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Our ref: 2025-12.001

Dear Professor Wilson,

Letter of Support – Viking Genes Shetland: Shetland Community Screening Project

Lerwick Community Council is pleased to offer its full support for the Viking Genes Shetland: Shetland Community Screening Project. We feel this is a transformative initiative that has the potential to improve health outcomes for community members in Lerwick and across Shetland. We strongly believe in its importance and value to our community.

We recognise the significant health benefits this initiative offers. Shetland has a unique genetic heritage, and previous screening over 3,000 Shetlanders has already identified individuals who carry actionable genetic variants. These findings have enabled early interventions that would otherwise not have been possible.

The proposed expansion to offer free genetic screening to a further 5,000 Shetland residents will not only save lives but also empower individuals with vital health information, enabling access to preventative healthcare pathways.

Early detection and preventative treatment may not only improve health outcomes but can reduce long-term healthcare costs, relieve pressure on local NHS services, and contribute to healthier future generations.

This project aligns closely with the Shetland Partnership Plan, particularly under the “People” priority, which focuses on improving health outcomes, reducing inequality, and prioritising prevention. By identifying individuals at risk before symptoms arise, the project exemplifies the Plan’s commitment to preventative approaches and early intervention. It also supports the Plan’s goal to reduce inequality of outcome, especially for those facing poorer health prospects due to inherited conditions.

Furthermore, the project promotes community empowerment, with a local voluntary committee actively fundraising and engaging the public. This reflects the Partnership Plan's emphasis on enabling communities to influence decisions and shape services that affect them.

We commend the work of the Viking Genes team and the local voluntary committee for their dedication and community engagement.

Lerwick Community Council fully endorses this project and supports its application for funding. We believe that investing in this project is an investment in the health and future of Shetland's population, and we urge funders to give it their full consideration. We hope that you will view this initiative as favourably as we do and grant it the support it requires to succeed.

Yours sincerely,

Dawn Ratter

On behalf of Lerwick Community Council