they are hard to get to is part of the impression they make. It wouldn't be the same if it was easy – if there was a bridge or something*" (CS6_INT_004). The difficulties created by the weather are also valued; "*the fact that we can't just do everything when we want isn't necessarily a bad thing*" (CS6_INT_004). Specific trips to the islands are also valued in terms of personal transformation; "***it was a fantastic transformative trip for me**. […] My early experiences of those islands were really key at that time"* (CS6_INT_004).

6. Ownership, sustainability and care

The ways in which the islands are linked to **people's lives and livelihoods create forms of attachment and rights**, regardless of legal ownership. Conflicts surrounding forms of territoriality and claims to resources are also part of social memory; "*the place was quite competitive, so this is where some of the conflicts came in*" (CS6_INT_017).

Infrastructures associated with landing and access to Staffa, such as the jetty, the steps and the railings, are associated with feelings of attachment and ownership for some. Across generations these have been sites of **informal practices of maintenance and care** reinforcing relationships to specific families. Forms of everyday heritage associated with maintenance and care can become sites of tension surrounding change: *"[Someone] decided to take away the steps between the bottom path and the top path. […] It's sacrilege, it should never have been allowed, because it's part of the history of Staffa those steps.*" (CS6_INT_010)

Even those whose working lives are unrelated to S&TI express forms of **concern rooted in attachment**. For instance, a resident from Iona explained that "*inevitably when they are **part of your scenescape you become possessive of them. I do worry about them**, because of the numbers [of visitors]*" (CS5_INT_012).

And for the current owners of Treshnish Farm (formerly Estate) there is a strong sense of the islands as part of their landscape, "*because there was that historic connection or relationship, you know*" (CS6_INT_022).

A **sense of ownership or at least attribution also imbues stories** associated with the islands. Regularly, in recounting them, people attribute sources: *"[X] tells this story and he got it from his father*" (CS6_INT_013). In this way, storytelling serves to reproduce and expand social relationships, but this can also create **tensions around who uses them and how**. "*It's like photographs, you can steal souls,* ***you can steal stories*** *[…] As soon as you put it into a brochure you've somehow betrayed it, because it [becomes] an interesting anecdote rather than something that the owners know about*" (CS5_INT_012).

For members of **TIARG**, there are **specific forms of attachment and care generated by their annual expedition** and the work they do with the birds. Within the group, different people become associated with particular areas; "*a kind of territoriality sounds mean, but it is a kind of territoriality*" (CS6_FG1_003). The same person also **linked this sense of ownership to care**: "*one person or a group of people have to have oversight of what happens to the seabirds, so you don't have multiple disturbances*" (CS6_FG1_003).

The **transition in legal ownership** from the Hebridean Trust to the National Trust for Scotland created anxieties about what that would mean for TIARG's work, and their relationship to Lunga in particular. Contemplating a scenario where their expeditions were no longer permitted, one TIARG member explained it would be "*an emotional wrench because we're sort of hefted, we're hefted to the island*" (CS6_FG1_002). A Trust employee commented that, "*they care about this place and I understood that*" (CS6_FG1_003).

The growing numbers of tourists visiting Staffa, and increasingly also Lunga, are a source of **concern relating to sustainability** for some. Several interviewees connected this to global problems: "*I mean, it's the whole problem, you know, it's all over the place, overtourism, isn't it? Staffa and Iona must sag under the weight of people sometimes*" (CS6_INT_017). One Iona resident explained that "*It does feel a bit as if, it's never said, but that Staffa has become a bit sacrificial. […] The wonderful thing about the Dutchman and Fladda for the birds is that they are really hard to get onto safely. And poor old Lunga's curse is that it is rough, but you can land*" (CS5_INT_012).

Debates and concerns about the seabirds intersect with anxieties about sustainability and change for many people, even if these are understood in different ways. "*They say 'puffins love people', well how convenient, perhaps they do respond in that way, but it's too much. Don't know how it is to be controlled*" (CS5_INT_012). For others it's about a balance, as one long-standing member of TIARG put it, "*there's no doubt that people have an impact. The question becomes, when does that impact become unsustainable for the wildlife? […] I don't think we're at that point. The birds are habituated*" (CS6_INT_018).

At the same time, interviewees acknowledged the **importance of visitors experiencing these places, so that they come to care for them** more. The problem posed is how to manage different kinds of visitors and provide interpretation "*so visitors are better informed about how special it is*" (CS6_INT_019). "*The local operators [of tour boats] are good because they know the place and the birds. They know not to motor in at 20 knots through rafts of seabirds*", but cruise ships "*with fleets of 20 zodiacs, they come in really fast […] hurtling through rafts of guillemots with chicks in tow*" (CS6_INT_018).

The impact of the growth in tourism on how people experience the islands is also a source of concern that activates social values. For Staffa it's about what that does to the island and it's atmosphere: "*it's pretty damn hard to get any atmosphere when there's a thousand people crawling across the it. I'm sorry*" (CS6_INT_017). The potential introduction of more intrusive health and safety measures is also a source of concern, for some. "*Wild places to me should be wild, and people should take full personal responsibility in them*" (CS6_INT_011). Ultimately, for some, the growth in tourism has simply changed their personal relationship with the islands: "*It changes these places. I mean, I don't want to go ashore now on the Treshnish Islands* (CS6_INT_017).

Implications

Staffa and the Treshnish Islands are uninhabited islands, but this assessment shows they are embedded in complex **networks of relationships with surrounding island communities**. The Trust already recognises the strong connections with these communities, but the main focus in terms of conservation and management is on how tourism relating to the properties supports local economies. This assessment has identified a **wide range of social values arising from the ways the islands are embedded in people's lives and livelihoods**. Incorporating these into the significance assessment, planning and decision-making for the properties will support the Trust in further developing community-based conservation and management.

S&TI also draw special interest groups, such as archaeologists, geologists, speleologists, nature conservationists and ornithologists. These groups can develop intimate relationships with the islands, generating social values in addition to scientific and other special interest values. In particular, TIARG's association with the Treshnish Isles extending back over 50 years creates a strong sense of group identity, and place attachment, especially with Lunga and the ruined village where they establish their expedition camp annually. It would be useful to recognise TIARG, along with other groups which make repeat research trips or field expeditions, as **specific stakeholder communities with strong attachments** and sense of ownership in significance assessment and management planning.

One of the key implications of this assessment is **the importance of everyday heritage in generating social values** relating to S&TI. It shows that the islands are an integral part of the 'spirit of place' for surrounding island communities valued as a backdrop to people's daily lives regardless of how often they visit. Furthermore, for those who work on and around them, expressions of everyday heritage also extend to the intimate familiarity they develop with specific aspects of the islands, the infrastructures supporting working practices, and the forms of oral history and social memory associated with them.

A rich body of social values has been documented arising from the everyday heritage dimensions of both S&TI. The **significance assessments** for the islands, which currently centre on natural and archaeological/historical values, could be expanded to include everyday heritage in the next planning cycle. This would facilitate accommodation of these values in approaches to sustainability and managing change where there are some specific implications (see below).

While the assessment supports the existing property management plans in their positioning of the islands as natural wonders with deep-rooted human histories (*Staffa NNR Vision and Management Plan* 2025; *Staffa Property Statement* 2017; *Treshnish Management Plan* 2025), it also shows that there is a complex **interplay between everyday heritage and people's ongoing experience of their extra-ordinariness**. For people whose lives and livelihoods bring them into regular contact with the S&TI, wonder or awe become more grounded in the sensory experience of changing conditions as they engage in routine activities. In light of this, it would be useful to adjust or qualify the link that is often made between the experience of wonder and the remoteness / wildness of the properties.

On Staffa, the management plan sees infrastructures as potentially intrusive signs of human activity disrupting the experience of visitors (*Staffa NNR Vision and Management Plan* 2025). However, this assessment shows that **infrastructures** such as the pier, stairs and causeway are valued aspects of the everyday heritage of the island, which can be associated with hidden attachments. For those whose working lives are bound up with the islands, they embody networks of relationships with those involved in their creation and/or maintenance in the past and present, as well as mediating wider forms of social memory and identity. It will be useful to take these social values into account when planning and communicating future infrastructure projects, which could disrupt these values and potentially create tensions.

Oral history, traditions and social memory practices linked to the everyday heritage are an important source of social values informing people's connections to the islands and their identities. Some of these stories and traditions connect with **the archaeological and built cultural heritage of the islands** where these are incorporated into more recent activities (e.g. the role of the abandoned village in TIARG's expedition camp), or because people make loose connections between their lives and those of unknown past inhabitants. However, there is less evidence that the associative historical value relating to Staffa's famous visitors informs contemporary social values (with the exception of Mendelssohn), and very little connection to the myths relating to Fingal and Ossian. Instead, the stories and memory practices linked to social values usually focus on **recent social and family histories, communal experiences, and fabled tales** surrounding particular incidents.

There is evidence that **some consider oral history and social memory to be a vulnerable aspect of the islands' heritage** because those who hold the stories are dying and their ongoing creation, transmission and performance is perceived to be undermined by changes to people's livelihoods and lifestyles. Oral history projects could be seen as a remedy for this, alongside incorporation into the formal interpretation of the properties. However, such initiatives need to be handled carefully, due to the sense of ownership and belonging associated with them and related potential for tensions around who recounts them and how they are shared.

The contribution of the properties, especially Staffa, to surrounding island economies in terms of tourism is widely recognised and valued. Moreover, the social values relating to S&TI intersect with the role they play in people's livelihoods in significant ways. Nevertheless, participants also express anxieties about **the growth in tourism and the impact on various social values**. Debates about sustainability intersect with values relating to the impact of rising visitor numbers on the islands' natural flora and fauna, especially seabirds, as well as the effects on visitor experience. In addition, several participants explained that the recent growth in tourism was starting to impact on their sense of place and relationship with the islands, changing when and how they relate to them. The findings suggest that a collaborative approach involving local communities and special interest groups could be the most effective in terms of deciding what sustainability means in different contexts, and how this might be managed.

Gaps/Future Assessments

There are some gaps in representation and scope, where complementary research could be conducted in future:

- The Hebridean Trust (founded 1982) and Hynish Trust (June 2024): The Treshnish Isles were in the care of The Hebridean Trust from 2000 to July 2023, when ownership was transferred to the National Trust for Scotland. The Hebridean Trust was based in Tiree and primarily focused on the restoration of the Hynish Lighthouse Shore Station. In June 2024, the Hebridean Trust gifted the Lighthouse Shore Station to the Tiree community, and the Hynish Trust was formed to take this project forward. A sample of interviews could be undertaken with former trustees of the Hebridean Trust and current trustees and active members of the Hynish Trust to explore any *ongoing* social values and attachments relating to the Treshnish Isles.
- Residents of Col and Tiree: historically, communities on Col and Tiree have not been as closely associated with the Treshnish Isles and Staffa as those on Iona and Mull. However, the Treshnish Isles are part of their seascapes and in recent years commercial boat tours have increased, although still small-scale. Some targeted social values assessment with residents would therefore be useful to ascertain the extent and nature of any social values associated with the properties.
- Special Interest Groups: This assessment revealed that researchers and special interest groups can develop strong social values and attachments to the islands, especially where repeat visits or

expeditions are involved. Members of TIARG were involved in this assessment, and Jones has been a member of archaeological expeditions to Staffa. However, further research might be productive with archaeologists, geologists, bird/nature conservation groups and speleologists.

- Clan societies: This research did not reveal contemporary social values relating to Scottish clans associated with the area. However, some targeted research with (e.g. with the MacDougall and MacLean Clan societies) might be worthwhile to ascertain whether the Treshnish Isles are the focus of social values and attachments for present day Clan members, in particular Cairnburgh Castle on Cairn na Burgh Mòr.

Annex I: Property Description

Location and formation

The Staffa National Nature Reserve and the Treshnish Isles are located to the west of the larger island of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides off the West Coast of Scotland (see Annex II: Maps). They are encircled by the islands of Coll and Tiree to the northwest and the smaller island of Iona to the south, sitting where the sea lochs of Loch na Keal and Loch Tuath open out into the ocean.

The islands were formed as outliers of a lava plateau formed approximately 60 million years ago. Successive periods of glaciation carved the islands from the plateau, which also forms much of Mull and coastal parts of the Morvern peninsula on the mainland. Staffa is particularly noted for its basalt formations. The sea cliffs provide spectacular examples of columnar jointing, where the lava has cooled and contracted to form regular multisided (predominantly hexagonal) columns. In the majority of cases the columns are vertical; however, in some instances, they have a tilted or curved character, as at Clamshell Cave (near the jetty to the southeast of the island) and Am Buachaille (the Herdsman), both of which feature prominently on photographs and artistic representations. The volcanic origins of the Treshnish Isles are apparent in the islands' steep cliffs and rock formations, their distinctive outlines reflected in names such as Dutchman's Cap (alternative name for Bac Mòr). This geology is distinct from that of the neighbouring islands of Coll, Tiree and Iona, which are formed of more ancient gneisses.

Socio-economic profile of surrounding areas

The properties are currently uninhabited, but they are visible from the inhabited islands of Mull (in particular from the Treshnish peninsula to the north, the Ross of Mull in the south, and the west coast), Iona, Tiree, Coll, Gometra and Ulva, forming part of the wider seascape and having interconnected histories. In recent times, the Treshnish Isles have been most closely connected with communities in the north of Mull, and Staffa with those in Iona.

The islands are incorporated into the Argyll and Bute Council area. At the time of the 2022 Scottish Census,[1] there were 181 people living on Iona, 175 people on Coll, 695 people on Tiree, and 3,083 people on Mull, Gometra and Ulva. In the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, several data zones cover these areas, all described as Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree (part).[2] Iona is included in a data zone that also covers the tip of the Ross of Mull (S01007287), which is placed in decile 6 overall, with a low ranking for geographic access (1) and housing (2), offset by a very high ranking for health (9) and crime (9, indicating a low incidence of crime). Education, employment and income are all ranked 6 or 7. The data zone covering Coll and Tiree (S01007284) ranks slightly lower overall (5), with above average rankings (6 or 7) in all areas except geographic access (1) and housing (4). The data zones for the northwest (S01007285) and west of Mull (S01007288), which includes Gometra and Ulva, are also ranked 6 overall, with rankings of 7 or 8 in most areas except for geographic access and housing (which are lower).

The properties are important resources within the neighbouring island economies:

"Approximately 100,000 visitors travel to Staffa each year mainly via tour boat trips from Mull, Iona or Morven; some by RIB from Coll, Tiree or Oban; some by cruise ship or tall ship from other islands or mainland ports; and a few by private yacht or kayak. Staffa therefore represents a regionally significant visitor attraction, playing an important role in attracting visitors to Mull, Iona and the Inner Hebrides. Many

[1] Census data accessed via the Island Groups 2022 area type and selecting the relevant islands on the map (https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/search-the-census#/location).

[2] The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (https://simd.scot/) is a relative measure across 6,976 small areas (called Data Zones). It ranks all the Data Zones and divides them into ten equally sized segments: the first decile (ranked 1) are the 10% most deprived areas, and the tenth decile (ranked 10) are the 10% least deprived areas.

combine a trip to Staffa with a visit to the neighbouring island of Iona, or with an extended boat trip to the Treshnish Isles" (*Staffa NNR Vision and Management Plan* 2025).

The properties (including formal heritage designations)

The Isle of Staffa came into Trust care in 1986. The island covers an area of 41.8 hectares and, as noted above, attracts around 100,000 visitors per year. The island's steep basalt cliffs give way in places to caves, some of which it is possible to enter by boat. The most famous among these is Fingal's Cave at the southern end of the island. The remains of stone structures and 'rig and furrow' field systems indicate historic occupation across the upper areas of the island in the form. Archaeological research led by Glasgow School of Art in collaboration with the Trust, University of Glasgow and University of Stirling between 2014 and 2019 uncovered evidence for prehistoric activity dating back to the Neolithic. Use of the island for grazing ended in 1997. The island is also a breeding site for sea birds, with a puffin colony on the cliffs to the northeast of the island.

The Treshnish Isles were cared for by the Hebridean Trust until 2023, when they were incorporated into the Trust's portfolio. This cluster of islands and skerries range in size from less than a hectare to the largest, Lunga, at 59.9 hectares (see Table 1 below). Lunga is the focus for most of the estimated c50,000 visitors that visit the Treshnish Isles annually, due to its large and accessible puffin colony and the seasonal aggregations of auks nesting at Harp Rock (viewed across a narrow but precipitous ravine). Tour boat operators have moored a floating pontoon offshore, to facilitate access.

Table 1. List of the Treshnish isles from southwest to northeast

Island or Skerry	**Area (hectares)**
Bac Beag	6.7
Bac Mòr (The Dutchman's Cap)	24.7
Lunga	59.9
Sgeir a' Chaisteil	3.7
Sgeir an Eirionnaich	5.0
Sgeirean na Giusaich	<1
Sgeir an Fheòir	<1
Bogha Ruadh	<1
Tighchoie	<1
Sgeir na h-Iolaire	<1
Fladda	20.6
Cairn na Burgh More	3.6
Sgeirean Mhic Fhionnlaidh	<1
Cairn na Burgh Beg	2.2

The Treshnish Isles had a resident population until 1857, and use of the islands for grazing from Mull and Iona continued into living memory. The remains of a medieval castle on Cairn na Burgh Mor and Cairn na Burgh Beag, occupied from at least the 12th century to the mid-18th century, are designated as a Scheduled Monument (https://www.trove.scot/designation/SM12954). The monument comprises substantial curtain walls on both islands. Standing within the curtain wall on Cairn na Burgh More is a 15th- or 16th-century chapel and an 18th-century barracks, guardhouse and associated buildings, relating to the occupation of the island by the British Army after the 1715 Jacobite uprising.

S&TI are within the Loch na Keal National Scenic Area (NSA), which covers the sea lochs of Loch na Keal and Loch Tuath, and also includes the islands of Eorsa, Inch Kenneth, Little Colonsay, Ulva, Gometra. The seas

around the islands are part of the wider Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area (MPA) for Basking Sharks and Minke Whales, and the Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC for Harbour porpoise.

All the islands are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their ecological interest, including the range of coastal habitats and breeding seabird assemblages (separate designations recorded by NatureScot for Staffa and the Treshnish Isles). Staffa is also designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR), while the Treshnish Isles are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), principally in recognition of their importance for breeding Atlantic grey seals.

Management arrangements

Staffa and the Treshnish Isles form part of a cluster of properties in the area that are cared for by the Trust, which also include the Isle of Iona and Burg on the Isle of Mull. At the time of this assessment, there was a small staff team working across these properties, consisting of an Area Manager (based on Iona, where there is a visitor centre), one permanent Ranger (also covering south Mull as part of the Mull and Iona Ranger Service) and three seasonal Rangers. The staff team's time is split between the Trust's properties in the cluster, with a significant focus for the seasonal rangers being on wildlife surveys and visitor management on Staffa and the Treshnish Isles. The team are supported by a regional Senior Seabird Officer (West Highlands), whose work focused on the Treshnish Isles during the assessment period.

The islands are free to visit. There are no permanent visitor facilities on the islands and little permanent interpretation (one interpretation panel on Staffa and a donation box set in a cairn. The boat tour operators and Trust rangers offer different kinds of oral interpretation as well as carrying Trust leaflets (for Staffa) and portable boards detailing bird sightings (used on Lunga), which are taken over and removed by the Rangers. The main access for visitors is with registered commercial tour operators from surrounding islands. The Trust recommends that people arrange transport through a registered tour operator, and the Rangers also use these services, although people can also access the islands independently.

Trust projects

Conservation – Monitoring seabird colonies, cases of avian flu, and any evidence for species such as rats, mink. In addition to the island's seabirds, corncrake (one of the Trust's Plan for Nature priority species) is known to have bred on the Treshnish Isles in 2025.

Archaeology – finds on the islands have indicated human occupation reaching back to the Neolithic period and there is a well-documented history of habitation from the Iron Age onwards. On Staffa, as part of a multi-disciplinary project over a number of years (2014, 2017-2019) by the National Trust for Scotland, Glasgow School of Art, University of Stirling, and University of Glasgow, survey and excavation work was carried in the vicinity of the ruined stone bothy in the centre of the island, the entire southern end of the island was surveyed using a laser scanner, with further data captured both from drone camera footage and a set of photos of the cliff faces, and the interior of Fingal's Cave was scanned and recorded, including photographing historic graffiti on the basalt columns.

Updates to visitor infrastructure on Staffa – in September 2022, the Trust commenced a series of projects to improve the access infrastructure on Staffa. These included work to address erosion and improve footpaths on the top of the island (2022), and significant repairs in Fingal's Cave (2023). Works continued in 2024 and 2025, with the installation of a new jetty with expanded waiting area and improvements to the staircase to the upper island. These works were scheduled out of season to avoid disruption to breeding birds and visitors, but did mean that the Staffa jetty was closed to boat landings from 23 September 2024 until mid-June 2025. There was also a change in policy in 2025, when the Trust prohibited dogs from going onto the island.

Other on-going activities

Since 1971, the Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (TIARG: http://www.tiarg.org/) has monitored the breeding seabird populations of the Treshnish Isles through ringing and census work. TIARG expeditions (of around 1 week per year) are based around the village ruins at the northern end of Lunga but include land- or boat-based counts on most of the other islands. The census and ringing data is submitted to two national monitoring programmes, the Seabird Monitoring Programme and the National Ringing Database, respectively.

Other people who work on or around the islands include the staff of fishing vessels and tour boats, which operate from Mull (Tobermory, Fionnphort, and Ulva Ferry), Iona, and Oban (on the Scottish mainland). In the past, boat operators have invested in maintaining the infrastructure on Staffa and Lunga (e.g. pathways and steps), to facilitate landing and visitor access.

Popular culture

Tourists have been drawn to the islands for hundreds of years, attracted by their unusual geology and wildlife. The Romantic movement of the 18th century emphasised the emotional experience of wonder and awe at natural splendour and Staffa, brought to prominence by the writings of famous botanist Joseph Banks, who included it in his 1772 *Journal of Travel*, became a popular destination among those seeking to experience the sublime. Tourist interest continued and grew through the 19th century, as transport became easier, with visits from British royalty, famous writers (including Scott, Wordsworth and Tennyson), musicians and artists. Keats recounted his experience of visiting Staffa in a poem, referring to Fingal's Cave as "*This Cathedral of the Sea"*.

Staffa has also been the inspiration for music and art. Felix Mendelssohn wrote the *Hebrides Overture* after his visit in 1829, saying that he was inspired by the sound of the waves in Fingal's Cave. The *Overture* has been played many times since in the cave itself, and short extracts are played by some of the tour boat operators today. J.M.W. Turner, who visited a year after Mendelssohn, exhibited a painting of Staffa in 1832, depicting a small tourist steamboat battling the waves near the Cave's mouth (painting now in the collection of the Yale Centre for British Art: https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:5018).

Annex II: Maps

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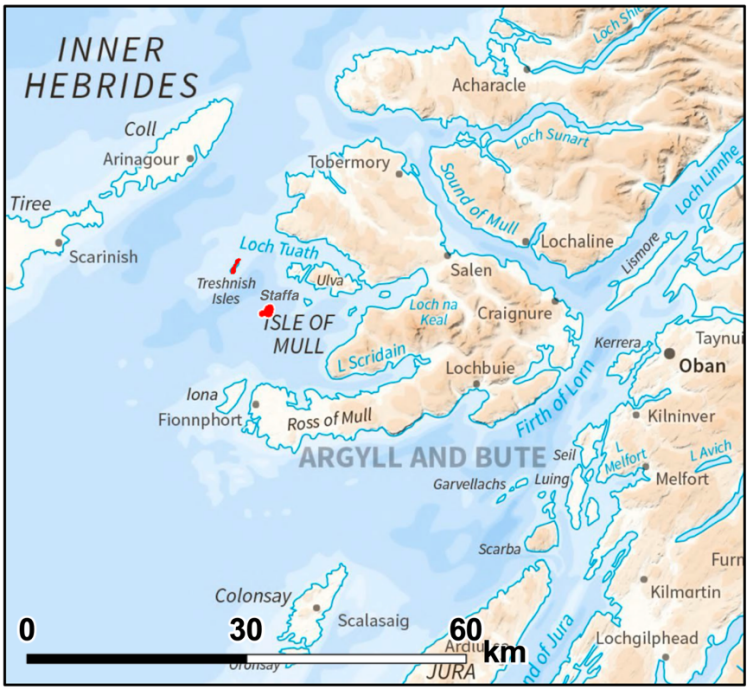
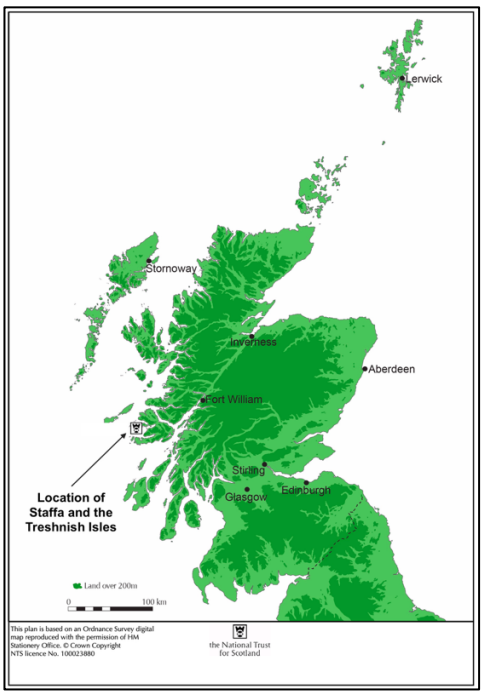
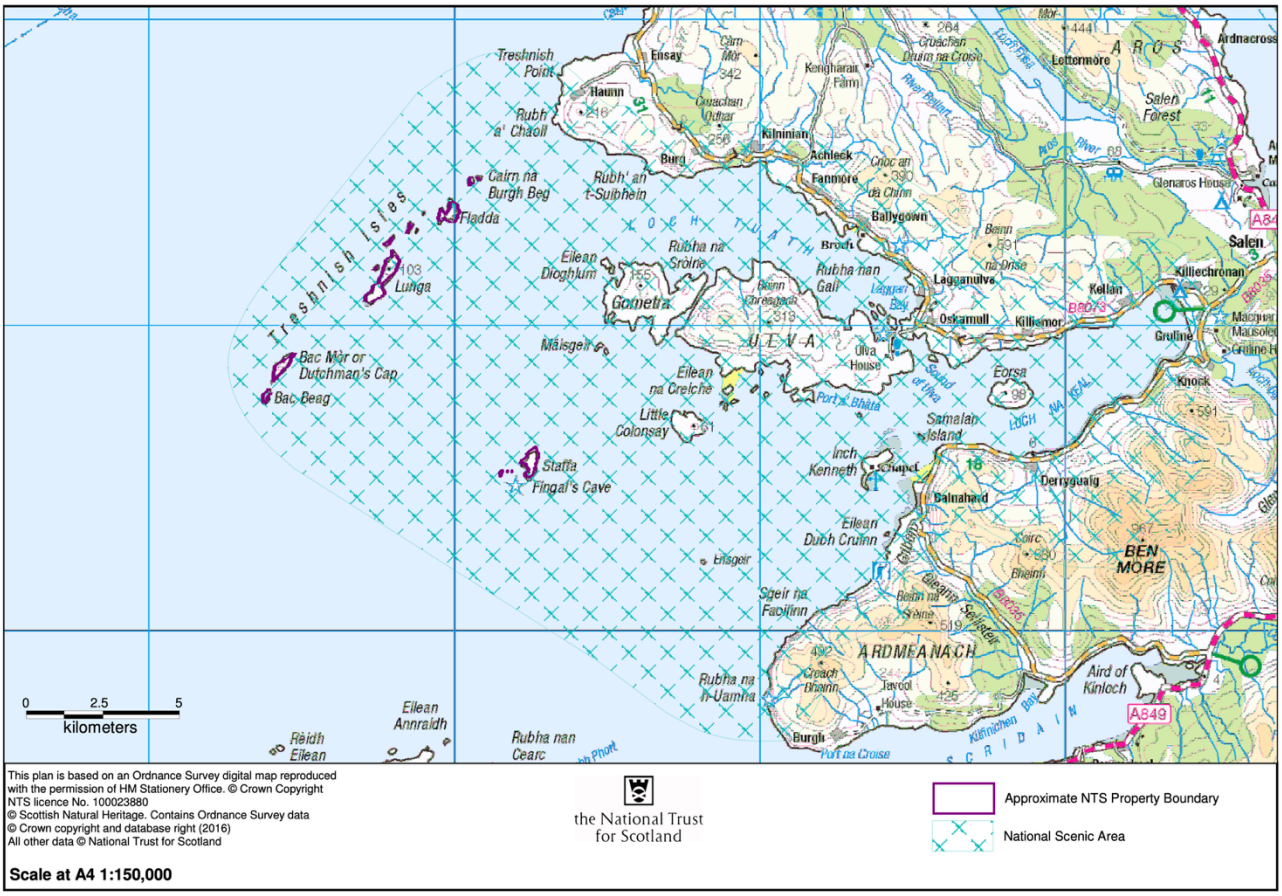
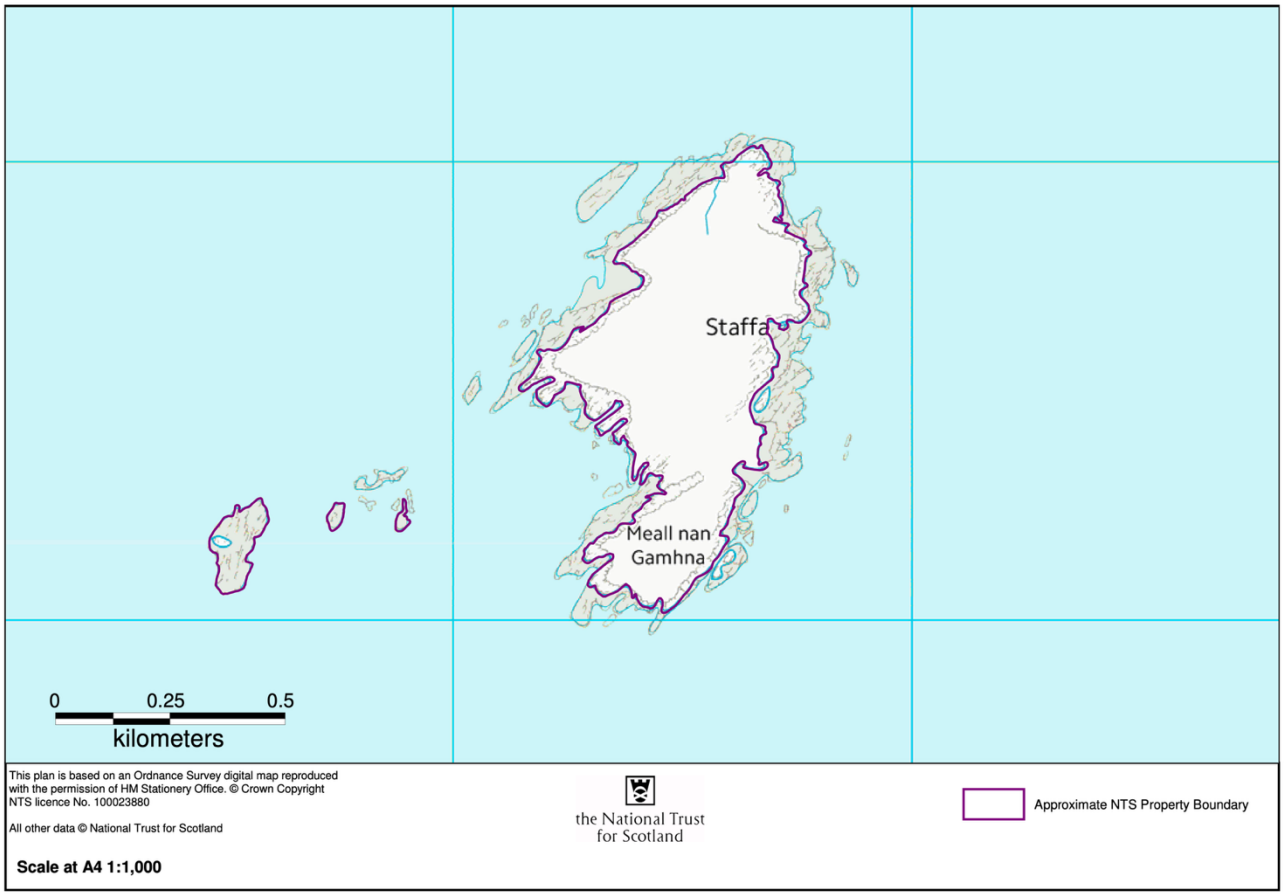




Maps showing locations of Staffa and the Treshnish Isles in the Inner Hebrides (L) and Scotland (R).



Map Showing NTS Property Boundaries for Staffa and the Treshnish Isles, as well as Loch na Keal National Scenic Area.



Map showing detail of Staffa. Not to be reproduced without permission.

Annex III: Participants

Almost all the participants directly involved in this assessment participated in semi-structured interviews. There was one informal focused group interview on Lunga which included some members of TIARG and some scientists working with the group.

Date	Primary affiliation/reason contacted	Initial focus for interview**
06/05/2025	NTS staff member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
06/05/2025	NTS staff member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
06/05/2025	Iona resident (fishing)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
08/05/2025	Iona resident (croft/farm)	Iona
08/05/2025	Iona resident (boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
08/05/2025	Iona resident (boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
08/05/2025	Iona resident (croft/farm)	Iona
10/05/2025	Ross of Mull resident (geologist)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
10/05/2025	Ross of Mull resident	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
15/06/2025	Iona resident	Iona
16/06/2025	Iona resident	Iona
16/06/2025	Iona resident (croft/farm/boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
17/06/2025	NTS staff member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
18/06/2025	Iona resident (boat tours/fishing)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
18/06/2025	Iona resident (boat tours/fishing)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
19/06/2025	Ross of Mull resident	Iona
19/06/2025	Iona resident (croft/farm)	Iona
19/06/2025	TIARG member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
20/06/2025	TIARG group interview (4 people)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
20/06/2025	Iona resident (boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
20/06/2025	Iona resident (boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
22 & 27/07/2025	TIARG member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
28/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
28/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (fishing)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
29/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (TIARG)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
29/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (TIARG)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
29/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (boat tours)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
29/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (NTS staff)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
31/07/2025	Northwest Mull resident (farm)	Staffa & Treshnish Isles
06/08/2025	TIARG /NTS staff member	Staffa & Treshnish Isles

**As noted in the Assessment Process section, people initially approached as part of the Staffa and Treshnish Isles assessment were routinely asked about Iona during an interview and vice versa.

Annex IV: Full Statement of Social Values

This Statement illustrates a range of values associated with the uninhabited properties of Staffa and the Treshnish Isles. The statement is structured thematically, exploring aspects of social value that crosscut both properties. Where there is evidence that the emphasis on particular social values varies between the properties this is highlighted in the text, as are any values that are distinctively associated with specific islands.

As at other properties across the Trust's, multiple values are present concurrently and seemingly contradictory values can co-exist between and within communities. Values are also dynamic and liable to change over time. This Statement should therefore be considered as indicative of the diversity of values for communities of locality, attachment and interest at the time of the research, rather than a definitive appraisal.

1. Place-based identities and attachments

1.1 Staffa and the Treshnish Isles are situated in a **complex web of social, economic and cultural relationships with surrounding island communities**, including in Iona, northwest, the Ross of Mull, Ulva, Gometra, Little Colonsay, Coll and Tiree. These relationships range from their place in people's everyday land/seascapes, to their important status as tourist destinations and sites of special interest informed by their geological formations, cultural histories, marine life, and seabird colonies. **These bring local communities into diverse relationships with the islands**, creating social values linked to place-based identities and attachments.

1.2 Whilst uninhabited in the present day, S&TI are part of the ***genius loci* or 'spirit of place'** for the inhabitants of surrounding islands. Even for those who have rarely or never visited them, they are prominent features of the land/seascapes off the west coast of Mull. On the one hand they are part of the everyday, taken for granted aspects of people's worlds, as reflected in one Bunessan resident's observation that "*they are just there*" (ethnographic fieldnotes). On the other, they are also recognised for the ways in which they shape the unique, distinctive character or atmosphere of a location. These in turn are associated with the generation of landscape and aesthetic values discussed below.

1.3 For some people, S&TI are also **part of their working lives and/or those of their forebears,** creating more intimate relationships and specific forms of identification and attachment. Crofters from Iona and northwest had **grazing leases** for various islands up until the late twentieth century. While the leases changed hands over time, they still created **lasting associations and attachments between specific individuals, families, crofts and estates**. These practices inform the identities of those involved, but also how others in surrounding communities regard the islands in terms of belonging, connecting them to specific families, such as Grants, Mackenzies, Rankins, and linking them to wider landholding entities, notably the Treshnish Estate in the case of the Treshnish Isles.

1.4 Those who work in **fishing**, especially creeling, have long made use of the rocky coastlines and underwater platforms of the islands for catching lobsters, crabs and prawns, developing an **intimate knowledge of their coastal zones** (see section 2). Historically, these relationships, and the identities associated with them, have been stronger between Staffa and the fishing communities of Iona, Bunessan, whereas the Treshnish Isles had closer relationships with northwest, in particular the settlement of Haunn on Treshnish Estate, but also Croig, Dervaig, Ulva Ferry and Tobermory. The proximity to the north end of Mull is seen as integral to this connection. Historically, the Treshnish Isles were not just an important location for lobster fishing, but also a source of bird eggs and winkles for the communities of northwest Mull.

1.5 There is a significant overlap between those who work with **tour boats** and those who work in fishing, whether switching between them day to day, seasonally, or at different times during the course of their lives. The historical relationships between **tours of Iona and Staffa,** dating to back to the steamboats (which continued until David MacBrayne's *TS King George V* was retired in 1974), **create especially strong connections between the two islands**, although the tenders rowed out from Gometra prior to the introduction of motor-powered ones. The relationship is so close that one Iona resident said that her husband who crews on a tour boat "*sees Staffa as part of Iona*" (SVNTS_CS5_INT_004). In contrast, tours to the Treshnish Isles are primarily associated with northwest Mull, specifically, Ulva Ferry, even though tours recently started from Iona and Tobermory. As with livestock grazing, the **identities of the families** involved, along with their boats and the routes they take, are **strongly associated with the islands in both their own eyes and those of others**. Sometimes there are even multi-generational connections stretching back to working the tender boats for George V.

1.6 The **sea is therefore the medium of connection rather than separation**, an arena in which complex webs of relationships are created between island communities, informing people's identities and sense of place. As one interviewee from Iona put it, "*We're all friends, it gives you a sense of connection, to people [in] Oban, Ulva Ferry, who I wouldn't know if it wasn't for the job*" (CS6_INT_013). The same person went on to explain that **"*the boats are part of it*", their biographies connecting people and places**, "*and the people themselves, they'll always remain connected to the boats*" (CS6_INT_013). Another Iona participant pointing to a photograph on the wall of his kitchen observed, "*that was one of the red boats*" (CS6_INT_010), as MacBrayne's tenders are known locally, reinforcing Iona's connection to Staffa.

1.7 The large volumes of **visitors from around the world** who visit the islands, especially Staffa, are also integral to these relationships and associated identities and attachments. The transient tourists in the summer season are the reason why local communities and their economies are so closely tied to the islands. But they also inform people's sense of place in surrounding island communities, **reinforcing both a sense of significance** and specialness of the area, whilst for some simultaneously threatening to overwhelm this with their sheer volume. The tourist infrastructures associated with them also bring a seasonal workforce, many of whom stay on in local communities, creating a **sense of openness to the world, cosmopolitanism even** (and see Robson and Jones 2026, *Social Values Assessment Report: Isle of Iona*).

1.8 In addition to transient tourists, the geological formations, cultural histories and ecologies of S&TI also draw **special interest groups**, such as archaeologists, geologists, speleologists, nature conservationists and ornithologists. These groups can develop intimate relationships with the islands, generating **social values in addition to the scientific and other special interest values** that draw them in the first place. This is particularly the case with activities that involve repeat visits and/or overnight stays, the logistics of which also establish longer term relationships with boat tour operators and others in surrounding island communities: "*you feel very familiar with those individuals and they know you. We all know what we're doing and helping each other*" (CS6_INT_015). Some members of these special interest groups have even settled on the surrounding islands like Mull and Iona in the longer term.

1.9 One group with particularly strong relationship to the Treshnish Islands is the **Treshnish Islands Auk Ringing Group (TIARG)**, which has an association extending back over 50 years, especially with Lunga where they do much of their work and establish their base camp. This **association** is characterised by considerable continuity over time in terms of its core members, among whom the annual expedition at the end of June has created a **strong sense of place attachment**. As one

longstanding TIARG member explained, "*even though I don't live locally, Treshnish is my local patch, you know, to me it's, it's another* ***home***" (CS6_INT_015).

1.10 The expedition conditions and the nature of the work also give rise to a particularly **strong sense of group identity**. As one TIARG member explained, you're all connected even though you're from different parts of the UK and "*you spend all your time together in the bothy, it's that closeness and camaraderie*" (CS6_INT_012). The **sense of connection extends to the birds**: "*it's just like you go onto the island and you've got the same familiar faces almost. I mean, it's not quite like that, but it feels like that, you know*" (CS6_INT_015).

2. *Values connected to everyday heritage*

2.1 Despite being places of otherness and wonder for many visitors, S&TI are also immersed in forms of **'everyday heritage'** associated with **ordinary, mundane and/or quotidian activities**, and the stories, images and material traces arising from them (Ireland et al. 2023). Integral to the place of the islands in people's working lives and family histories, forms of everyday heritage give rise to social values that play an important role in place-making, place-attachment, and sense of identity. Furthermore, **social values arising from 'everyday heritage' exist alongside, and sometimes in tension with, the extraordinary status of the islands**.

2.2 In a place like Iona, which has been intimately involved in island tourism for many decades, interviewees reflected on how they were **conscious of Staffa as children** because of all the people who came through to visit it. **Tour boats** moored in the bay, or departing and arriving heaving with excited tourists, became an **everyday feature of people's lives.** One Iona resident recalled that: "*I was very aware of Staffa, because as kids we spent a lot of time down on the beach and at the pier, so we were always seeing the Staffa boats coming in and out*" (CS6_INT_003). Like others, this interviewee had played in a **derelict Staffa tour boat** called Dunara as kids and this had also created a sense of connection to Staffa. Another older Iona resident in his late 70s recalled how as a child:

> ***[*Staffa*] was almost a fictional place****. The red [tender] boats went away out there every day in the summer to ferry the folk from the King George. […] I know if you got to the north end, you can actually see it, but it's far enough away that you can't see anything of any detail… But you knew this boat [the King George V steamer] and other boats were stopping there and hundreds, hundreds of people going ashore on this pretty small island. And you know, what is the scene?* ***The imagination starts to turn it over****, thinking there must be something that attracts them*" (CS6_INT_011).

2.3 For those whose families have connections to the sea – whether through fishing, tourism, sailing or other forms of leisure – S&TI therefore **feature in valued childhood and teenage activities** that inform people's identities and treasured memories. One interviewee recalled, by the time he was aged 10 or 11, he used to go out on the tour boats quite a lot, mainly on the Iolaire, "*just because I wanted to […] because I loved being on the boat and Staffa's a pretty amazing place as well, and also sometimes in the summer if it was a really big tide we used to go out and pick winkles out there*" (CS6_INT_003).

2.4 For some people living in the surrounding island communities, S&TI have also been destinations for **family outings and associated memories**, "*we did jollies out there you know, just family trips*" (CS6_INT_003). Those with their own boats would make day trips for picnics and even camp on the islands. For instance, one Iona resident (CS6_INT_004) talked of taking his family into MacKinnan's Cave on Staffa in a wee boat and how they went to Lunga with friends for a picnic and later to camp with the family amongst the ruins on Lunga. Even some TIARG members took

their families on day trips and camping expeditions to Lunga, creating family relationships: "*that makes it that much more special when you spend family time in such an extraordinary place, particularly at night*" (CS6_INT_019).

2.5 **Photographs are an important aspect of everyday heritage**, informing family and community identities. Alongside those of boats, photographs of family trips adorn the walls of homes and family photo albums, forming part of everyday heritage: "*there's photographs in the house of me at Staffa when I wasn't very old and actually also going to Lunga as well. Aye, just a wee curly headed monster. Maybe 5 or 6 or something like that going from the photograph. I have a vague recollection of it actually, but nothing more*" (CS6_INT_010). The same interviewee pointed to photographs of boats, the Dunara and the Wave, all of which had been used to take people to Staffa: "*that's the Wave. And she was an old sailboat that [X] used to [borrow to] take people to Staffa, because his fishing boat was smelly*".

2.6 By far the largest component of everyday heritage relating to the islands, however, stems from their place in **people's working lives**. For generations, communities on surrounding islands have been engaged in tourism, fishing and livestock grazing on and around S&TI; one Iona crofter describing the other islands as "*a feature of agricultural life*" (CS5_INT_001). This resulted in an **everyday familiarity with the islands rooted in the quotidian rhythms of particular activities**.

2.7 The **routines involved create specific kinds of relationships which are valued in different ways**. One interviewee explained that "*with the red [tender] boats there was no access to the top, so it was just a case of shovelling people in and people out again*" (CS6_INT_010). But when he had his own boat and was landing people "*It was good, I really enjoyed it… I like walking over it and looking at it*" (CS6_INT_010). A current skipper reflected with appreciation: "*I've spent a lot of my life sitting at Staffa or off Staffa like we are now [in one of the tour boats while the passengers explore the island]. And I realise I'm very lucky because some days it really doesn't feel like work*" (CS6_INT_013)

2.8 An important aspect of everyday heritage is the **intimate knowledge of the islands' features and topography** that accrues as part of people's working lives. Some of this is integral to the work people are doing whereas other aspects are more tangential, a result of regular visits combined with personal interests like photography. Those who have been involved in **landing people or animals on S&TI** have acquired a detailed knowledge of the coastal features of the islands, as well as the impact of tides, currents and forms of shelter available in difficult conditions: "*A lot of folk would land at the north end [in the past], [X] would land visitors there all the time, at high tide*" (CS6_INT_010); also, "*we put three bullocks on the Dutchman, seven on Fladda and we put a lot into Lunga, it was easy to get alongside Lunga, the Dutchman was difficult, you had to get the weather to get in there, and the Cairn na Burghs, easy to land on*" (CS6_INT_010).

2.9 Those involved in fishing have a detailed knowledge of coastal and underwater features around the islands and their significance for particular species, again derived from routine practice: "***a fisherman has [a] kind of intimate knowledge because he's shooting creels in the very places other people won't want to take a boat**, bit more dicey, shallow and rocky and the tide running*" (CS6_INT_004). Knowledge of where to fish for particular species, as well as where to get shelter, is also shared within the fishing community and to some degree transmitted between generations. The Treshnish Islands for instance were regarded as "*the place*" on the West Coast of Scotland for fishing a small, sweet variety of lobster but they also known for the shelter they offer which meant that people would come longer distances, e.g. from Mallaig and Orkney.

2.10 This extract from an interview with a retired fisherman from Mull perfectly captures the **connections between forms of working knowledge, oral tradition and everyday heritage**:

You could shelter either side [east or west], and you could get shelter inside the Treshnish Islands, all the rocks and reefs meant you could dodge about [to get shelter in bad weather]. […] Lunga wasn't a great place to stay over, but Fladda, ***once you got inside the [natural, tidal] harbour at Fladda, it was a really safe place […] So one family, the Robertsons, they stayed there with their boat, I believe the remains of it are still lying in Ulva****. And I heard that they had another small boat that they could drag from one side of the island to the other if there was a lot of wind on one side, because Fladda has this narrow part across the centre. So they'd figured it out, quite smart. They were there on the spot and could get their creels in the water first* (CS6_INT_016).

2.11 The annual **TIARG expeditions have also produced a rich body of everyday heritage**, albeit highly specific to the work they do and the expedition camp on Lunga. Bird ringing involves skilled, focused work, creating a **deep familiarity with specific aspects of the slopes and cliffs** around the coast of Lunga where the birds nest. TIARG also do a complete seabird census of the island every year, creating **connections between specific people and the sectors they routinely cover** for the census, even leading to toponyms like "Simon's Gully" (CS6_INT_015).

2.12 TIARG's **expedition camp on Lunga itself is particularly important in terms of social values**. Located in and around the ruined remains of a settlement abandoned in the 1850s, the best-preserved house is covered with a tarpaulin and re-used for communal activities, including cooking and eating. This "*bothy*" has come to embody the camaraderie of the camp, the shared memories and conversations that define the group. Year after year, other areas of the village are re-used for specific things. For instance, some longstanding members regularly pitch their tents within the walls of the same buildings. The historic well is reused and maintained. Then there is "*what we call 'The Cave' […]. I don't know whether you were shown it, but it's where we store things*" (CS6_INT_015).

2.13 **For TIARG members, everyday heritage is also highly seasonal**, coinciding with their annual expedition in late June. Regular members of the group note that "*if you go at another time it's like a different place*" but if you go in June the vegetation is the same and "*you've got your birds in the same places*" (CS6_INT_018). Key aspects of the work they do have also been impacted by longer term shifts, such as the decision to stop grazing livestock on the islands: "*So just about a year or two before I joined [in the early 1990s], grazing stopped and that's then had the consequence on the how the habitats have changed*" (CS6_INT_015). Long-term members comment on how this has led to changes in plant life, butterfly species and terrestrial birds, and while you've "*still got the old familiar features*" (CS6_INT_018), knowing where these are when they are covered in dense vegetation depends on the intimate knowledge created by repeated activities such as the annual bird census.

2.14 The **modifications and infrastructures created by people** to support various working practices are also an important aspect of everyday heritage of the islands, producing a sense of attachment and belonging linked to specific forms of care (see section 6). These range from reuse of pre-existing structures, such as the ruined houses on Lunga that are used by TIARG for their base camp, to the construction of stairs, handrails and landing infrastructures on Staffa: "*The* ***original stairs*** *[to get up the cliff to the top of Staffa]* ***would be a ship's ladder****, you know* ***they were third hand by the time*** *they were onto that, because they were up by the north end of Staffa originally, for folk to get up there, … aye they took them from there and put them down the other end*" (CS6_INT_010)

2.15 This **reuse of materials and structures carries forwards earlier forms of everyday heritage,** creating forms of connection and continuity through the social lives of things like a ship's ladder. Buildings in particular create feelings of shared experience extending to earlier occupants and their daily lives. "*See, I would say to you 'the boat shed along there', well you would talk about the*

[NTS] shelter. Well that originally was built to house those boats that are in that photograph, the [tender] boats of Iona and Staffa" (CS6_INT_010).

2.16 **Colloquial names are also part of everyday heritage** for those who work on and around them. Among fishermen the Cairn na Burghs are known as the north islands and Bac Mòr is popularly known as the Dutchman's Cap. Specific rocks and other features also have **informal names creating a sense of community and connection to place amongst those who use and understand them**, as recounted by this fisherman:

"***People had their own local names****, the rock on the entrance to Lunga, people call that the submarine rock […] it just looks like a submarine, so it's not an old name [laughs], they'll just say 'oh I shot the creels round the sub', erm and then there's a kidney shaped rock at the back of Lunga, everyone knew where it was, what it was. Errm… yeah****, the older guys would have had Gaelic names for everything*** *and would have known every single bit of it, every rock would have had a name because it was their world*" (CS6_INT_016).

2.17 The **weather is also important** in shaping daily activities and the values associated with them (for values connecting weather to sensory experience see section 5). In an everyday sense the weather "*completely dictates everything*" (CS6_INT_004), and "*you have to be quite flexible, because there's nothing else to do if the weather is bad, you just have what you have*" (CS6_FG1_001). Whilst inevitably creating frustrations, this impact of the weather is also valued, "***I enjoy*** that ***it is completely unpredictable, and I like being challenged by it****, being completely on our own here and having to work out practical things*" (CS6_INT_018). **Changing technologies are also important** in this regard, shaping daily practices, "*when we first came we had no mobile phones, no batteries to keep our radios charged, so you had to bring clunky old radios for getting the shipping forecast […] So you never knew when the boat was going to come in,* ***you never knew whether you were going to get off****, so in terms of living here [in the expedition camp] it was very different experience*" (CS6_FG1_002).

3. Storied islands: social memory and oral history

3.1 Oral histories connected to S&TI tend to be rooted in this everyday heritage, in one way or another. **Stories of specific characters and incidents** are retold, transmitted and shared beyond those who were immediately involved, engendering broader forms of social memory (evident in some of the quotes in the previous section). They also **tie the islands into specific connections with communities** on the surrounding islands, maintaining forms of relatedness and identification, despite the demise of certain kinds of everyday heritage practice, such as grazing livestock or collecting winkles.

3.2 Certain individuals, usually older members of communities with multi-generational ties, are singled out as **authoritative storytellers**. "[X] would know. He's got a memory that's just, you know, he doesn't forget these things […] It's almost... I described it before as he's got, I think, **a generational memory**. He must have been paying particular attention when he was a wee boy listening to the old folks talking […] because he can tell you now what was happening in the 1930s as if he had been there" (CS6_INT_016). And in northwest Mull, the late 'Tommy of Haunn' on Treshnish Peninsula is often referenced as a source for people's "*sense of the past*" because "*he could talk about place names and things… the kind of things that are not on the map*" (CS6_INT_022). Another person, 'Pedro the fisherman', now deceased, was also attributed this sort of intimate knowledge of place: "*If you took him along the track to Haunn, he had a name for all the big rocks. Because it was his place. 'This is where I live, I pass this thing every day in my life. This is what I call it.' And it would all have significance"* (CS6_INT_017).

3.3 Stories associated with **getting animals on and off** the Treshnish Islands and Staffa are particularly prevalent in Iona, where the most recent rental was held by a local crofter, though they also link to the Treshnish Estate as "*the deal was that we'd put her [Lady Rankin's] hoggs on and then we could put our own on, as well as cattle*" (CS6_INT_010). Many of the stories concern the practicalities and logistics of getting animals on and off the islands, of the relative difficulties of landing and when and where to go about it. "*It was difficult. Even with the sheep. We had to take lots of gates out and put them round the boat. Even on Lunga, and that has a really good place to land that you can get alongside. […] But not the Duchman's Cap, and you could only go there when there was no Atlantic Swell because it's just useless, you had to pick your days, really quiet days"* (CS6_INT_008).

3.4 Certain events have become **fabled tales, told and retold in multiple ways**. One of these is the tale of a helicopter being coopted into lifting a bull off Dutchman's Cap. According to one person who was involved first hand, the bull had got trapped on a ledge. They had gone down to try to get a rope on it, "*I was terrified for my life*", but it still wasn't possible to get it up. So, they asked the helicopter pilot who was working on a job at the Hurta Lighthouse at the time, to help "*and all he did with the ropes was lift the beast up and put him on the top*." (CS6_INT_008). Yet in transmission the story takes on many forms, including that this was the 'feral bullock' that they couldn't catch to take off the island, which was eventually flown all the way to Iona after it had died (CS6_INT_013).

3.5 There is also a strong sense of the **camaraderie and the social dimensions of these expeditions**, of how they roped in other people, family and friends and someone with a boat, to give a hand. Recalling how things used to be, one retired fisherman mused over how people would see it as an adventure: "***It'll be good fun**. We'll take some whiskey with us and some sandwiches and the family might go...*" (CS6_INT_017). Another who was involved personally: "***It was just a bit of a day out. You didn't need to be paid for it. It was just a bloody good laugh**. There'd be a case of beer and a bottle of whisky or whatever and hanging about some at the end of it*" (CS6_INT_011). Occasionally women and kids would go along too, for picnics.

3.6 Another popular story that has **entered wider social memory in multiple forms** amongst those who work on/around the islands, focuses on the "*mad German teacher*" (CS6_INT_013), Klaus Glimm (also said to be half Norwegian) (CS6_INT_008), who used to bring 6th form students to Lunga, and later to Fladda, for survival training. Some say that Lunga proved too easy, because the tourists gave the children sandwiches, others that they built up the ruins of the houses to stay in (CS6_INT_010), or ate seabird eggs or gull chicks (CS6_INT_015), or used abandoned lobster pots from the shore (CS6_INT_013). Longstanding TIARG members talk about how some of their group encountered them out of the blue on Fladda, when they went over to do a census, and how they had suspicions the children had eaten the first Great Skua chick born on Fladda for many years, "*the children described coming across this big brown fluffy chick which fit the description of a Skua chick and they'd eaten that!*" (CS6_INT_015). Those who work on the tour boats recall how they were commissioned to transport them, and how they took sandwiches and crisps when they went to pick them up and how they would charge down to the boat "*half starving*" (CS6_INT_013).

3.7 The significance of these stories and the ways they are shared is that they highlight forms of social memory that inform communal identities, whilst also acting as **forms of social capital that simultaneously bind and differentiate**. Knowing iconic stories like those above is something that bonds those with more intimate connections to S&TI and distinguishes them from others in surrounding island communities. **Storytelling therefore generates social values in terms of informing people's identities and relationships, but it is also a vital ingredient in the**

'crack'/'craic', a culturally specific form of gossip, fun, and lively conversation that is highly valued socially. **Unsurprisingly then, humour is also a prominent ingredient** as in this account:

"*There was Shetland sheep out there […] and one ram that hadn't been caught in a least two years. On the Dutchman. And I got hold of the ram […] and managed to get astride it, but […] I couldn't get purchase on the ground [laughing], and it took off with me […] and I managed to take it down just before we reached the edge of the bloody cliff [more laughter]. So there were quite a lot of high jinks out there*." (CS6_INT_011).

3.8 **TIARG have their own rich tapestry of oral history** to do with the origins of the group, and its formation and development over the course of 4-5 decades. There is a focus on key **personalities and their influence** on the directions the organisation has taken. Some people had started going casually in the 1970s and "*there were several individuals who were basically a regular team*". The late, Simon Walker, is seen as a key figure and leader, who "*instigated annual one-week expeditions to the Treshnish Isles by TIARG*" from the early 1990s. The group was in existence before then, "*but not on a regular basis in terms of annual visits. And he was very keen to make it a ringing and observational monitoring [expedition], basically exactly what the BTO [British Trust for Ornithology] wants*" (CS6_INT_015).

3.9 For members of the group, the **landscape and ruined village of Lunga are imbued with social memory** and simultaneously act as mnemonic devices. There are stories about specific incidents, someone getting trapped by the tide on "Castle Island" (Sgeir a' Chaisteil, meaning the castle skerry) and having to return in the dark, and landscape features and ruined houses taking on associations with specific individuals. "The bothy" acts as an arena for sharing stories over meals and a drink, with various incidents and personalities brought to life and passed on to newer members and associates. There is even a memorial stone to the late Simon Walker, which sits above the village on Lunga, made from "*a piece of Ross of Mull granite […] which we found on Fladda and then took to England and […] had it polished and engraved*" (CS6_FG1_002).

3.10 While there are some in TIARG who have vague sense of connection with the people who lived in the Lunga houses up until the 1850s, it is the tradition of **ornithologists and naturalists** associated with the Treshnish Islands that they feel greatest affinity with. These include Seton Maxwell, John Maxwell and Niall Rankin. However, it is the famous ornithologist and conservationist, Fraser Darling, who camped on Lunga with his family for several months in 1937, who receives the most attention in terms of **sense of tradition** and associated social values. For one TIARG member who has stayed on the island with his own family: "*You can get totally romantic about this, but it's just like when Fraser Darling was there, you know. We're camping literally just around the corner from where Fraser Darling and his family camped*" (CS6_INT_018).

3.11 In the Treshnish area of northwest Mull, there is also an awareness of Darling's association with the Treshnish Islands, but Niall and Lady Jean Rankin who purchased them around the start of World War II, along with the Treshnish Estate in northwest Mull, also feature prominently. For instance, one local resident explained that: "*Down below the house here, there's a slip that they've blasted into the rock, which I think was probably done before the Rankins came. I'm not quite sure, but they had a winch to bring a boat in, and Rankin had a boat called the Storm Petrel. Obviously, it's not kind of our story, but it feels like it's embedded in the place and it's a special place because it feels like you go down there and you've got this channel that goes out through the rocks and it's like it's taking you to new places*" (CS6_INT_022). One of those places, they feel, is the Treshnish Isles illustrating again the way in which the remains of physical infrastructures and boats act as memory 'props' (or mnemonics) maintaining relationships between the islands and surrounding communities.

3.12 Vaguer, fragmented stories about earlier times are also evident: "*I think years ago, they used to sail out from Iona and take the mast off and put the mast across [to Harp Rock] to go and get bird eggs. I have no date on when this happened, but there was a tragedy and the mast broke and people, lives were lost yeah. […] But I have no date for that, […] but it must have been after people lived [on Lunga] that [people] were going out from Iona*" (CS6_INT_013). These extend the webs of connections between the lives and livelihoods of surrounding communities and the islands temporally as well as spatially. "*It's a romantic thing, but the older folk […] talked about the past as though it was just yesterday […] And I loved that. I loved that sense of, you know, that connection with everything in the place and the people in the place*" (CS6_INT_017).

3.13 Whilst the stories surrounding S&TI create a web of connections with communities on surrounding islands, many commented on how the number of people who know these stories is declining. Families that have lived on surrounding islands for generations are seen to hold the knowledge, "*as do some people who moved here 30-40 years ago and been told these stories because of the jobs they did and the people they knew, but the number of people who have the stories first hand from the past is really dwindling now*" (CS6_INT_022). The influence of changing livelihoods is hinted at here and reinforced by one retired fisherman, who reflected with a sense of loss about the decline of people who understand the significance of these stories: "*I think that it may not be gone entirely, but I think it's largely gone because they don't need the bird eggs. They don't need the winkles. They don't need the rabbits. […] They don't need that adventure of the day […]. So, yeah, … when they go now, they go on the tourist boat, or they go for a day to look at the birds"* (CS6_INT_017).

4. Land/seascape values and nature

4.1 S&TI are **distinctive landmarks** in the southern part of the Inner Hebrides, sitting off western Mull with Coll and Tiree to the west and Iona to the south. For people who live on these surrounding islands, they are **valued for their striking features, the visual interest they create, and the perspectives they offer;** "It's really important to have places like that on the horizon that aren't immediately accessible but will give you a different perspective" (CS5_INT_011). Some islands and features loom especially large in terms of people's consciousness: the Dutchman's Cap's from Iona and the Ross of Mull, Staffa's Great Face on approach in a boat, the fortifications and ruined buildings on the Cairn na Burghs from the Treshnish Peninsula in northwest Mull.

4.2 For surrounding island communities, S&TI are part of people's **everyday landscapes and seascapes** from their homes or as they go about their lives. "*The Treshnish Isles from Bunessan, they're just the backdrop of my view. […] all the silhouettes on the horizon, that's what you can see from Bunessan. So, that's been my view of them, you know,* ***they've been the backdrop to my daily goings on****. They're a friendly presence on the horizon*" (CS6_INT_009). Reflecting on their place in their everyday working lives, one resident in northwest said, *"It's like the old tree that you pass regularly as part of your day-to-day activities. These things are important. It's not that they would, because they are islands, but I really wouldn't want them to disappear"* (CS6_INT_022).

4.3 For others their presence leaves a stronger expression in terms of sense of place. "*Staffa and the Treshnish, they're completely familiar things* ***absolutely fixed in your mind on the horizon***" (CS6_INT_006). From Treshnish Peninsula in northwest, "*they are so striking, sometimes in winter with snow on them. So changeable*" (CS6_INT_022). From southwest Mull and Iona likewise, as on Iona resident explained:

If you stand on the top of Dun I [on Iona] and you look around at that kind of vista that you've got, of the Burg and Ben Mor, then out to Staffa and then when you get out to Treshnish, you've got the Dutchman's Cap, which is so sort of iconic and, you know, it's so distinctive. So, you know,

people, I think love that whole view you've got […] it must be one, well, ***I think it's one of the greatest views there are, you know, it's pretty amazing****.* (CS6_INT_003)

4.4 Many also **value how these expansive views of the islands change** at different times of the day and with different kinds of weather. "*This morning I woke up at 4 a.m. [on Lunga] and I caught this* ***amazing sunrise over the islands*** *over there and I was just completely blown away by it*" (CS6_INT_012). And another person extolled: "***I love seeing a gale out there*** *because of the atmosphere. […] I enjoy seeing that and seeing the sea conditions and seeing the light conditions change.*" (CS6_INT_015). Another frequently noted characteristic, of the Treshnish Islands in particular, is how they **look so different from the different orientations** offered from boats and surrounding islands, **creating an even more varied and visually captivating seascape**.

4.5 Within these largescale vistas, the islands themselves are also valued as continuously changing, **lively elements in the landscape**. As one Bunessan resident observed "*they are just there…, but* ***the Dutchman's Cap, it's always changing****,* ***sometimes its floating****, sometimes it's hardly there*". These qualities are also noted in casual conversations, as recounted by a husband and wife from Mull reflecting on the conversation they had in the pub the day before:

CS6_INT_006: *I said [to him] do you mean the Fata Morgana? So, there's this kind of atmospheric effect where* ***it's a bit like a mirage, but things get distorted*** *and they kind of start to float above the horizon like flying saucers and the Treshnish Islands in particular do that a lot and* ***they're just so incredibly strange****.*

CS6_INT_007: ***It's very affecting*** *because you were so familiar with it and then when you see it change like that, it's, it's quite unsettling to see that because it's not how you expect it to be.*

4.6 The **diversity and distinctiveness of individual Treshnish Islands** is also significant and a regular source of commentary amongst those who live and work around them: "***They have very distinctive shapes****"* but *"while they have separate identities, they have [also] got a strong link together*" (CS5_INT_006). "*It's* ***the variety****, isn't it?"* (CS6_INT_007). "*The little kind of cubed flat ones, and you know, they're just, and Bac Mòr, Dutchman's Cap, is like such a bonkers island, you know*" (CS6_INT_006). Whilst a resident of the Ross, who is familiar with the individual Treshnish Islands up close as part of their work, explains that:

[T]hey are all similar geology, but what really struck me by surprise when visiting them was ***how different they feel****. So, like the Little Dutchman is quite low lying and it's got a really strong maritime influence, so there are lots of plants adapted to sea spray […] and it's not grass it's just rock with plants popping up and birds nesting. But if you go on Dutchman that hill is like a grassy, flower spangled, inland slope. It feels totally different. […] And Fladda's got trees [in the low-lying section] and brambles … yeah, amazing*" (CS6_INT_009).

4.7 The **aesthetic qualities of the individual islands** are also valued. One Iona resident observed that: "*It's a beautiful place. There's a quote somebody made about Lunga, 'it's a jewel on a peacock sea', or something like that, and that's still true on a beautiful day. It's not unique, there are other places like that in the Hebrides and elsewhere, but* ***it is spectacular and beautiful*** *and I'd be surprised if there are many folk who go out who don't benefit from the experience*" (CS6_INT_004). Like others, when turning their attention to Staffa they highlighted the **uniqueness of the geological formations**: "***it is spectacular****, the rocks are very unusual and [the basalt columns] are all grouped together in a way that [you don't find in other places], but the way they are at Staffa, alongside these* ***amazing caves****, and the effects of the swell […]* ***So it is special***" (CS6_INT_004).

4.8 As these quotes highlight, whatever their distinctive features, **relationships with the sea**, and indeed with nature, are integral to the landscape values associated with the islands. As this resident of the Ross of Mull explains, reflecting on Staffa: "*You know, it's not just the island, which is amazing. The fact that it is an island means* ***it's different from just finding a [columnar basalt] cliff face along a river in land or something like that. Because it's in this blue sea****, and it has these amazing islands all around it and it has the mountains of Mull […]. And then there are puffins, and there are birds, you know […] and it's kind of uninhabited, so it has a kind of specialness*" (CS6_INT_007).

4.9 For many, the **absence of human habitation** and the location of the islands is also an important aspect of the social values associated with the islands. "*As you walk to the north end [of Iona] the backdrop is this great majesty […] of the Burg and going out to Staffa and the islands out there and you stand in the midst of that and* ***you feel quite sort of small and humbled*** *in a way, because* ***nature is clearly in control here***" (CS5_INT_005). Staffa and the Treshnish Islands are valued for the "***raw, powerful experience of 'nature***" (CS6_INT_002) that they offer, unmediated even. "*Here it's all real,* ***it's not an engineered place*** *that is designed specifically for targeting specific species, it's just here*", and "***it's unmediated****, and you never know what's going to happen*" (CS6_INT_012).

4.10 The inconsistencies and tensions inherent in these ideas of an unmediated experience of nature are felt by many in different ways. For some the archaeological remains and ruined structures are powerful reminders that these have been peopled places for centuries, millennia even. Those whose livelihoods and those of their families create more everyday relationships are aware of the ways in which the flora and fauna were influenced by use of the islands for grazing livestock, and the changes that have taken place since this was stopped. As one long-standing TIARG member explained, "*just about a year or two before I joined, grazing stopped and that's then had the consequence on the how the habitats have changed*" (CS6_INT_015). Even the experience of the sea bird colonies on Staffa and Lunga are mediated by the presence of lots of visitors: "*It's one of the most accessible sea bird islands in the UK, and it's got some of the most amenable seabirds because they are used to lots of people, and it has many different species, if you're a seabird geek*." (CS6_FG1_002)

5. *Extra-ordinary places: values relating to sensory and affective experiences*

5.1 For some, the ways in which S&TI intersect with everyday activities can counter their affective power, "*well if you're seeing these things all the time you get blasé about them don't you?*" (CS6_INT_010). However, for many who live and work in their vicinity they **maintain their extra-ordinariness, capable of invoking wonder for surrounding communities.** "*I was definitely inspired by it [Staffa],* ***really impressive*** (CS6_INT_004), "*I thought the cave was spectacular […] there is an atmosphere about it*" (CS6_INT_010) and "*the Treshnish Islands [long pause] are* ***just extraordinary****, there's nothing like them anywhere*" (CS6_INT_006).

5.2 As this fisherman explains, there are days when the conditions will still generate this **sense of awe even for those whose working lives involve routine interaction**:

> *I'm out there [near Staffa], you know, once or twice a week now. […] But it's still, you look at it and goodness you know, the great face is just a* ***phenomenal piece of geology****. […] It's just incredible,* ***an incredible place****. It still kind of makes me go, wow, you know. Yeah, it really honestly does. Not every day, but days where it's basically a sunny day with a big swell, you still look at it and go,* ***wow****.* (CS6_INT_003)

5.3 **Weather conditions are an integral** in perpetuating a sense of wonder for those whose who work around the islands. For some, this connects to the **expansive seascapes** (see 4.4 above), whereas for others it is about the way it **changes the experience of the islands** themselves. Reflecting on his experience of Staffa, a regular crew member for a boat tour operator explains:

We're out there on days where it is glassy calm and you can you can kind of see the island reflected on the surface of the sea. Or in gales where there's a big, and it's grey and kind of dark as well, and there's big waves coming in and crashing to the top of the columns, you know you get bits of spray way up. And then if you get a similar day, where it's sunny and bright, then ***the colours are amazing*** (CS6_INT_005).

5.4 The **weather also creates a sense of connection and affinity** for some, with the islands and their other inhabitants. For instance, one longstanding member of TIARG explained that "*you're seeing the whole. You're not just seeing a sunny island [Lunga].* ***You're seeing what the birds totally experience and what the island experiences****. Everything on the island and you. So, you see it in its different facets. […] You've got a far closer affinity to the island because of that.*"

5.5 In terms of sensory experience at Staffa, the primary locus is its geological formations, which are experienced as **timeless and unchanging, but simultaneously dynamic**. Those with an intimate everyday knowledge observe physical transformations, pointing out lighter grey sections on the columns of columnar basalt where other columns have been lost in powerful storms. But the dynamic ways in which **Staffa's Great Face shows itself in different and striking ways** as a result of changing light and atmospheric conditions are a more potent influence on people's experiences; the striking contrast in bright sunshine, the pounding of the sea in a big swell, the lichens and flowers on the columns and upper cap that change with the seasons. *"****Staffa is an incredible place, it's never the same twice****, even with the tide moving up and down it's different, the swell is different, the wind's different, the people are different*" (CS6_INT_013).

5.6 **Colour is also an important aspect of the affective qualities of Staffa.** Contemplating the Great Face one long-standing crew member on the tour boats observed: "*There's lichen that grows up towards the top [of the columns], that yellowy lichen and there's stuff which is a kind of pale greeny colour […]. At the moment, there are sea pinks just coming out, so bursts of pink around. You've got turquoise in the water you know […] and I suppose white spray. So, there's* ***a whole lot of colour in the scene that you might not imagine*** *if you're not thinking about it,* ***you just think it's a big lump of black rock, but you know there's much more to than that***" (CS6_INT_005)

5.7 The **sensory qualities of the caves**, especially Fingal's cave, are also significant for many; the architecture, the light, and especially the acoustics. "*The acoustics in there are, you know, it's magic. So just thinking of it, it's just like, yeah,* ***constant fractal points of kind of sound and light moving***" (CS6_INT_016) and "*the light, that's one of the things I love in there, the patterns of light in the water, reflecting against the vertical columns pointing down and away*" (CS6_INT_016). The **acoustic effects** of Fingal's Cave and other caves are also a source of comment: "*There's one around the north side called the Gunshot Cave, which makes the noise like a gunshot, but if the tide's right with the White Horse Cave it makes the same sort of noise, you get this boom, you know a big boom. It's, you know****, there's some pretty amazing sounds out there too, as well as sights***" (CS6_INT_003).

5.8 The **Treshnish Islands** are also recognised for their beauty (see previous section), but it is the birdlife that is most prominent in terms of **sensory experiences**. One of the tour boat skippers commenting on the difference between Lunga and Staffa observed: "*It's just such a wonderful place, [but] it's mostly about the birdlife. You can come to Staffa out of season and it's still got the columns and it's still got the cave […]. But once the birds leave, Lunga is just an island, just a rock*

really, but ***when the birds are there it's just such a phenomenal place***" (CS6_INT_013). And a member of TIARG explains how they are: "***completely blown away by it****… erm there is* ***nowhere else you can get that close to these birds****, I mean I have a storm petrel breeding next to my tent […] It's a* ***massive privilege*** *to get to come here and do this and I'm hooked, I want to keep coming back forever*" (CS6_INT_012).

5.9 The **overwhelming impression of the birds on almost every aspect of the senses** in the nesting season also comes across repeatedly, especially in respect to Lunga. For an ornithologist working on Lunga for the second time: "*Walking along and coming over the hill and seeing all the guillemots, I won't top that for the rest of the year, it's pretty incredible, a pretty significant sensory experience, yeah* ***all the senses are engaged, it's amazing***." (CS6_FG1_001). While for a longstanding TIARG member the impact of the experience remains despite many repeat visits: "*it doesn't pall with time, I've walked that path hundreds, maybe a thousand times, and* ***I never lose that sense of wonder when I see those guillemots****, never*" (CS6_FG1_002).

5.10 The **noise and the smell** created by the sheer numbers of birds stand out as particularly overwhelming: "*You walk round a corner and a shag is honking at you and the smell…*" (CS6_FG1_001). An Iona resident whose life has been closely connected to the sea and a keen kayaker commented on one overnight trip that "*it was just absolutely …* ***birds everywhere […] it really was staggering****, I mean the puffins, the noise of the guillemots at night*" (CS6_INT_004). And for one of the boat skipper's: "***Harp Rock, it's like a massive skyscraper*** *with people living cheek by cheek, and* ***the noise and the smell, it just really is amazing****…*" (CS6_INT_013).

5.11 Another important component in the affective experience of S&TI is **the journey** required to get to them. "*The fact that they are hard to get to is part of the impression they make. It wouldn't be the same if it was easy – if there was a bridge or something*" (CS6_INT_004). The difficulties created by the weather are also valued in this regard, "*it isn't always easy*" and "*the fact that we can't just do everything when we want isn't necessarily a bad thing*" (CS6_INT_004). Some of those who work on and around the islands also emphasise the value of the journey for the tourist/visitor experience as they see it; not merely that this inspires a sense of wildness and remoteness, but that making the journey and experiencing what's there is important in terms of **connecting to nature and personal transformation** "*especially if it's a bit of a rough day […] if it's a bit more challenging*" (CS6_INT_002).

5.12 Specific trips to the islands are also valued in terms of personal transformation by some of the residents of surrounding islands: "***it was a fantastic transformative trip for me****. […] My early experience of those islands were really key at that time… I just knew that this was how I wanted to spend more of my time whether through work or leisure"* (CS6_INT_004). For TIARG members too, there's a sense that spending time in Lunga can make you into a different kind of person; one longstanding member reflecting on the transformation he sees in a friend on the island, *"[it's] like a breath of fresh air. He's a different person here*." (CS6_INT_012).

6. Ownership, sustainability and care

6.1 The ways in which the islands are linked to **people's lives and livelihoods create forms of attachment and rights for some**, regardless of legal ownership. As discussed earlier, the identities of the families involved in the grazing rentals and the tour boats become strongly associated with the islands. For fishermen too, the relationship between certain boats and the sea surrounding particular islands is informally recognised, particularly amongst those involved in creeling, for instance, "*Staffa is quite limited [and] a boat from Ulva already had creels out […] so there's no much point in me putting stuff out there because we'll just all be running over the same ground*" (CS6_INT_003)

6.2 **Conflicts surrounding forms of territoriality and claims to resources** are also part of social memory. One retired fisherman observed that "***the place was quite competitive**, so this is where some of the conflicts came in*" (CS6_INT_017). He went on to recount a particular dispute between the MacDougalls of Haunn and the Robertsons of Tobermory after the latter established their summer fishing base on Fladda, encroaching on areas that the MacDougall's had fished for some time from Haunn Port. "*I can't remember the exact story, but one of the Robertsons, I think, took a shot at one of the MacDougalls and he wasn't in the great state afterwards. […] But, you know, those things happened, and especially in those days, life was a bit cheaper*" (CS6_INT_017).

6.3 The **infrastructures** associated with landing and access to Staffa, such as the jetty, the steps and the railings, **are also associated with feelings of attachment and ownership** for some. Across generations these have been sites of **informal practices of maintenance and care** which have reinforced relationships to specific families. One interviewee noted that his father's name was inscribed in concrete steps he had helped to build, while another pointed out that "*the steps would start to sag so we were putting braces in below to provide support*" (CS6_INT_010). Furthermore, the forms of everyday heritage resulting from such practices (see section 2) can become sites of tension surrounding infrastructural projects: *"[Someone] decided to take away the steps between the bottom path and the top path. And they started to break them away, but the concrete was that hard they couldn't get it, so today it's neither one thing nor the other.* ***It's sacrilege, it should never have been allowed, because it's part of the history of Staffa those steps****.*" (CS6_INT_010)

6.4 Even those whose working lives are unrelated to S&TI express forms of **concern rooted in attachment**. For instance, one crofter from Iona explained that "*inevitably when they are* ***part of your scenescape you become possessive of them. I do worry about them****, because of the numbers [of visitors]*". And for the current owners of Treshnish Farm (formerly Estate) there is a strong sense of the islands as part of their landscape, "*because there was that historic connection or relationship, you know, you just, you see it in the back of your mind, you know, the Treshnish Isles are there*" (CS6_INT_022).

6.5 A **sense of ownership or at least attribution also imbues stories** associated with the islands. Regularly, in recounting them, people attribute their sources: *"[X] tells this story and he got it from his father*" (CS6_INT_013), or "*he must have got them [stories] spending time at his uncle's listening to the old folks talking*" (CS6_INT_011). In this way **stories are embedded in social relationships** and storytelling serves to reproduce and expand t**hese**, but this can also create **tensions around who uses them and how**. "*It's like photographs, you can steal souls,* ***you can steal stories*** *[…] Oral storytelling, it's about things we know about [….] things we share and all the funny stories, but as soon as you put it into a brochure you've somehow betrayed it, because it [becomes] an interesting anecdote rather than something that the owners know about*" (CS5_INT_012).

6.6 For members of **TIARG**, there are **specific forms of attachment and care generated by their annual expedition** and the work they do with the birds. Within the group, different people become associated with particular areas: "*when I started doing this the '****patchness****' was stronger, a kind of territoriality sounds mean, but* ***it is a kind of territoriality***" (CS6_FG1_003). The same person also **linked this sense of ownership to care**: "*one person or a group of people have to have oversight of what happens to the seabirds, so you don't have multiple disturbances*" (CS6_FG1_003). In a broader sense the growing numbers of visitors from the tour boats and yachts contribute to a sense of ownership: "*oh,* ***we've been invaded, you know, because it's our island for the week type of thing***" (CS6_INT_015).

6.7 The **transition in legal ownership** from the Hebridean Trust to the National Trust for Scotland also activated feelings of belonging for TIARG members, as well as anxiety about what the transfer would mean for their work, and their relationship to Lunga in particular. Contemplating a scenario where their expeditions were no longer permitted, one TIARG member explained that it would be "*an emotional wrench because **we're sort of hefted, we're hefted to the island**, or I feel hefted anyway. I know it so well, and yeah, hefted to a place I love, I do love the Treshnish Isles very deeply*". (CS6_FG1_002). Whereas a member of the Trust described TIARG's relationship to the Treshnish Isles as a kind of ownership: "*I'm quite big on the idea of cultural ownership, I'm not sure if that's a technical term but it's one I use, just because we hold the land rights, that's one form of ownership, but you know **there are other forms of ownership… They care about this place and I understood that***" (CS6_FG1_003).

6.8 The growing numbers of tourists visiting Staffa, and increasingly also Lunga, are a source of **concerns relating to sustainability** for some in surrounding island communities, several interviewees connecting this to global problems and asking, ***"where does it stop?"***. One Iona resident explained that "*It does feel a bit as if, it's never said, but that **Staffa has become a bit sacrificial**. And I do hope the National Trust can find a more sustainable solution to the birds and the beasties, and the silence on Lunga […] The wonderful thing about the **Dutchman and Fladda** for the birds is that they are really **hard to get onto** safely. And poor old **Lunga's curse is that it is rough, but you can land***" (CS5_INT_012). A resident of northwest Mull contemplated the dilemmas as they see them: "*I mean, the thing is, it's not fair because I'm in the privileged position. To get out there. There's people come from, you know, the world over and it's a magic site for them to get Fingel's Cave. I mean, it's the whole problem, you know, **it's all over the place, overtourism, isn't it? Staffa and Iona must sag under the weight of people sometime**s*" (CS6_INT_017).

6.9 Debates and **concerns about the seabirds intersect with anxieties about sustainability and change** for many people even if these are understood in different ways. "*The increase in visitors to Lunga has been pretty astonishing, and I can't help but be concerned. They say 'puffins love people', well how convenient, perhaps they do respond in that way, but it's too much. Don't know how it is to be controlled*" (CS5_INT_012). For others it's about a balance, as one long-standing member of TIARG put it, "*there's no doubt that people have an impact. The question becomes, when does that impact become unsustainable for the wildlife? […] I don't think we're at that point. The birds are habituated*" (CS6_INT_018). At the same time there is a recognition that it is important for people to visit these places and have these kinds of experiences. The problem posed is how to manage different kinds of visitors and provide interpretation "*so visitors are better informed about how special it is*" (CS6_INT_019). "*The local operators [of tour boats] are good because they know the place and the birds. The know not to motor in at 20 knots through rafts of seabirds", but cruise ships "with fleets of 20 zodiacs, they come in really fast […] hurtling through rafts of guillemots with chicks in tow*" (CS6_INT_018).

6.10 The impact of increasing visitors on how people experience the islands is also a source of concern that activates social values. For Staffa it's about the atmosphere: "*it's pretty damn hard to get any atmosphere when there's a thousand people crawling across the it. I'm sorry*" (CS6_INT_018). The introduction of health and safety measures are also seen as problematic by some. "*Wild places to me should be wild, and people should take full personal responsibility in them. And that doesn't happen now. It's just not allowed to happen*" (CS6_INT_011). For some the growth in tourism has simply changed their personal relationship with S&TI, as explained by one Mull fisherman:

> *It changes these places. I mean, I don't want to go ashore now on the Treshnish Islands when there's one, three boatloads of people plus yachts and mini cruisers and majestic liner boats are all*

going in there... It's a popular place for the birds. And yeah, I don't have any answers. I don't have any feelings other than that personally, I just want to avoid those high moments of [peak tourism], you know, I might go now when the birds have gone. (CS6_INT_018

Annex V: References and Comparators

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