



Bluemull Sound STAG Study
First Stage Consultation Report

ZetTrans
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Prepared by:

Andrew Robb
Consultant

Approved by:

Paul Finch
Associate Director

Rev No	Comments	Date
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Lower Ground Floor, 3 Queens Terrace, Aberdeen, AB10 1XL
Telephone: 01224 627800 Fax: 01224 627849 Website: <http://www.fabermaunsell.com>

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This summary presents the consultation results from the first round of consultation on the Bluemull transport link – connecting the North Isles of Unst, Fetlar and Yell. Specifically, details are provided on the problems identified during consultation and the opportunities that could be considered to improve the link in the future.

The issues raised during the consultation exercise will be further analysed and will provide the foundations for setting objectives that the study will need to address. These objectives will then be used as the basis for the appraisal of the various options considered in the study.

2. Key Findings

1. A good level of response was received from Unst and Fetlar, while there was a lower level of response from Yell.
2. Many believe that the existing ferry service is good and reliable.
3. There are a number of inter-related issues associated with the timetable/vessel/crew. These include weekend timetable problems, the irregularity of the timetable, specific gaps in the timetable during the day, and constraints at peak periods.
4. There was a high level of awareness that the Bluemull terminals and vessels are getting older.
5. The analysis of resident's travel patterns revealed only a limited amount of interaction between Unst and Yell. Fetlar residents had far more interaction with both Unst and Yell.
6. Arguments for fixed links arise mainly from island sustainability, ease of movement and financial efficiency points of view.
7. Overall, there is a need for a cost effective solution for the long term sustainability of the transport link.

3. Methodology

Consultation has been undertaken with a variety of stakeholders, including North Isles residents, various Shetland-wide agencies, elected representatives, local businesses and young people, as follows:

- Initial Public Meetings (on Unst, Fetlar and Yell);
- Resident Questionnaires (issued to all households on Unst and Fetlar, and available for collection from various public locations on Yell);
- Face-to-face discussions, telephone interviews, and letter/email correspondence with a variety of stakeholders;
- Workshops, including discussion sessions with local schools;
- Drop-In Sessions in Unst and Yell;
- Review of previous work, including findings from previous consultation on the Shetland Regional Transport Strategy; and
- Public Feedback Meetings on Unst and Fetlar (Yell cancelled due to poor weather affecting travel).

4. Response

A good level of response was received from Unst and Fetlar. The level of response from Yell was lower. In total, 267 questionnaires were received from Unst residents, 35 questionnaires from Fetlar, and 42 questionnaires from Yell. Approximately 50 telephone and face-to-face

interviews were also held with a variety of stakeholders. These have been useful in allowing for a more detailed exploration and understanding of issues raised and problems encountered.

5. Travel Patterns

Only 25% of responses from households indicated they use the ferry more frequently than weekly. The majority (81%) of responses confirmed travel on the ferry as a car driver or car passenger, although 13% also indicated that they also travel on the bus. The results indicated that Unst households primarily travel onto the Mainland. This was not the case for Fetlar residents who travelled equally to both Unst and Yell (and onward to Mainland).

6. Strengths

Generally, feedback on the current ferry service was positive. It was described as good and reasonably reliable, particularly when the weather is good. The frequency is generally good. The removal of fares on the Bluemull Sound service was also frequently stated as a reason for liking the ferry service. The crew are seen to be friendly and helpful.

7. Problems Associated with the Current Link

Following analysis of the consultation results, consultees stated the following problems with the current link.

<p><i>Terminals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing and need upgraded / replaced • Lack of breakwater at Hamars Ness • Facilities at terminals need upgraded • Information boards are not always kept up to date • Signs can be confusing for tourists • Lane markings at Ulsta are confusing 	<p><i>Vessels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing • Too small, causing capacity constraints at peak times and in the summer • 0820 from Belmont often fully booked and 0705 can be as well • In contrast, Yell Sound ferries are bigger which causes a bottleneck at Gutcher • The <i>Bigga</i> is a good size but if it is taken off for other commitments capacity is restricted • Poor disabled and child access, steep stairs • Future impact of ongoing fuel price increases on cost of service, but also wider impacts
<p><i>Timetables</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor weekend timetable (single vessel) • Gaps in the timetable (during Fetlar runs/lunch/ferry maintenance) • Not enough early and late sailings • Timetables are difficult to understand • Voicebank not kept up to date • Connections with Yell Sound ferry service and buses • In the morning, Fetlar crew has to travel to Cullivoe to board vessel and begin shift. This wastes time that could be used for an earlier first run from Fetlar 	<p><i>Fares, Ticketing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yell Sound costs are high • No provision for buying tickets with credit / debit cards on the ferry • Expensive for pensioners / senior citizen car drivers • Fares set up causes confusion for visitors – unsure when or if they have to pay a fare • The promotion of the service and fares could be improved to attract more visitors to the North Isles. • Consultees concerned regarding uncertainty over future fares levels.

In combination it was recognised that these issues affect **accessibility** for those living and working on the islands, the **efficiency** and **ability** to deliver key services, as well as the **efficiency** and **viability** of economic enterprises.

Consultees recognised the wider relationships between transport, and issues of future island vitality and viability, such as housing supply, provision of key services, population dynamics, opportunities for employment, and opportunities for accessing retail, leisure and social opportunities.

8. Future Options for Consideration

A wide range of options to improve the Bluemull transport link were generated through the consultation process. There was a high level of response with regards to the potential for a **fixed link**.

- Tunnel between Unst and Yell (rather than a more weather dependent bridge)
- Fixed links would provide freedom of movement and would be a long term solution. Benefits would be that it could prevent depopulation, allow for living on Unst and working on Mainland, and provide a boost for businesses and tourism
- Fixed link between Unst and Yell could also be good for Fetlar which would benefit from a dedicated ferry
 - Fetlar – Gutcher ferry route would still be preferred by a majority of Fetlar residents
 - Provides opportunities to consider options for tailoring the service to the needs of the island
 - Fetlar residents want to protect existing levels of service
- However, there was concern over merging of services between Unst and Yell (health care, schools etc), and also the potential impact of loss of ferry jobs
- It was also stated that people like living on an island
- It would need to be demonstrated that investment in a fixed link represented value for money, and also that it represented the best use of this money. It was realised that attracting external funding support could be difficult, due to competition for funding from elsewhere

Other options, based around ferry operations, were suggested as follows:

<p><i>Terminals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade or replace • General maintenance • Hamars Ness breakwater • Improved information including displaying time and destination of next ferry 	<p><i>Vessels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigger or new ferries with a larger capacity • Fetlar based ferry • Unst based ferry • Water taxi • Better disabled and Child Access
<p><i>Timetables</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve weekend timetable • Lengthen service day on Bluemull Sound / keep ferries running in the middle of the day • Unst / Yell runs every 20 minutes • Earlier and later ferries to enable attendance at events on the Mainland / Yell • Make timetables more user friendly, review connections with Yell Sound 	<p><i>Fares and Ticketing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If fares have to be reintroduced, North Isles residents should have passes, and non-residents should pay fares

9. Next Steps

This study is being progressed in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). The future stages that will be undertaken as part of this process are as follows:

- Agree / verify problems / opportunities / constraints / uncertainties, and develop study objectives;
- Confirm the list of options for appraisal;
- Undertake an initial, and then detailed appraisal of the different options.

The results of this appraisal and reporting of the study is anticipated in summer 2008. Regular updates will be provided by ZetTrans, and will be posted on the ZetTrans Bluemull Sound web page <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/transport/bluemull/default.asp>

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Consultation Report presents the findings from the first round of consultation on the problems, issues, opportunities and constraints associated with the transport links across Bluemull Sound, connecting the North Isles Unst, Fetlar and Yell. This process was carried out between 21st January 2008 and 21st February 2008.

This report presents the problems identified during consultation with the current transport link and the opportunities in the future that the transport links between Unst, Fetlar and Yell will need to address. From this:

- Objectives will be set that the transport link will need to meet
- Options to meet the identified issues can be generated
- An appraisal of the different options against the objectives and various economic, environmental, social and safety criteria can be carried out

The results of this appraisal and reporting of the study is anticipated in summer 2008.

1.2 Background

Within Shetland's Regional Transport Strategy¹, ZetTrans acknowledged there was strong support for a fixed link from Unst to Yell. With regards to Fetlar, there was a strongly held belief that both Unst and Fetlar would benefit from dedicated ferry services and 'The development of the breakwater at Hamars Ness was seen as vital in facilitating improvements to the ferry service that the Fetlar community wish to see and could deliver a number of other improvements to the island. It was also stated that a dedicated ferry/crew and breakwater facility in Fetlar, tied in with other development opportunities, would have a significant impact on both Unst and Fetlar's futures by allowing each island to have more influence in addressing their own particular needs.'

A joint working group involving representatives from ZetTrans, local Councillors, local Community Councillors and ferry crews was set up, adopting the title 'The Bluemull Sound STAG Group'.

This group agreed to a study 'To identify means of providing sustainable efficient transport links across Bluemull Sound for the long-term and identify the most appropriate actions to carry forward to implementation for the benefit of Shetland as a whole.'

This study is being led by ZetTrans in co-operation with the Bluemull Sound STAG Group, in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

STAG is the Government standard for appraisal of transport service and infrastructure projects and provides a framework to use for the objective consideration of options against government and local objectives. Since July 2003 it has been a requirement of the Scottish Executive² that all projects for which it provides support or approval are appraised in this way. Consultation and participation with all stakeholders is important throughout. This first stage of consultation, presenting the current and future problems and opportunities, provides the foundation for the rest of the process.

¹ This strategy was produced by ZetTrans, and submitted to the Scottish Executive for approval in March 2007.

² Now Scottish Government.

The Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG): Process and Appraisal Criteria

The STAG planning and appraisal process involves nine stages as follows:

- Stage 1 - Analysis of present and future problems and opportunities
- Stage 2 - Setting objectives
- Stage 3 - Generation of options
- Stage 4 - Initial sifting of options
- Stage 5 - Broad appraisal
- Stage 6 - Detailed appraisal
- Stage 7 - Reporting
- Stage 8 - Implementation
- Stage 9 - Monitoring and evaluation

All these stages must take place with participation by and consultation with all stakeholders.

The headings under which final appraisal and decision takes place are:

- Environment
- Safety (accidents and security)
- Economy (transport efficiency and economic development)
- Integration with the plans of other departments and organisations
- Accessibility and social inclusion
- Total cost to all national and local government bodies
- Risk and uncertainty

1.3**Report Structure**

Following this introduction, there are three further sections, as follows:

Section 2: Consultation Methodology, describing the consultation process that has been adopted for the purposes of establishing the problems, issues, opportunities and constraints.

Section 3: Key Findings: A summary of the main consultation results.

Section 4: Next Steps outlines how the results from this consultation will be taken forward.

Consultation Methodology

2 Consultation Methodology

2.1

Introduction

This section discusses the consultation process adopted for the purpose of establishing the problems, issues, opportunities and constraints that the transport links between Unst, Fetlar and Yell should address.

This process was agreed by the Bluemull Sound STAG Group and was a broad approach designed to enable all stakeholders to express their views and have an opportunity to consider the following:

- What is liked about the current ferry arrangements for Bluemull Sound?
- Are there any problems that arise out of the current arrangements?
- If so, what options, or improvements could be considered to address these problems?
- Are there any opportunities that are perhaps being missed as a result of the current situation?
- What are the biggest constraints affecting links across Bluemull Sound?
- What future options should we be considering within the study for links across Bluemull Sound?

It was important that all Shetland stakeholders were able to contribute, recognising that the final preferred option should be the option that benefits Shetland as a whole and any funding set aside to develop options for the Bluemull Sound link could also impact on the resources available to improve infrastructure and services to other parts of Shetland.

2.2

Methodology

A variety of consultation methods have been used to encourage feedback to this study, including:

- Initial Public Meetings (on Unst, Fetlar and Yell);
- Resident Questionnaires (issued to all households on Unst and Fetlar, and available for collection from various public locations on Yell);
- Face-to-face discussions, telephone interviews, and letter/email correspondence with a variety of stakeholders;
- Workshops, including discussion sessions with local schools;
- Drop-In Sessions in Unst and Yell;
- Review of previous work, including findings from previous consultation on the Shetland Regional Transport Strategy; and
- Public Feedback Meetings on Unst and Fetlar (Yell cancelled due to poor weather affecting travel).

The consultation process was also supported by publicity from the local media, including adverts on Shetland News and Radio Shetland, and articles in the Shetland Times.

The following sections briefly describe the main forms of consultation that have been used to encourage feedback from the various different stakeholder groups.

2.2.1

North Isles Residents

Each household on Unst, Fetlar and Yell was sent an Information Sheet early on in the exercise and public meetings were held on each of the islands on 21st, 22nd and 24th January in the Baltasound Hall, Fetlar Hall and Mid Yell Junior High School respectively. These meetings outlined how the community could get involved in the study and explained the questionnaire. A copy of the Information Sheet is presented in Appendix A, while Appendix B sets out the minutes from the public meetings.

In parallel to this, the questionnaires were distributed. Unfortunately the electoral role is no longer available for consultations of this kind. Instead the Council Tax register of households was used. This provides information on whether there are one, two or more adults living in a household. In mid January, residents of Unst and Fetlar over the age of 18 received a questionnaire. Those households that did not receive a sufficient number of questionnaires were asked to phone for more. Copies for Yell residents were made available in various public locations. All North Isles residents were encouraged to complete and return the questionnaires to ZetTrans by 4th February. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix C.

Discussion sessions were also held with young people living in the North Isles at Baltasound Junior High School and Uyeasound Primary School on Unst, at Fetlar Primary School, and at Mid Yell Junior High School. These sessions gave young people an opportunity to discuss transport issues important to them.

Informal Public Drop-In Sessions were also held in Unst and Yell, which provided members of the public with an opportunity to discuss the study.

Following the conclusion of the initial consultation period, public feedback meetings were held on Unst on 19th February, and Fetlar on 20th February. The Yell meeting scheduled for the 21st was cancelled due to poor weather affecting travel, but Yell residents were encouraged to get in touch with ZetTrans to get feedback on the consultation findings.

Finally, it should be noted that other residents in Shetland were informed of the study through the local media and adverts, and were invited to respond by letter or email and through their Community Council representatives.

2.2.2

Community and Interest Groups

The Community Worker for the North Isles sent out a newsletter to all local groups which included information about the study and consultation process.

2.2.3

Businesses and Business Representatives

All North Isles businesses were informed of the study and offered the chance to have a face-to-face meeting to discuss the study with project officers.

Those businesses based on Mainland Shetland who currently make use of the Bluemull Sound link were also informed of the study and invited to a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone interview. The list of businesses was compiled from a list provided by the Bluemull ferry service booking office.

2.2.4

Service Providers in Shetland

A variety of service providers were consulted as part of this study including NHS Shetland (Board and GPs practices), HIE Shetland, Trusts, emergency services, utility providers, and representative bodies. All were informed of the study and invited to respond by email, letter, or via a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone call.

Since the SIC covers a number of services, a workshop was held on 20th February, with all Heads of Service invited to attend to discuss issues that the study should consider.

Furthermore, the *Fivla* and *Bigga* ferry crews were informed of the study early on, and discussion meetings were held with both crews on 4th February.

Freight operators were also consulted as part of the study.

2.2.5 *The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland*

The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland were informed of the study and invited to respond via a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone conversation.

2.2.6 *Elected Representatives*

MSPs (constituency and list), MP and MEPs were informed of the study and invited to input, if desired.

Councillors of Shetland Islands Council were also informed of the study and of the various means for providing comment and input.

All Community Councils in Shetland were informed and invited to respond, as one method of ensuring the wider Shetland community were able to input.

Key Findings

3 Key Findings

3.1 Key Findings

This section summarises the key findings from the consultation process. Findings are presented according to the broad categories of consultees highlighted in Section 2.

3.2 North Isles Residents

3.2.1 Introduction

These findings come from the questionnaires distributed to Unst and Fetlar households (with questionnaires available for collection at various public locations in Yell), the public meetings held in January, and discussion sessions held with young people in the North Isles.

In general, there was a good level of response received to the study from Unst and Fetlar, with residents returning 267 and 35 questionnaires respectively. There was a lower level of response from Yell, with 42 questionnaires being returned to ZetTrans. Generally, these were fairly representative of the communities in terms of gender, age, employment status and disability, although there were a high percentage of returns from older and retired members of the community than the 16-29 age group.

Only 25% of responses indicated they use the ferry more frequently than weekly. The majority (81%) of respondents travel on the ferry as a car driver or car passenger, but 13% travel on the bus. The results indicated that Unst households primarily travel onto the Mainland, with limited interaction between Unst and Yell. Fetlar residents travel equally to Unst and Yell (and onward to the Mainland).

In terms of trip purpose, shopping and visiting friends and relations accounted for 50% of responses received.

In terms of what is liked about the service, it was described as good and reasonably reliable, particularly when the weather is good. The frequency is generally good. The removal of fares on the Bluemull Sound service was also frequently stated as a reason for liking the ferry service. The crew are seen to be friendly and helpful.

However, there were some respondents who said they liked nothing about the current service.

3.2.2 Problems and Concerns

Problems or concerns associated with the current service can be summarised under the following categories, based on the outline of the questionnaire:

Timetable issues:

- Poor weekend / festive period timetable (single vessel)
- Gaps in the timetable during Fetlar runs / lunch / ferry maintenance
- Not enough early and late sailings (including for Fetlar)
- Long waits between ferries (when it goes to Fetlar)
- Timetables are difficult to understand / in too small print / not user friendly
- Voicebank not updated often enough or clear
- Connections with the Yell Sound ferry service / buses are poor
- In the morning, Fetlar crew has to travel to Cullivoe to board vessel and begin shift. This wastes time that could be used for an earlier first run from Fetlar
- 0820 from Belmont is booked up. 0705 can be hard to get on to as people book on this once 0820 is full

- Can't get the first flight out of Sumburgh in the morning / or attend evening events on the Mainland / Yell
- Fetlar children cannot attend school at Baltasound, Unst because of transport constraints. Instead they have to go to Anderson High School in Lerwick
- Fetlar secondary pupils attending Anderson High are currently transported back to Yell before catching the ferry to Unst. They then have a long wait before the 1905 crossing from Unst to Fetlar
- Tricky to book when going to Whalsay

Fares and ticketing:

- Yell Sound costs are high
- No provision for buying tickets with credit or debit cards
- Expensive for pensioners / senior citizen car drivers
- Fares set up causes confusion for visitors – unsure when or if they have to pay a fare
- The promotion of the service and fares could be improved to attract more visitors to the North Isles
- Concerns regarding uncertainty over future fares levels

Terminals:

- Terminals are ageing and need upgraded / replaced
- Need for a breakwater at Hamars Ness, Fetlar
- Facilities at terminals, no drinking water (Fetlar)
- Waiting rooms and toilets need upgraded
- Hamars Ness – smell of septic tank
- In the summer, parking / waiting areas are inadequate at Hamars Ness
- The information boards are not always kept up to date when ferries are not running to timetable / over the festive period
- Signs can be confusing for tourists
- Ulsta, Yell – lane markings are confusing

Vessels:

- Age of the vessels – getting old
- Size of the vessels – too small
- Causing capacity constraints at peak times and in the summer e.g. 0820 from Belmont often booked up and 0705 can be as well
- Yell Sound ferries are bigger – leading to a bottleneck at Gutcher
- *Bigga* good size – if taken off for other commitments capacity is restricted
- Poor disabled access
- Steep stairs to lounge
- Future impact of ongoing fuel price increases on cost of service, but also wider impacts

Other problems:

- Not always possible to book from Fetlar / Unst without having to disembark and wait for next ferry
- Long wait in Yell
- No night service / emergency cover during the night
- Fact you need to book limits freedom of travel
- Problems when tarring roads in the summer
- Public Transport connections poor (buses)
- Poor reliability in bad weather

Of the problems listed above, issues with the Bluemull ferry timetable were the most frequently raised, although some respondents commented that many of the problems mentioned above

are inter-related and in combination it was recognised that these issues affect **accessibility** for those living and working on the islands, the **efficiency** and **ability** to deliver key services, as well as the **efficiency** and **viability** of economic enterprises.

3.2.3

Improvements and Future Options

As well as identifying problems and constraints associated with the Bluemull Sound transport link, the consultation process provided North Isles residents with the opportunity to comment on future options or improvements ZetTrans could consider in the study to improve the transport link.

Options and improvements suggested can be broadly categorised under the issues listed above.

There were a number of timetable / operational improvements suggested. These included:

- Extend length of time the service is available each day: this can be related to opportunities people currently miss out on, such as not being able to reach the first flights from Sumburgh and attend evening events on the Mainland / Yell
- Improve the timetable at the weekend
- Improve the Fetlar timetable by introducing a dedicated Fetlar based ferry to enable an earlier first run from the island in the morning
- Belmont / Gutcher runs every 15-20 minutes (shuttle service)
- Introduce an additional sailing from Belmont between the current times of 0705 and 0820 (e.g. at 0745) for commuters
- Reduce gaps in the timetable by keeping ferries running in the middle of the day
- Better integration between the Bluemull Sound and Yell Sound services to prevent rushing between Gutcher and Ulsta to make the connection
- Introduce a water taxi for a late night service

It was also frequently stated that timetable information should be better conveyed and made more user friendly. It was suggested that the Voicebank should be improved. Improved information boards – including when the ferry is not running to timetable – and tourist information is needed. It was suggested the “Service operating normally” message should be replaced by a more informative message such as “The next ferry leaves at (time) for (Unst) (Fetlar).”

Some residents would like to see better connectivity between the ferries and bus services, with an improved bus service from Unst to Lerwick noted as a specific improvement.

There was some concern expressed among North Isles residents over the possible reintroduction of fares to the Bluemull Sound service. In relation to this issue, a number of future suggestions for fares and ticketing were made, including:

- Keep free fares on the Bluemull service
- Free fares / discounts / passes for locals and the elderly
- Fetlar residents should not have to pay – residents have to shop regularly in Lerwick and no fuel is available on the island
- Fares for non residents
- Idea of long term passes – e.g. pay a fixed price for unlimited travel over a period of six months
- If charges do have to be brought back, they should be equal with other routes e.g. Whalsay
- Ferries should be part of the road network

With regards to the terminals, a number of suggestions were made. For example, some suggested upgrades or replacements for the existing terminals. A key issue in the case of Fetlar is the need for a breakwater to be built at Hamars Ness. Suggestions to improve the general appearance of the terminals were often made; they should be kept tidy, waiting rooms and toilets should be improved. There should be a shop or café at Belmont (like at Gutcher) and more provisions at the Hamars Ness terminal (such as drinking water).

Another associated comment was that there should be separate lanes for 1) Yell and 2) Unst/Fetlar traffic at Toft – to allow Fetlar and Unst travellers to get to Gutcher in plenty of time instead of being stuck behind Yell traffic and rushing to catch the connecting ferry.

As shown above, problems with the vessels centred on capacity constraints. New or bigger ferries were suggested by many, such as two ferries the size of the *Bigga*. Improvements suggested included introducing a dedicated Fetlar based ferry (which was said by many to have been a success when the ferry was berthed at Hamars Ness overnight in summer 2007). Some suggested that Unst should have its own service and the ferry should be based there. One respondent suggested incentives for car sharing should be introduced, to reduce the amount of single occupancy vehicles using the ferries. Similarly, it was stated that the 0820 Belmont ferry has a passenger bus on it – and this should be based at Gutcher instead to pick up passengers in order to free up more space for cars on the crossing from Unst to Yell.

It was thought that the ferries should be made more accessible for those with disabilities or children.

With regards to fixed links, many respondents considered that a fixed link would provide Unst with a more flexible link with Yell and Mainland Shetland. In particular, there was support for a tunnel between Unst and Yell. It was generally felt bridges would be more weather dependent and be subject to closure in periods of bad weather / high winds. However, a suggestion was made that a bridge between Unst and Yell could have wave or tidal generators to provide electricity for the islands.

Respondents felt that the development of a fixed link would provide greater freedom of movement (than the ferries currently provide) by allowing people to travel when they want. Similarly, fixed links were said to make sense in logistical terms, with one respondent stating that only when you live on Unst are you aware of the problems of commuting on two ferries.

The success of tunnel development in Scandinavia was said to be an example for Shetland to follow.

Some respondents felt that fixed links would ensure population retention in the North Isles and it could provide more opportunities for tourists to visit the islands and lead to further tourist and economic development.

The main disadvantage associated with introducing a fixed link was, according to some respondents, the impact that this could have on the community and current way of life. Some consultees had relatives who work on the ferries and stated a disadvantage would be the loss of jobs from the ferry and the knock on impact of this on the community. There are concerns that a fixed link could result in the centralisation of services between Unst and Yell – with the secondary school and health centre the most frequent examples cited. There was concern any centralisation of services would also contribute to job loss in such sectors.

One respondent stated that there should be more emphasis on the fact that the Bluemull Sound link is not just for Unst residents commuting south for work and that Unst has provided employment for people from all over Shetland in the past – and it may do so again in the future at the Saxa Vord resort. As such, those in Yell may find work in Unst and it is therefore important that infrastructure and services are divided between the islands and not centralised in Yell / the Mainland.

One respondent commented that Unst would become a suburb of Yell if a fixed link was built to connect the two islands. Other reasons for opposing a fixed link were that people liked the idea of living on a unique and individual island such as Unst.

The effect of any Unst-Yell fixed link on Fetlar was also considered by a number of respondents. It was stated that a fixed link to Unst should not come at the cost of a reduced or lesser service to Fetlar. A fixed link on Bluemull Sound could open up the potential for a

dedicated Fetlar ferry / more runs to Fetlar and provide opportunities to consider options for tailoring the service to meet the needs of the island.

Most North Isles residents would favour a ferry route from Fetlar to Yell if a fixed link was developed between Unst and Yell. Gutcher is the preferred destination, but a number opted for a Fetlar – Mid Yell route because this would provide easier access to services in Yell for Fetlar residents. However, such a crossing would be problematic due to the longer distance to travel (by sea), and the crossing would be rougher. Mid Yell would also be less sheltered. This option would lengthen the journey time for any Fetlar residents who work in Unst. These thoughts were reflected in the questionnaire results, with 71% of Fetlar responses favouring a ferry route from Fetlar – Gutcher if an Unst-Yell fixed link was developed.

In terms of summarising residents' opinions about fixed links:

- A bridge: Generally deemed unfeasible due to the bad weather and high winds that can hamper ferry operations currently
- A tunnel: If a fixed link was to be developed, a tunnel would be the most appropriate option as it would not be affected by the weather, it would have no visual impact and it would cause less pollution than a bridge. However, some people may not feel secure about using a tunnel

In closing, in terms of future options, the majority of North Isles respondents stated that a fixed link would be the most cost effective solution for Bluemull Sound, rather than continually replacing the ferries every 10 or 20 years. In terms of the process/study itself, some respondents felt that more money is being spent on meetings than on building links, and a tunnel should be progressed without years of feasibility studies costing thousands of pounds.

A full list of questionnaire results is provided in Appendix D.

3.3

Community and Interest Groups

Although the Community Worker for the area sent out a newsletter to all local groups, which included information about the study and the consultation process, no responses were received by ZetTrans from these groups.

Factors considered as to why there was a poor response from Community and Interest Groups could include that many group members will have been consulted through other processes (for example, the resident questionnaire) and that many of these groups do not hold regular meetings. Anecdotal evidence has also suggested that some of these groups may not have actively responded as it was considered by some that the community has been over-consulted.

3.4

North Isles Businesses

The ferry service is used by North Isles businesses in a number of ways including:

- Their employees commuting between the islands
- Businesses use the ferry to import and export products / supplies
- To access business / carry out jobs on the Mainland
- The Fetlar shop uses the service once a week to travel to Lerwick to pick up stock for the shop and post arrives on the 11am ferry and goes out on the first ferry out

In general, businesses believe the service provided is good, fairly reliable and generally frequent. The free fares on Bluemull Sound were frequently cited as positive for businesses. Concern was expressed about the possible re-introduction of fares, which would be an additional cost to North Isles based businesses. A Yell based business which has staff commuting from Unst expressed concern, because if fares were reintroduced they would have to pay fares to get their workers across to Yell.

Issues such as the gaps in the timetable, capacity constraints and the bottleneck at Gutcher caused by the Yell Sound ferries were also highlighted during consultation.

Although some businesses do not believe the current service constrains them, and the free fares facilitate the running of operations for many businesses, others see the current service as a constraint, as time is lost working around the timetable and waiting for the ferry. By way of example:

- One business stated that they have to operate under a “curfew” if they are working on a job on the Mainland. If they are working on a 2-3 day job, they have to give up for the day an hour before they are finished and go home early to get the ferry back to Unst. This results in there being an additional visit to complete the job which incurs more cost to the business
- Another business stated that it takes a day to make a delivery to the Mainland, because it takes two and a half hours to get to Lerwick from Unst. As a result, the proprietor of the business plans any errands they might have around the delivery because it is going to take them the whole day to make the delivery anyway
- The 0705 and 0820 sailings from Belmont are difficult to get on and can be booked up the day before the sailing according to one business

Suggested improvements to the current service included:

- A service to enable people to get to the early morning flights from Sumburgh
- A ferry arriving in Yell nearer 8am because currently workers commuting from Unst have to wait half an hour before starting work because the ferry gets them there too early
- Reinstatement of the 1800 sailing (as opposed to the 1850) from Gutcher – Hamars Ness
- A round the clock service, with sailings first thing in the morning and last thing at night and after hours
- Another bigger ferry (like the *Bigga*)
- 2 ferries on a Saturday, including in the summer for tourists
- Dedicated ferries (for both Unst and Fetlar)

A fixed link could provide benefits to businesses in the North Isles: it would be more convenient for workers commuting between the islands as they would have more flexibility when leaving for work in the morning and not be reliant on the ferries. One business stated that a fixed link between Unst and Yell would be beneficial because there is a shortage of workers in Yell and a fixed link would provide an easier commute from Unst. A fixed link would open up the area and make it more accessible and easier to get to the Mainland.

A fixed link was said by some to be a way to repopulate the islands and encourage the growth of tourism. However, the opinion was also expressed that a fixed link could have the opposite effect with there being less need for people to stay over in the North Isles if they could get there more easily by a fixed link.

It was also stated that the benefits of fixed links have been apparent in Norway and the Faroe Islands, and one business suggested there has been an increase in economic activity where tunnels have been built, and new jobs have been created due to their development.

With regards to Fetlar, it was felt that a fixed link between Unst and Yell would further the case for a dedicated Fetlar ferry service berthed on the island.

However, one business stated that although fixed links should be looked at in close detail as an option, it is an emotional subject for the North Isles because ferry jobs could be lost.

Other businesses expressed support for a fixed link on Yell Sound.

In terms of the type of fixed link, a tunnel was preferred because it would be unaffected by wind and bad weather, unlike a bridge which would be more prone to closure.

3.5

Service Providers in Shetland

The ferry service is believed to be reasonably good, for example for enabling connections between the islands for the Fire Service, and for the willingness of the ferry crews to help out the Ambulance Service.

In terms of tourism, Visit Shetland believes that the timetable is reasonably good and reliable. From the point of view of tourists, the service is good because it provides access to Britain's most northerly island, Unst

In terms of problems / opportunities being missed / improvements:

- Ferry size / capacity can be an issue and if there are roadworks en route to the terminal or big lorries in the queue, people may have to wait longer
- Opportunities for getting to Fetlar are limited by the vessel and this causes problems for tourists trying to get to the island
- The ferry set up can confuse tourists, and it is felt that signposting at the terminals could be made friendlier for tourists and better visitor information could be provided on the larger ferries from Toft – Ulsta
- There is also confusion over fares, with tourists not knowing when / if they have to pay and tourists might sit in the unbooked queue even if they are booked on to a ferry

Visit Shetland believes that serious consideration should be given to the development of tunnels, pointing to the success of such infrastructure in the Faroe Islands. Tunnels would make it easier to get to the North Isles and increase the potential for tourists to stay overnight on the island.

Examples of constraints the current service imposes on service providers include:

- The ferry service is not available out of hours and only runs for a certain number of hours a day
- The timings of sailings to / from Fetlar were identified as a particular constraint by the health services, for example when patients have appointments in Yell or need to see the GP there. There can often be long waits to catch the ferry back to Fetlar. In addition, if a patient has a hospital appointment in Lerwick, it was said that it is easier to go from Lerwick to Fetlar than Fetlar to Lerwick because of the timings of the ferry
- If the Yell ambulance is transporting a patient back to Fetlar, it has to sit in Fetlar and wait for the ferry to come back
- Trips to access care on the Mainland / training opportunities can require departing from Unst or Fetlar the night before; thus a degree of organisation and planning ahead is required
- In one case of bad weather, the air ambulance system was used to evacuate a patient from Unst – and it was 7 hours before the patient reached Lerwick

There are a number of advantages a fixed link from Unst-Yell would be able to provide to improve service delivery:

- Reduced travel time to Ulsta / and on to the Mainland and between Unst and Yell
- 24 hour access to the islands for the emergency services – enabling 'out of hours' operations if necessary
- A tunnel would enable the movement of manpower and resources between Unst and Yell without any (weather related) problems

3.6

Elected Representatives

Some elected members responded with general comments about fixed links.

With regards to Community Councils, Northmaven Community Council would favour a fixed link across Bluemull Sound as this would benefit both Unst and Yell by attracting new residents and enabling easier travel for residents and visitors to the isles. In terms of Fetlar, it was felt that a breakwater would allow the ferry to be based there, providing the island with its own ferry service and an economic boost.

Sandness and Walls Community Council stated that "If a fixed link were to go ahead, the possibility of including a community energy facility should be explored, given the strength of tides in Bluemull Sound".

Other Community Councils responded with general comments about fixed links.

3.7

Closing Points and Summary

The consultation process revealed that consultees recognised the wider relationships between transport, and issues of future island vitality and viability, such as housing supply (there is a lack in Yell), provision of key services, population dynamics, opportunities for employment, and opportunities for accessing retail, leisure and social opportunities.

It was also stated during consultation that it would need to be demonstrated that investment in a fixed link represented value for money, and also that it represented the best use of this money. It was realised that attracting external funding support could be difficult, due to competition for funding from elsewhere.

Overall, there was a consensus amongst respondents to the consultation process for a cost effective solution for the long term sustainability of the transport link.

In closing, a variety of methods have been used as part of this consultation process, including public meetings, questionnaires, drop-in sessions, workshops, in addition to approximately 50 telephone and face-to-face interviews. These processes have enabled a detailed exploration and understanding of issues raised and problems encountered, as well as future options that should be considered in delivering improvements to the Bluemull Sound transport link.

It should also be noted that a full list of stakeholders consulted as part of this study is included in Appendix E.

Next Steps

4 Next Steps

4.1

Next Steps

The future stages that will be undertaken as part of the STAG process are as follows:

- Agree / verify problems / opportunities / constraints / uncertainties, and develop study objectives
- Confirm the list of options for appraisal
- Undertake an initial, and then detailed appraisal of the different options

The results of this appraisal and reporting of the study is anticipated in summer 2008.

The Bluemull Sound STAG Group will continue to meet at key stages during the progression of the study and consultation with stakeholders will continue at the appropriate stages.

Regular updates will be provided by ZetTrans, and will be posted on the ZetTrans Bluemull Sound web page <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/transport/bluemull/default.asp>

Appendix A: Information Sheet

APPENDIX A: Bluemull Sound Study – Information Sheet

Introduction

1. A study is being undertaken to examine options for the long-term sustainability of transport links across Bluemull Sound. Shetland's Regional Transport Strategy³ identified the need for such a study, to take into account issues such as replacement ferries and ferry terminals, berthing arrangements, and alternative crewing and timetable arrangements. A separate but related study is being undertaken examining the potential for fixed links within Shetland. Whilst the feasibility of a Yell-Unst fixed link has yet to be determined, the Bluemull Sound Study will take full account of the outcomes from the fixed link study.
2. A further strand of work has recently been completed. This looked at the business case and practical requirements to provide overnight berthing for a ferry on Fetlar. Applications for funding are being made for this.

The Bluemull Sound STAG Group

3. This study is being led by ZetTrans, in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG)⁴. The study is being guided by a joint working group, involving representatives from ZetTrans, local Councillors, local Community Councillors and ferry crews, with a mandate *'To identify means of providing sustainable efficient transport links across Bluemull Sound for the long-term and identify the most appropriate actions to carry forward to implementation for the benefit of Shetland as a whole.'* At their initial meeting in December, they assisted in identifying the most appropriate approach for consulting with the wider North Isles community / communities with regard to Bluemull Sound transport links. Consultants Faber Maunsell will assist ZetTrans with various aspects of the study.

The Study

4. The driving force is three-fold: (a) the existing ferry infrastructure is approaching the end of operational lifespan and there will be a requirement to look at options to maintain transport links across Bluemull Sound, (b) there is an opportunity to address some of the problems and constraints of the existing Bluemull transport links; and (c) outcomes from the fixed link study may indicate that there is case for a fixed link connecting Yell and Unst – there will therefore be a need to identify an efficient and sustainable means of connecting Fetlar with Unst and Yell.
5. A key element of this STAG study is the initial consultation process to be undertaken with stakeholders. From this:
 - a) A review will be undertaken of the findings of previous related studies and consultation exercises;
 - b) Analysis can be undertaken to better understand the problems identified through consultation;
 - c) Objectives will be set for the Bluemull Sound Study;
 - d) Option generation and sifting can be done; and, finally,
 - e) An appraisal of the different options against the study objectives and wider appraisal criteria can be carried out.
6. The result will be recommendations that take into account all the various stakeholder inputs, any constraints and risks, as well as the option appraisal. The first stage of the study is expected to report in March 2008 with the full study due for autumn 2008. Feedback from the initial round of consultation is planned for mid to late February.

Your Involvement

7. The first stage is to identify the problems, issues and opportunities that you feel the Bluemull Sound Study should address. Initially, the study will be seeking responses to the following questions.
 - a) What is liked about the current ferry arrangements for Bluemull Sound?
 - b) Are there any problems that arise out of the current arrangements?
 - c) If so, what options, or improvements could be considered to address these problems?
 - d) Are there any opportunities that are perhaps being missed as a result of the current situation?

³ This strategy was produced by ZetTrans, and submitted to the Scottish Executive for approval in March 2007.

⁴ In order to arrive at a preferred option, for which a case for funding can be made to the Scottish Government, a STAG process must be followed.

- e) What are the biggest constraints affecting links across Bluemull Sound?
 - f) What future options should we be considering within the study for links across Bluemull Sound?
8. We will be collecting views of the communities and stakeholders through questionnaires, meetings, telephone conversations, as well as inviting written comments.

How You Can Get Involved

9. The Bluemull Sound STAG Group have organised a programme that aims to capture the views of a wide range of residents, businesses and services in the North Isles (Yell, Unst and Fetlar) and the rest of Shetland in order to ensure that the study proceeds from a solid base. This starts mid January 2008, with initial feedback being provided week commencing 18 February 2008.
10. There will be several ways to get involved
- a) Public meetings outlining the study and how the community can get involved (if people need assistance to attend these meetings, please contact ZetTrans using the number below).
Unst, Monday 21st January, 7pm at Baltasound Hall
Fetlar, Tuesday 22nd January, 7.45pm at Fetlar Hall
Yell, Thursday 24th January, 7.30pm at Mid Yell School
 - b) In mid January residents of Unst and Fetlar over the age of 18 will receive a questionnaire, to be returned by 4th February. Copies for Yell residents will be available at various public locations throughout Yell.
 - c) Local businesses, community groups and young people will also invited to input to the study.
 - d) Interested parties can also submit written responses (prior to 4th February), providing name and contact details, via:
Email to: bluemullsound@shetland.gov.uk or
Post to: ZetTrans, 11 Hill Lane, LERWICK, ZE1 0HB
 - e) Community Councils will be invited to discuss the issues at their meetings and to feedback views;
 - f) A variety of Shetland-wide agencies, and elected representatives will also be invited to respond.
11. As the study develops it is important to keep people informed. The Bluemull Sound STAG Group will communicate feedback through a variety of means. Public meetings outlining the findings of the consultation and next steps will be held as follows.
Unst, Tuesday 19th February, 7pm at Baltasound Hall
Fetlar, Wednesday 20th February, 7.45pm at Fetlar Hall
Yell, Thursday 21st February, 7.30pm, at Mid Yell School
12. Information and updates will be available at: <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/transport/bluemullsound>

If you would like further information, or would like a copy of this information sheet about the Bluemull Links Study in large font or an alternative language, please phone ZetTrans on (01595) 744868 or email bluemullsound@shetland.gov.uk

Appendix B: Notes of Meetings

APPENDIX B: Notes of Meetings

B1. Unst Initial Public Meeting

Project:	Bluemull Sound STAG Study	Job No/Ref:	55280TABT / 701
Purpose:	Unst – Initial Public Meeting	Date held:	21/01/08
Held at:	Baltasound Hall, Unst	Made by:	Richie Fraser
Present:	Unst residents (approximately 60 in attendance) Michael Craigie ZetTrans Emma Perring ZetTrans Allan Wishart ZetTrans David Polson Shetland Islands Council Richie Fraser Faber Maunsell	Distribution:	
Apologies:			

No.	Item	Action By
	<p>Laurence Robertson (Unst CC) welcomed everyone to Unst Community Council's first meeting of the New Year. LR informed the audience that the first part of the meeting was to hear about the study into transport links across Bluemull Sound. At this point, LR passed over to Allan Wishart, Chair of ZetTrans.</p> <p>AW outlined the role of ZetTrans and that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the study that was being launched into examining the long-term transport links/options across Bluemull Sound. The format of the meeting was a presentation outlining how the study would be undertaken and how stakeholders could get involved. There would be opportunities for the audience to ask questions at different intervals.</p> <p>MC then gave a presentation covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history behind transport links between the islands and what the RTS (published March 2007) says in relation to Bluemull Sound; (<i>in short the RTS proposes a STAG study to review all options for improving the link in the long term</i>); • The reasons why there is a need to undertake this study e.g. three-fold: infrastructure approaching the end of its lifespan; there are constraints/problems with the current service; and there is the opportunity to tie this study into parallel studies (fixed links review and Fetlar breakwater) that are currently being undertaken; • The overall purpose of the Study, as agreed by the Bluemull STAG group (MC noted who this group comprises and that they have an important role in guiding the process – however, they are not a decision making body); • Information about STAG (MC discussed the nine stages) and its importance (e.g. a STAG assessment is required for all transport appraisal projects for which funding from the Scottish Government is required; principles of open and transparent etc.); • The first stage of STAG is where the Study is currently at – and this is one of the most important stages. It is very important to find out current and future issues so that objectives can be developed and thereafter options generated to address these. • While the study was starting from a clean sheet, it was emphasised that 	

the study team already have a sound knowledge of some of the current issues that need to be resolved (through previous consultation on the Transport Strategy) and the information collected in the past will be fed into the process to keep momentum going;

- The Study will be Shetland wide; as Unst is part of Shetland, views will be sought from the rest of Shetland.

At this point, one audience member stated that Unst and Fetlar are the only islands that share a ferry and are therefore unique (“a special case”). Sharing the ferry leads to travel time constraints. The biggest constraint according to some residents in Unst is Fetlar.

It was asked when the Study will be at the stage of Final Reporting (e.g. STAG 2 recommendation). MC indicated that this was planned for autumn 2008, though the study will be concluded sooner if possible. The speed of the study will depend on the number/range of options raised.

If the study recommends that a fixed link is to be developed, some residents expressed a concern as to what would happen (or would not happen) in the meantime.

It was stated that the day of the meeting was a prime example of the problems of not having a dedicated ferry service, with the ferry twice unable to get to Unst as it had to go to Fetlar. Issues with regards to the Voicebank and VMS not being kept up to date were also raised.

RF then gave a presentation on the consultation process and how people could get involved. RF also spoke through the questionnaire.

There was some discussion over Faroese tunnels with the question asked if it was possible to build tunnels similar to those in the Faroes or not due to EU standards? AW explained that there is currently a wider study ongoing looking precisely into the possibilities of developing tunnels in Shetland and the standards that these would have to be constructed to. AW said that the standards were related to various factors including the number of vehicles passing through the tunnel each day and safety issues. In short, it was felt that standards needed to be relevant to the size of the tunnel. It was confirmed that dangerous goods are allowed to travel through tunnels.

It was said that it would be inevitable that if greater freedom of movement was provided through the provision of a fixed link, this would be matched by increased travel. Leading from this, AW raised the point that if/once a fixed link is built, it could change the island forever. Society will change. People take transport for granted, though it is very important for communities. AW said that this study is precisely interested in matters such as how local people regard issues such as community spirit, social fabric etc. and encouraged residents to respond to the questionnaire, providing as much information, views and comments as they wished.

It was said that there is a bottleneck effect at Unst caused by the impact of the Yell Sound ferries, particularly when there are tourists visiting the island.

Some residents at the meeting mentioned that they frequently encountered problems booking a place on the ferry on Sundays. AW stated that this just showed that fares are perhaps not always as important as is made out – capacity and length of the day are other important factors.

There was some discussion over the provision of information for tourists on the Yell Sound services. Rather than just asking travellers to wait in their cars until their fare has been collected, it should read please wait until the **return** fare has

been collected, which would ease the confusion as to whether the tourists have to pay on the Bluemull Sound ferries.

In the summer, due to capacity constraints, tourists cannot always travel across to Unst. It was stated that many tourists are left sitting in the unbooked queue because they are not aware that they should book. It was agreed that there is therefore a need for better information provision for tourists as current arrangements are having a potentially negative impact on the B&Bs on the island.

The SIC vans / workmen that come across to the island in the summer to tar the roads also reduce valuable the ferry's capacity and prevent tourists getting to Unst.

It was said that tourists do not realise that they can travel to Unst and Fetlar as many times as they like (at no cost). This would be good for tourism. There are big tourism opportunities in Unst with the RAF bods.

It was questioned what impact the free fares have had on Unst. Many thought that free fares have had a good impact – tourist numbers were very good in summer 2007. However, it was restated that fares are not everything – factors such as length of day, capacity etc. are also important.

It was considered that, in the future, the North Isles will become increasingly important for tourism due to the chronic lack of accommodation in Lerwick. Unst has a plentiful supply of accommodation which could relieve pressures elsewhere – this is why this study needs to be viewed as one that could have an impact on Shetland as a whole.

The question was asked as to what the latest was on the Bressay fixed link? AW stated that many of the problems in the past were caused by the fact that there was nowhere near the same level of consultation as proposed for the Bluemull STAG. However, now that the Bressay study has been revisited, there has been much more consultation and the study is progressing well. A Bressay fixed link is back in with the pot of Council projects and will be compared against the likes of Whalsay link improvements, the outcomes from this Bluemull STAG and any other transport studies ZetTrans take forward. One resident stated that the last time a study was done into the development of a potential fixed link between Unst and Yell, around 85% of the island was in favour of a fixed link. It was therefore asked "if the Bressay community is split on the issue, would the Bluemull options jump the queue?" AW stated that this question could not be answered until the studies have been concluded.

The lack of emergency cover on Bluemull Sound was raised as a concern by some residents. One resident stated that it was only due to the goodness of the ferry crew that a family member was able to reach hospital during an emergency. The Unst community were led to believe that the air ambulance was the main method. It was agreed that the current arrangements required clarification.

The question was asked to what extent can this study inform the development of short term improvements across the Bluemull? It was confirmed that the primary focus of the study is into finding a long-term option for improving transport links across the Bluemull Sound. Once this is decided, short term options can be considered. To do this, first there is a need to understand the problems that the public face and the options that can address these. However, the study needs to take the long-term view and if any short-term options are to be taken forward, these need to be complimentary and fit within the context of the long-term option.

One resident stated that many people in Shetland see that a primary role of developing a Bressay fixed link would be to facilitate development. However, developing a fixed link to Unst would primarily be in order to sustain the population. Many felt that Unst would close down if a fixed link is not developed to

the island. AW noted however that some people in Bressay would make other arguments e.g. because they are so close to Lerwick, they are forgotten about. AW also emphasised that it was important not to turn the study into an Unst vs Bressay argument. First off all, it is critical that this study understands all the issues that the future transport link must seek to address.

It was considered by residents at the meeting that the population in Fetlar would also support a fixed link between Unst and Yell as this would allow them to benefit from a dedicated ferry service. In terms of the potential location of this service, it was felt that many Fetlar residents would like to travel to Mid Yell, as this is where the health and leisure facilities are located. However, it was also noted that some residents in Fetlar also work in Unst and so this might not be the most suitable location for them. Water taxis were suggested as one potential option that could be looked at.

Finally, the question was asked if there is a chance that the development of fixed links would lead to services being rationalised or lost (e.g. schools, health centres, nursing homes). While this study will pose these questions to the service providers, it was generally acknowledged that such services would be apprehensive to provide too much information, nor would they probably be in a position to do so.

AW closed by thanking all residents for attending the meeting and urged all in attendance to respond as fully as possible to the consultation.

B2. Fetlar Initial Public Meeting

Project:	Bluemull Sound STAG Study	Job No/Ref:	55280TABT / 701
Purpose:	Fetlar – Initial Public Meeting	Date held:	22/01/08
Held at:	Fetlar Hall	Made by:	Richie Fraser
Present:	Fetlar residents (approximately 30 in attendance) Emma Perring ZetTrans Allan Wishart ZetTrans David Polson Shetland Islands Council Richie Fraser Faber Maunsell	Distribution:	
Apologies:			

No.	Item	Action By
	<p>AW outlined the role of ZetTrans and that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the study that was being launched into examining the long-term transport links/options across Bluemull Sound. The format of the meeting was a presentation outlining how the study would be undertaken and how stakeholders could get involved. There would be opportunities for the audience to ask questions at different intervals.</p> <p>EP then gave a presentation covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history behind transport links between the islands and what the RTS (published March 2007) says in relation to Bluemull Sound; (<i>in short the RTS proposes a STAG study to review all options for improving the link in the long term</i>); • The reasons why there is a need to undertake this study e.g. three-fold: infrastructure approaching the end of its lifespan; there are constraints/problems with the current service; and there is the opportunity to tie this study into parallel studies (fixed links review and Fetlar breakwater) that are currently being undertaken; • The overall purpose of the Study, as agreed by the Bluemull STAG group (EP noted who this group comprises and that they have an important role in guiding the process – however, they are not a decision making body); • Information about STAG (EP discussed the nine stages) and its importance (e.g. a STAG assessment is required for all transport appraisal projects for which funding from the Scottish Government is required; principles of open and transparent etc.); • The first stage of STAG is where the Study is currently at – and this is one of the most important stages. It is very important to find out current and future issues so that objectives can be developed and thereafter options generated to address these. • While the study was starting from a clean sheet, it was emphasised that the study team already have a sound knowledge of some of the current issues that need to be resolved (through previous consultation on the Transport Strategy) and the information collected in the past will be fed into the process to keep momentum going; • The Study will be Shetland wide; as Fetlar is part of Shetland, views will be sought from the rest of Shetland. <p>Before discussing the consultation process and inviting comments, EP provided an update on the Fetlar Breakwater capital bid. EP said that there was mixed</p>	

news on this front. On a positive note, as a result of the recent study/option appraisal into the breakwater, the breakwater and small boat berthing facilities were included in a Draft Report to Council on the proposed Capital Programme. However, it is scheduled for design work in 09/10, with the breakwater being proposed for construction in 2010/11. It was noted however that other plans could still come onto the Capital Plan which could push the Fetlar Breakwater further down the line.

Some members of the public were disheartened by this news, questioning the point of the current study if it is just going to lead to more broken promises (the point was made that Senior Councillors and Council officials had visited the island previously and reportedly stated that Fetlar would definitely get a breakwater and boat berthing facility). One resident said that it was becoming impossible to make a living from agriculture and that a boat berthing facility was necessary to sustain the population.

With the current ferry service, it is difficult to get employment, which in turn makes regeneration of the island an almost impossible task.

Knock-backs regarding the breakwater is something the residents have been hearing for as long as many of them can remember. One resident stated that he recalled arguments that a breakwater has not been constructed because the island is only home to 100 people...80 people... 60 people... If the programme of the proposed Capital Plan is adhered to, it could be four years before the breakwater and berthing facilities would be provided, leading some residents to pose the question how many people will the island would still be around by then?

One resident stated that every time they go to the ferry terminal, the community is reminded of the lack of forward planning by the Council (e.g. there is only space for 4 cars in each queue for boarding the ferry – does this infer that smaller ferries will be operating on the route in the future?)

Despite the disappointment felt by some residents, others recognised that, while it may just be a 'crumb', getting the breakwater on the Capital Plan was the biggest advance in 10 years. It was also considered that there was generally a lot more optimism in Shetland on the back of the newly elected Council. Some residents recognised that there has already been some progress under the new Council and that this gives the community a base to push forward on.

It was also stated that this study provided the Fetlar community with another avenue of furthering their case for a breakwater. For example, if a fixed link is developed between Unst and Yell, Fetlar would presumably require a dedicated ferry service based on the island. It was also thought that Unst residents would give 100% support to a Fetlar breakwater, especially since they also want improvements immediately so it is important that the community keep pushing for it.

AW reiterated to the community that they should not let the opportunity provided by this study go and should embrace it fully – providing their views on the issues, problems, constraints and improvements that should be made to the Bluemull service.

If Fetlar is provided with a dedicated ferry service, it was not considered that the timetable would require changing too much – people will still generally travel at the same start and end times. DP pointed out that there will be a need for a new terminal somewhere. The Council is having to put on extremely expensive band-aids to the Gutcher and Belmont terminals every couple of years.

One resident recalled how he came to the island on 1974 and at that time the school role was down to 2. However, within a very short space of time the population jumped up to 14. Conditions are a lot better today than they were back

then (i.e. no hydro-electric, poorer ferry service), but it seems that the island has come full circle again as all the children move south. It was reminded that the population of the island was once around 800 and that despite being the fourth largest island in Shetland, Fetlar is the only island without a sheltered harbour.

It was asked if there was any concern in Unst over the rationalisation of services? RF confirmed that the consultation process will seek to draw these views out. AW agreed that it is important to think ahead and collect views on this.

It was considered that there was an immediate, definable benefit of having a ferry based on Fetlar that could be felt by all North Isles. A breakwater could be built relatively quickly and would be cheaper than a fixed link.

In terms of the operation of the ferry, one resident stated that it was disappointing that in 2008, in addition to allowing the ferry to berth in Fetlar during the summer, it would have been good if the skipper was also given the responsibility to decide if the ferry could berth in the winter. DP said that this is something that could be considered for next winter's arrangements.

One resident stated that the construction of a breakwater does not come with any revenue costs (i.e. it is not like laying on an additional ferry service) and that the proposed £2.9m that it would cost to develop the breakwater would be to the benefit of the three North Isles – so in reality it is not that expensive. Sometimes the Fetlar breakwater is seen as just benefiting Fetlar, but the benefits that it would provide for all three islands need to be recognised.

It was asked, "if a fixed link is built between Unst and Fetlar, would this be free?" Leading from this, one resident stated that if there were no tolls on the potential fixed link, the Fetlar ferry should also be free. AW could not provide an answer as to whether tolls would be put onto any potential fixed link at this stage but highlighted the case in the Faroe Islands. In order to pay back the development trusts (who loaned the authority a substantial percentage of the construction costs), road tolls were introduced for a set period (i.e. 15 years or so – this was the timescale that it was estimated it would require to pay back the development trusts). However, the number of cars using the tunnels were actually much greater than anticipated and so the authority were in a position to pay back the development trusts much earlier and therefore also reduce/remove tolls earlier than planned.

AW closed by thanking all residents for attending the meeting and urged all in attendance to respond as fully as possible to the consultation.

B3. Yell Initial Public Meeting

Project:	Bluemull Sound STAG Study	Job No/Ref:	55280TABT / 701
Purpose:	Yell – Initial Public Meeting	Date held:	24/01/08
Held at:	Mid Yell School	Made by:	Richie Fraser
Present:	Yell residents (approximately 20 in attendance) Emma Perring ZetTrans Allan Wishart ZetTrans David Polson Shetland Islands Council Richie Fraser Faber Maunsell	Distribution:	
Apologies:			

No.	Item	Action By
	<p>AW outlined the role of ZetTrans and that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the study that was being launched into examining the long-term transport links/options across Bluemull Sound. The format of the meeting was a presentation outlining how the study would be undertaken and how stakeholders could get involved. There would be opportunities for the audience to ask questions at different intervals.</p> <p>EP then gave a presentation covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history behind transport links between the islands and what the RTS (published March 2007) says in relation to Bluemull Sound; (<i>in short the RTS proposes a STAG study to review all options for improving the link in the long term</i>); • The reasons why there is a need to undertake this study e.g. three-fold: infrastructure approaching the end of its lifespan; there are constraints/problems with the current service; and there is the opportunity to tie this study into parallel studies (fixed links review and Fetlar breakwater) that are currently being undertaken; • The overall purpose of the Study, as agreed by the Bluemull STAG group (EP noted who this group comprises and that they have an important role in guiding the process – however, they are not a decision making body); • Information about STAG (EP discussed the nine stages) and its importance (e.g. a STAG assessment is required for all transport appraisal projects for which funding from the Scottish Government is required; principles of open and transparent etc.); • The first stage of STAG is where the Study is currently at – and this is one of the most important stages. It is very important to find out current and future issues so that objectives can be developed and thereafter options generated to address these. • While the study was starting from a clean sheet, it was emphasised that the study team already have a sound knowledge of some of the current issues that need to be resolved (through previous consultation on the Transport Strategy) and the information collected in the past will be fed into the process to keep momentum going; • The Study will be Shetland wide; as the North Isles is part of Shetland, views will be sought from the rest of Shetland. <p>RF then gave a presentation about the consultation process and how people could get involved. RF also spoke through the questionnaire.</p>	

There was a consensus that most Yell residents do not use the Bluemull Sound service. Greatest use of Bluemull Sound was by Unst and Fetlar residents.

It was asked whether consideration had been given to the effects of the development of a fixed link on various services e.g. the police? It was considered that a fixed link could lead to the development of a single economic unit (involving Unst and Yell).

It was thought that the impacts of introducing a fixed link could not be predicted – and this was something which would only be learned over time if one was in place (e.g. with regards to the effects on service provision on Yell and Unst).

The big impact related to the development of a fixed link according to some was the travel flexibility that this would provide.

While the high costs of maintaining the inter-islands ferry services were recognised, it was highlighted that these play a vital role in retaining the islands' intrinsic character. It was hoped that this point would at least be considered by island residents during the consultation process. The role of the ferry service in helping to shape the environmental character of Shetland's islands was a factor that should not be underestimated.

If SIC implemented an Orkney pricing model for the inter-islands ferry services, this would also have major repercussions on travel patterns throughout Shetland.

The point was made that 'times change'. Many of the audience recalled the *MV Earl* which previously operated, stating that there has been a huge advance in the ferry service provided since the Earl operated. At the time that the Earl was running, islanders would never have believed that people would be able to commute from Yell to Lerwick for work. It was stated that many people have remained on Yell because although they may work in Lerwick, they do not necessarily want to live there. The advancements to the ferry service have thus made commuting possible for Yell residents and allowed them to remain based on the island.

The same was said with respect to businesses. If businesses have confidence that their costs will not increase, it will continue to be viable for them to stay on the island. It was emphasised that it is the small businesses that keep the island going.

One local resident in attendance stated that over the 13 years that he had lived on Yell, it has probably cost him around £10-12k to commute off the island to the mainland. This is not bad and is probably the same as it would cost to commute from the outskirts of London to the city centre over a 3/4 year period. Also, it has only been on a handful of occasions that he has been unable to commute due to the ferry being cancelled. On the whole, the ferry services have been great so he would be sad to see them go. The Yell Sound service is excellent, though island residents no longer know all of the crew men.

It was reiterated that there have been a lot of changes to Shetland's transport services over the years. Each community used to be self-contained, and for many people in the outlying areas, going to Lerwick used to be a big deal. Given the ease of getting to Lerwick nowadays, it is easy for people to take it for granted but so many aspects of life dependent on transport.

One of the good things about Shetland's ferries is that they are so frequent and so cheap. Islanders often take the ferry service for granted and see it as like jumping on the bus.

It was said that visiting the islands on the ferry is a key part of Shetland's tourism

industry. Ferries are a unique selling point, and hence the development of fixed links could have an adverse effect in this regard. However, it was suggested that if ferries were to be replaced by fixed links, there may still be private opportunities for water taxis to operate. In contrast, one resident put forward the view that residents are the main users of the ferries with some requiring to use the ferry everyday for work purposes. Therefore the fact that the development of a fixed link would remove an island's status as an 'island' is less of an issue for local residents.

The Unst ferry service is very important. The biggest single problem facing the outer-isles is depopulation. It was stated that if you have an island with 1200 residents and you lose 30 or so, this would generally go unnoticed. But when an island gets to the point that Fetlar is at now (i.e. 60 people) it becomes very hard to sustain any sort of social fabric (e.g. having enough people to run a hall committee etc.) If things go on for another 50/60 years as they have been in Yell and Unst (with people leaving the islands due to economic difficulties and the need to commute for work), it is feared that these islands could soon find their populations down to a size similar to Fetlar. This is why it is so important that fixed links are developed according to some. It was stated that fixed links will help keep young folk on the North Isles.

At this point it was acknowledged that different opinions will be gathered from different groups during the consultation period.

According to some, there is the perception by some islanders (i.e. Yell, Unst, Fetlar, Whalsay etc.) that people living on Shetland Mainland do not realise how important the ferries are to them. Speed is of the essence in identifying and thereafter implementing the option that is deemed most feasible and appropriate. The view was also put that the music venue in Lerwick is of no point to the islands.

One resident pointed to the situation of Burra which has had a fixed link developed to connect it to Shetland's Mainland and ever since has seen the population in the area boom.

Questions were asked over the time duration of this study. It was emphasised that while the study itself would not take long (i.e. months), most time consuming is the process of gaining consent for implementing the preferred option (i.e. gaining agreement on standards, securing funding etc.) It was also restated that the findings from the parallel tunnels standards study that is being undertaken would be fed into this STAG study. For example, there would be no point in pursuing the option of a fixed link for Bluemull if the tunnels study establishes that this is not technically feasible.

AW closed by thanking all residents for attending the meeting and urged all in attendance to respond as fully as possible to the consultation.

B4. Unst Initial Consultation Feedback Meeting

Project:	Bluemull Sound STAG Study	Job No/Ref:	55280TABT / 701
Purpose:	Unst – Initial Consultation Feedback Meeting	Date held:	19/02/08
Held at:	Baltasound Hall, Unst	Made by:	Paul Finch
Present:	Cllr Robert Henderson SIC (Chair of Meeting) Emma Perring ZetTrans Paul Finch Faber Maunsell	Distribution:	
Apologies:	Cllr Alan Wishart SIC Cllr Iris Hawkins SIC		
In attendance	Cllr Josie Simpson SIC Robert Thomson SIC – Community Worker Laurence Robertson Chair, Unst CC + 15 members of community		

No.	Item	Action By
1.	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Cllr Henderson opened the meeting, welcoming all attending. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present the initial findings from the initial consultation work that has been undertaken to date. It provides an opportunity to check that the initial findings are broadly felt to be correct, and to ensure that the right interpretation of the results is being made. It also provides a further opportunity to register comment.</p> <p>Emma Perring went on to provide some background to the study, including the study aim, and explain the process that is being used, and the different steps.</p> <p>Paul Finch continued the presentation, providing a recap on the consultation work that has been undertaken to date. He then went on to provide an overview of key findings from the residents surveys, and the stakeholder discussions. He ended the presentation making five key summary findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many perceive the existing arrangements as being good and reliable for a ferry service 2. There are a number of inter-related timetable/vessel/crew issues: Weekends; Constraints at peak periods; Irregular timetable; gaps (for example at lunchtime) 3. Awareness that terminals and vessels are getting older 4. For residents, Unst and Yell appear quite independent, not so for Fetlar 5. Arguments for fixed links arise mainly from island sustainability, ease of movement and financial efficiency points of view <p>He finished this element of the presentation by requesting comment from the meeting on the findings that had been presented, and asked whether the overarching summary that had been made was fair and a correct interpretation.</p>	
2	<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vans and lorries can't always get onto the ferries. This must cost £s in lost time and productivity. The ferry is the island's "road" – surely roads would be available 24/7 anywhere else? • It was confirmed that you have to be very organised and plan ahead. Those that did not plan ahead could lose out. 	

- It was confirmed that people do commute to the mainland. Currently over 2 hours. People stay over in Lerwick. The time taken would be drastically reduced if a fixed link were provided.
- It was asked how much previous studies had been used, and whether the consultants were aware of this body of work? Examples were the closure of the airport in '94, run down of Saxa Vord in '99 and outright closure in 2006. Unst must be the most researched population.
- PF replied that he was aware of work undertaken following closure of Saxa Vord, previous studies into fixed links, the recent fares study, IATE consultation, and consultation used to help prepare the RTS. He was aware of a previous study into Bluemull Sound undertaken by AB Associates. He noted that the outcomes of the current exercise were very much in line with the outcomes of other recent consultation work.
- It was commented that studies undertaken in '94 and '99 both pointed towards improvements in transport in order to address depopulation. If transport is not sorted, then there will be no-one left.
- It was asked how long until *MV Bigga* would need replaced.
- Whilst it was noted that the vessels become technically non-compliant in 2010, it was anticipated that exemptions would be granted to enable the continued operation of the existing vessels affected by this legislation (*MV Hendra, MV Geira, MV Fivla, MV Bigga*), particularly as SIC were currently planning for their replacement.
- There was a concern expressed that during the overhaul period, if something took longer than expected, or the vessels continued to age and became more unreliable, the route could be left with only one vessel on the route.
- It was expressed that there was an urgent need for ferries capable of carrying 25 cars, particularly for the summer, considering the importance of tourism.
- There was concern expressed at plans to take the larger ferries off the route during the summer period, in order to relieve *MV Leirna*. It was noted that the difference between the January carryings, and the Summer carryings was 125 – 150%.
- It was asked why the household questionnaires were not sent to each household in Yell, as well as in Unst and Fetlar.
- EP replied that the approach was the one decided by the Bluemull STAG Group, recognising that for many people in Yell, there was limited interaction with the Bluemull Sound ferry service. It was considered that it was a more appropriate use of resources to make the questionnaire available, along with pre-paid envelopes, at public places, and on the Bluemull Sound Ferries.
- Cllr Robert Henderson commented that he wasn't overly surprised by the response gained from Yell residents, commenting that for many it wasn't a relevant issue for them. However, if through the study issues come out

which will affect Yell, particularly issues such as the re-organisation of service delivery, then there will be a renewed necessity to engage with Yell residents.

- The view was expressed that if a fixed link was provided, then the population would increase, leading to a demand for more services delivered locally. This is in contrast to a declining population, with services delivered on a more centralised basis.
- EP commented that a study was currently underway with regard to the dynamics of island population / depopulation. This would feed into this study.
- It was highlighted that something has to happen now. If it takes, say 8 years to build a tunnel, then the existing ferry infrastructure won't necessarily last that long.
- It was asked how far ahead into the future would the appraisal look with regards to the increasing price of fuel.
- PF commented that the appraisal has to be undertaken over a period of 60 years, and there is specific guidance from HM Treasury / Scottish Government with regard to how to estimate future costs of fuel, values of time etc.
- Cllr Robert Henderson enquired as to the view of the meeting, with regard to the level of support for a fixed link. The response of those attending the meeting was that there was strong support for the development of a Yell-Unst fixed link.
- The discussion turned to issues surrounding the affordability of fixed links. Cllr Josie Simpson argued that it was necessary to ensure that the very best case was made in support of fixed links. It couldn't be afforded by SIC. It would have to go to Edinburgh, and to Europe.
- It was also noted that there was competition for funding within Shetland – from other transport projects, a wider demand for infrastructure development. However, outwith Shetland, there was also considerable pressure. Schemes such as the Forth Road Bridge, the Olympics, the Glasgow Commonwealth Games all will reduce the amount of capital funding that is available. However, the first task was to concentrate on Bluemull Sound and the communities that are served by this ferry link, and make the best job of identifying the case for future investment.

3

Next Steps

To conclude the meeting, PF summarised the next steps and anticipated timescale. The next milestone was the meeting of the Bluemull STAG Group on 03 March, and the work that would be undertaken in finalising the consultation report, and working up the analysis to support the agreed list of study objectives. It is hoped that the IATE event on 22/03/08 could be used to provide an update on the study.

The timetable for the first part of the study is for a draft around Easter.

More detailed appraisal work will then be undertaken between Easter and the summer on the individual options / packages of measures taken forward.

4

Thanks

To end the meeting, Cllr Robert Henderson thanked everyone for their attendance and their input to the study to date. It confirmed that ongoing engagement with the study would play an essential part in helping to ensure that its work, and its findings were correct and robust.

Project updates would continue to be made available on the Bluemull Sound STAG study website, <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/transport/bluemullsound>

B5. Fetlar Initial Consultation Feedback Meeting

Project:	Bluemull Sound STAG Study	Job No/Ref:	55280TABT / 701
Purpose:	Fetlar – Initial Consultation Feedback Meeting	Date held:	20/02/08
Held at:	Fetlar Community Hall	Made by:	Paul Finch
Present:	Cllr Alan Wishart Michael Craigie Paul Finch	SIC (Chair of Meeting) ZetTrans Faber Maunsell	Distribution:
In attendance	Cllr Josie Simpson Cllr Robert Henderson Robert Thomson + 15 members of community	SIC SIC SIC – Community Worker	

No.	Item	Action By
1.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Cllr Alan Wishart opened the meeting, welcoming all attending. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present the initial findings from the initial consultation work that has been undertaken to date. It provides an opportunity to check that the initial findings are broadly felt to be correct, and to ensure that the right interpretation of the results is being made. It also provides a further opportunity to register comment.</p> <p>Michael Craigie went on to provide some background to the study, including the study aim, and explain the process that is being used, and the different steps.</p> <p>Paul Finch continued the presentation, providing a recap on the consultation work that has been undertaken to date. He then went on to provide an overview of key findings from the residents surveys, and the stakeholder discussions. He ended the presentation making five key summary findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many perceive the existing arrangements as being good and reliable for a ferry service 2. There are a number of inter-related timetable/vessel/crew issues: Weekends; Constraints at peak periods; Irregular timetable; gaps (for example at lunchtime) 3. Awareness that terminals and vessels are getting older 4. For residents, Unst and Yell appear quite independent, not so for Fetlar 5. Arguments for fixed links arise mainly from island sustainability, ease of movement and financial efficiency points of view <p>He finished this element of the presentation by requesting comment from the meeting on the findings that had been presented, and asked whether the overarching summary that had been made was fair and a correct interpretation.</p>	
2	<p>Discussion</p> <p>AW summarised the summary, stating that in essence it is clear that something has to happen. It could be ferry or fixed links, but what then happens on Fetlar.</p> <p>It was stated, that on balance there would be a preference for continued use of Gutcher or Belmont as the main ferry terminal for Fetlar – Mid Yell would suffer from unreliability, and would be a longer crossing.</p> <p>The issue of timescales for tunnels was raised. It was agreed that it was likely</p>	

that the main delay could come from gaining approval for funding. A time of say 15 years before implementation could be disastrous for Fetlar, considering age of ferry crew. How would Fetlar be served then?

AW stated that he could not make promises re: when and how. He was aware of the current situation of the ferry crew.

A particular problem was that Fetlar could not get people into the island as there was no chance of them being able to get a job either on Unst or Yell, or even Shetland Mainland.

It was commented that Fetlar was always a poor relation, and missed out on the benefits delivered to Yell, and to a certain extent Unst, by Sullom Voe etc.

The breakwater / small boat facility could provide the opportunity for jobs based on the island – ferry crew, fishing etc.

It was raised that fuel is not kept on the island – Fetlar folk had to leave the island in order to fill up their cars.

The way ahead for the island was a completely separate ferry system from Unst, delivered to suit the needs of Fetlar. This would resolve problems such as timing of the ferry – it would also help resolve issues of say the school bairns.

It is important for the study to look for opportunities for improvement. Young Fetlar folk are living and working in Lerwick. Some could come back if there were opportunities.

It was argued that the breakwater was still needed even if the ferry were not based in Fetlar.

AW noted that at the end of April a committee of the Scottish Parliament were coming to Shetland on a fact finding visit. 28 April Town Hall. The Ferry Inquiry is actively requesting input from communities and organisations. AW encouraged the community to prepare response, and submit them to the inquiry.

The importance of European, as well as Scottish Government funding was also raised.

It was re-confirmed that the community would not accept a “watered down” ferry service.

The possibility of re-introducing the 7am Fetlar departure was raised, as a way of enabling employment off the island. This could be on a “bookings-only” basis, but this would have to be given sufficient time and commitment. It was noted that there were employment opportunities currently in Yell, not being filled by Yell folk.

The situation on Fetlar was considered to be very serious. It was considered that things have to be done quickly, before it was too late.

AW commented that he witnessed on Faroe the re-invigoration of island communities as a result of the construction of a tunnel. Commuting was easier, and house prices were cheaper.

It was also important to continue the free fares on Bluemull Sound. It is a 28 mile round trip to fill up your car if you live in Fetlar – even if you are only driving on Fetlar!

AW recognised the necessity that when living on an island, even on Bressay, everything had to be planned so systematically, as you could not just “pop into town” for say a bolt for the tractor.

It was also raised that it is difficult to get skilled contractors to come to Fetlar as they would waste so much time getting to and from the place.

Cllr Robert Henderson agreed that in his mind there was no doubt about the value of the breakwater in providing opportunities for the island.

It was noted that in Skerries, there were opportunities from Salmon farming which had been taken, but were denied to Fetlar. It was noted that it was about quality, not quantity.

3 **Next Steps**

To conclude the meeting, PF summarised the next steps and anticipated timescale. The next milestone was the meeting of the Bluemull STAG Group on 03 March, and the work that would be undertaken in finalising the consultation report, and working up the analysis to support the agreed list of study objectives. It is hoped that the IATE event on 22/03/08 could be used to provide an update on the study.

The timetable for the first part of the study is for a draft around Easter. More detailed appraisal work will then be undertaken between Easter and the summer on the individual options / packages of measures taken forward.

4 **Thanks**

To end the meeting, AW thanked everyone for their attendance and their input to the study to date. It confirmed that ongoing engagement with the study would play an essential part in helping to ensure that its work, and its findings were correct and robust.

Project updates would continue to be made available on the Bluemull Sound STAG study website, <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/transport/bluemullsound>

B6. Yell Initial Consultation Feedback Meeting

This meeting, scheduled for 21st February 2008, was cancelled due to poor weather affecting travel, but Yell residents were encouraged to get in touch with ZetTrans to get feedback on the consultation

Appendix C: Questionnaire



Introduction

As you may be aware a study is being undertaken *'To identify means of providing sustainable efficient transport links across Bluemull Sound for the long-term and identify the most appropriate actions to carry forward to implementation for the benefit of Shetland as a whole⁵.'*

In order to assist with this study, you are invited to answer the questions below and return in the freepost envelope provided. All adults in the North Isles are invited to respond in this way. Young people will be asked to get involved through schools and/or youth clubs. If you do not receive sufficient questionnaires for the number of adults in your household, please phone (01595) 744868. The closing date for responses to the questionnaire is the **4th February 2008**.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to enable the study team to understand the problems, issues, opportunities and constraints associated with the transport links between Unst, Yell and Fetlar, across Bluemull Sound.

SECTION 1 – Your Travel Patterns

1.1) Where is your usual place of residence? (please tick ONE)

Fetlar Unst Yell

1.2) How often do you use the Bluemull ferry service?

More than once a day	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daily / almost daily	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-3 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>		

⁵ Agreed by Bluemull Sound STAG Group, including North Isles Councillors, and representatives of Fetlar, Unst and Yell Community Councils.

1.3) What ferry route do you most frequently use on your outward trip?

- Unst – Fetlar
- Unst – Yell Do you typically continue via Yell-Mainland service?
- Fetlar – Unst
- Fetlar – Yell Do you typically continue via Yell-Mainland service?
- Yell – Unst
- Yell – Fetlar

1.4) What time do you typically travel on your outward trip?

- Before 9am 4pm-6pm
- 9am-12pm After 6pm
- 12pm-4pm

1.5) What time do you typically travel on your return trip?

- Before 9am 4pm-6pm
- 9am-12pm After 6pm
- 12pm-4pm

1.6) Why do you use the ferry? (Please tick all that apply)

- Commuter to work Education and learning
- Business meetings Health care
- To participate in sports and leisure activities To visit friends and family
- Access childcare Shopping

Other (please specify) _____

1.7) How do you typically travel on the ferry?

- Car – Driver Bus Passenger
- Car – Passenger Foot Passenger

SECTION 2 – Your comments on the current arrangements

2.1) What do you like about the service?

Frequency

Cost

Reliability

Other (please specify) _____

2.2) Do you experience any problems or have any concerns with the current arrangements? Please provide any comments detailing the problems you have experienced.

Vessels _____

Timetable issues _____

Terminals _____

Fares and ticketing _____

Other _____

2.3) Of the problems listed above, which is the most significant?

SECTION 3 – Improvements for the future

3.1) What future improvements would you like to see considered? Please detail any solutions or options you would like to see considered in the study.

Vessels

Timetable issues

Terminals

Fares and ticketing

Fixed links

Other

3.2) If a Yell-Unst fixed link is developed, which ferry route would be most appropriate for Fetlar?

Fetlar – Gutcher (Yell)

Fetlar – Belmont (Unst)

Fetlar – Mid-Yell

SECTION 4 – Additional Comments

Please record here any other comments regarding this study that you may wish to make here, over the page or on a separate sheet.

SECTION 5 – Your Personal Details

Gender: Male Female

Age: 16-29 30-39 40-49 50-59
60-69 70-79 80+

Employment Status:
(please tick ALL that apply)

Employee Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee Part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student Part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other, please specify: _____

Please indicate whether you are registered disabled:

If you would like to discuss this questionnaire about the Bluemull Sound STAG study or would like further information, or would like a copy of this in large font or an alternative language, please phone ZetTrans on (01595) 744868 or email bluemullsound@shetland.gov.uk

Data protection:

Each of these questionnaires has a reference number for the purposes of analysis. The questionnaires have been randomly distributed so cannot be used to identify individual households. Upon submission, the information you have provided will be collated and held by Shetland Islands Council (SIC) and will be held securely in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Please be assured that the information collected will only be used to create anonymous reports.

Appendix D: Questionnaire Results

APPENDIX D: Questionnaire Results

SECTION 1 – Your Travel Patterns

1.1 Where is your usual place of residence?

Unst (267)

Yell (42)

Fetlar (35)

1.2 How often do you use the Bluemull ferry service?

More than once a day (20)

Daily / almost daily (17)

2-3 times a week (51)

Weekly (123)

Monthly (69)

Occasionally (65)

Never (1)

Other comments:

- Use the service as it is required
- Would use more if a fixed link was in place
- A few times a month
- Seasonally (including more in the summer than the winter)

1.3 What ferry route do you most frequently use on your outward trip?

Unst – Yell (258), Do you typically continue via Yell-Mainland service? (237)

Unst – Fetlar (9)

Fetlar – Yell (27), Do you typically continue via Yell – Mainland service? (27)

Fetlar – Unst (14)

Yell – Unst (46)

Yell – Fetlar (15)

1.4 What time do you typically travel on your outward trip?

Before 9am (204)

9am-12pm (122)

12pm-4pm (19)

4pm-6pm (18)

After 6pm (16)

1.5 What time do you typically travel on your return trip?

Before 9am (7)

9am-12pm (9)

12pm-4pm (51)

4pm-6pm (175)

After 6pm (127)

1.6 Why do you use the ferry?

Shopping (256)

To visit friends and family (224)

Health care (153)

Business meetings (86)

Commute to work (72)

To participate in sports and leisure activities (70)

Education and learning (54)

Access childcare (3)

Other comments:

- To go to Lerwick
- To access links to the south (Sumburgh / Aberdeen)
- To go on holiday, attend social events, for days out
- Banking
- Other business reasons such as picking up supplies etc.
- Church
- Charity & volunteer working

1.7 How do you typically travel on the ferry?

Car – Driver (253)

Car – Passenger (101)

Bus Passenger (57)

Foot Passenger (22)

SECTION 2 – Your comments on the current arrangements

2.1 What do you like about the service?

Cost (211)

Reliability (208)

Frequency (186)

Other comments:

- Service is good
- Its free
- Pretty reliable
- Service is better than other islands have
- Frequency is good except at the weekend / Fetlar
- Reliable in good weather
- The crew is very helpful and excellent
- It enables Unst to remain as an island

2.2) Do you experience any problems or have any concerns with the current arrangements?

Timetable issues (159)

- Poor weekend timetable, not enough (early) sailings (Fetlar)
- Poor festive period timetable
- Long waits between ferries (when it goes to Fetlar)
- Timetable poor, was greatly improved in Summer 2007
- Timetables are difficult to understand / in too small print / not user friendly
- Gaps in the timetable for maintenance / lunch
- Connections with the Yell Sound service are poor
- There should be an earlier / another sailing from Belmont between 0705 and 0820 (e.g. at 0745). Booked up
- Can't get the first flight out of Sumburgh in the morning / or attend evening events on the Mainland
- Lack of late ferries
- Tricky to book when going to Whalsay

Fares and ticketing (85)

- Keep free fares on Bluemull Sound
- Concerns if fares were to be reintroduced
- Yell Sound costs are high
- No provision for buying tickets with credit or debit cards
- Expensive for pensioners / senior citizen car drivers
- Free concession tickets / discounts / cards for local residents
- Ferries should be part of the road network

Terminals (60)

- Need for a breakwater at Hamars Ness, Fetlar
- Hamars Ness – smell of septic tank
- In summer parking / waiting areas are inadequate at Hamars Ness
- Terminals are getting old and need replacing / upgrading
- The information boards are not up to date
- Signage at terminals can be confusing for tourists
- Facilities at terminals, no drinking water (Fetlar)
- Waiting rooms and toilets need upgraded
- Base ferry at Belmont terminal
- Ulsta, Yell – lane markings are confusing

Vessels (60)

- Size of the vessels – too small
- Age of the vessels – getting old
- Small size of the vessels causes capacity constraints at peak times and in the summer e.g. 0820 from Belmont often booked up
- Yell ferries too big – leads to a bottleneck at Bluemull
- *Bigga* good size – if taken off for other commitments capacity restricted on other vessel
- Poor disabled access
- Steep stairs to lounge

Other (34)

- Voicebank not updated often enough or clear
- Not always possible to book from Fetlar/Unst without having to disembark and wait for next ferry
- More services between Belmont/Gutcher; long wait in Yell
- Boards not updated enough when ferries are not running to timetable / info boards over festive period not kept up to date
- No night service / emergency cover during the night
- Fact you need to book limits freedom of travel
- Problems when tarring roads
- PT connections poor (buses)
- Poor reliability in bad weather

2.3 Of the problems listed above, which is the most significant?

- Lack of breakwater at Fetlar
- Timetabling issues
- Vessels (size)
- Fares
- Some respondents said that the problems are interrelated

Section 3 – Improvements for the future

3.1 What future improvements would you like to see considered?

Fixed links (201)

- Tunnel Unst-Yell
- Bridge between Unst/Yell with wave or tidal generators to provide electricity for the islands
- Tunnels less weather dependent than a bridge
- Good in the case of medical emergencies
- Yell Sound fixed link
- Tunnel to Fetlar from Mid Yell
- Fixed links would provide freedom of movement
- Crucial to long term viability of the North Isles
- Long term solution
- More money being spent on meetings than on building links / tunnel should be progressed without years of feasibility studies costing £1000's
- Only when you live on Unst are you aware of the problems of commuting on 2 ferries
- Long time since feasibility study – need for a plan soon
- Example of Norwegian tunnels
- Would help with timetable issues. Provide breakwater for Fetlar
- Earlier loading of vehicles onto vessels to keep to timetable
- Bridge
- Concern over centralisation of services – secondary school / health centre

- Fixed links would prevent depopulation
- Bring in fixed link before ferries have to be replaced
- Most cost effective solution

Timetable issues (99)

- Improve weekend timetable
- Improved Fetlar timetable especially at weekends
- Make timetable / notices more user friendly
- Lengthen service day on Bluemull Sound
- Earlier first run from Fetlar
- Dedicated Fetlar based ferry. This and breakwater would alleviate timetable issues
- Service from Belmont between 0705 and 0820
- Belmont / Gutcher runs every 15/20 minutes
- Keep the ferries running in the middle of the day
- Earlier and later (bookable) ferries – attend events on Mainland / Yell
- Better connections with Yell e.g. change of 5 minutes to the times to allow time to time to travel between Bluemull and Yell
- 2 vessel timetable

Fares and ticketing (76)

- Keep free fares
- Free fares / discounts / passes for locals & the elderly
- Pay a fixed price for unlimited travel over a period of 6 months
- Fetlar residents should not have to pay – residents have to shop regularly in Lerwick and no fuel is available on the island
- Fares for non residents
- If charges have to be brought in, should be equal with other routes e.g. Whalsay

Terminals (54)

- Upgrades or replace existing terminals with new ones
- General maintenance, keeping tidy, improved waiting rooms etc. Fresh water supply to toilet block (Fetlar)
- Hamars Ness breakwater
- Shop or café at Belmont like Gutcher
- Berth ferry overnight at Unst
- Widen approach roads to allow stacking of vehicles while waiting on ferries
- Improve info boards & information for tourists
- Mid Yell terminal
- Upgrading to accommodate bigger ferries
- Separate lanes for Yell and Unst/Fetlar traffic at Toft – allow Fetlar/Unst travellers to get to Gutcher in plenty of time instead of being stuck behind Yell traffic and rushing to catch connecting ferry

Vessels (54)

- Fetlar based ferry (as in Summer 2007)
- Fetlar based ferry would free up Bluemull ferry for more runs in morning between Belmont/Gutcher
- Own service for Unst / base ferry on Unst
- Bigger ferries with more capacity
- 2 *Bigga* sized ferries
- New vessels
- Better disabled / child access

Other (16)

- All ferries direct between Fetlar/Yell
- Time of next ferry displayed at terminal
- Improve lane signage at Ulsta
- Water taxi for late night service
- Improved Voicebank
- Tunnel at Yell should take priority over Unst fixed link
- Window for booking onto the ferry is too restrictive
- Breakwater could open up more opportunities for Fetlar (fishing, agriculture, tourism etc)
- Incentives for car sharing – to reduce the amount of one person vehicles using the ferries
- Improved bus service from Unst to Lerwick
- 0820 Belmont ferry has a passenger bus – suggestion that this should pick passengers up at Gutcher instead to free up car space

3.2 If a Yell-Unst fixed link is developed, which ferry route would be most appropriate for Fetlar?

Fetlar – Gutcher (Yell) (104)

Fetlar – Mid Yell (81)

Fetlar – Belmont (Unst) (67)

Section 4 – Additional Comments

- Consideration of a ferry terminal at Uyeasound?
- Earlier loading of vehicles to keep to the timetable
- New vessels and terminals the way forward – fixed link would be a disaster for Unst
- Ferry route could go to Gutcher/Mid Yell, like the Skerries ferry which goes to Vidlin/Lerwick
- Put Yell ferries to Whalsay and the two Whalsay ferries to Unst / Fetlar alongside the *Bigga*
- Mid Yell terminal would provide easier access to services for Fetlar residents
- Mid Yell is further distance by sea than Gutcher and crossing is rough
- What is the shortest and most cost effective solution?
- High winds would close a bridge on a regular basis
- Fetlar – Gutcher cheapest and most convenient and weatherproof – Fetlar – Mid Yell would make sense if there was a terminal at Mid Yell
- Removal of fares on Bluemull should be better advertised
- Some respondents do not want a fixed link
- Concern about services being lost to Yell and jobs lost as a result. Unst would become a suburb of Yell?
- Unst should remain as an island
- Fixed link would allow living in Unst working on Mainland
- Easier to visit elderly relatives in Unst if a fixed link
- Depopulation will only stop if there is a link on both Sounds
- Fixed link would boost tourism
- Fixed links + better ferry provision → enable original island residents to remain on their respective islands instead of working in Lerwick – possibility for remote working
- “Service operating normally” message is unhelpful – could there be a “Next ferry leaves at...for Unst...for Fetlar”?

Section 5 – Your Personal Details

Gender:

Male (171)

Female (161)

Age:

16-29 (23)

30-39 (33)

40-49 (69)

50-59 (80)

60-69 (74)

70-79 (39)

80+ (16)

Employment Status:

Employee Full-time (121)

Retired (107)

Employee Part-time (49)

Self-employed (46)

Student Part-time (3)

Student Full-time (2)

Other – included those who specified they are unemployed / housewife / volunteer and charity work

10 respondents to the questionnaire are registered disabled.

Fetlar residents told us...

- There is not an early enough ferry leaving Fetlar in the morning
- The ferry timetable at the weekend is poor, there are not enough ferries
- Timetable can be difficult to understand (sharing with Unst)
- Not always possible to book from Fetlar/Unst without having to disembark and wait for next ferry
- Unable to secure skilled workers – no one wants to wait 5 hours after doing a half hour job
- Connectivity problems with Yell Sound ferries
- There is a need for a breakwater at Hamars Ness
- Dedicated Fetlar ferry / more runs to Fetlar if a fixed link built between Unst and Yell
- Fixed link to Unst not at cost of reduced or lesser service to Fetlar
- Basing ferry on Fetlar worked well in summer 2007
- Lack of breakwater and dedicated Fetlar ferry impacts on all other issues
- There is no drinking water at the Hamars Ness terminal and there is a smell from the septic tank. Poor washing facilities, toilet operates on salt water
- In the summer parking/waiting areas are inadequate at Hamars Ness
- Free fares are good for Fetlar. Free fares for locals
- Free fares makes living on Fetlar fairer – no fuel pumps on the island
- A ferry route from Fetlar – Mid Yell would be beneficial for accessing services but further to travel than Gutcher and rougher crossing
- Boards, Voicebank not updated enough. Display time of next ferry at terminal
- Improve information for tourists

Yell residents told us...

- Vessels too small; capacity problems
- New & larger vessels required
- Vessels are not disabled friendly
- Gaps in timetable
- Terminals require replacing / upgrading. Fetlar breakwater
- No waiting room at Ulsta
- Free fares should be kept / discounts for locals / re-introduce fares for non residents
- Dedicated Fetlar ferry / better weekend timetable to Fetlar
- Fixed links (tunnels predominately)
- Improve population and freedom of movement
- Those against the idea of a fixed link stated that they liked living on an island. Loss of ferry would be a big blow to the community / people move away to find employment
- Cutting of services if Unst and Yell linked?
- Fixed link on Yell, more ferries on Bluemull

The majority of responses presented in this appendix are based on responses received by Unst residents. This is why there is not a specific "Unst residents told us" section above, as this appendix has already presented these findings.

Appendix E: Consultation List

APPENDIX E: Consultation List*

*In addition to questionnaire responses

Face to Face meetings – Unst

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Malcolm Spence	Unst Leisure Centre
Dr Andrew Hamilton	Unst Health Centre
Pat Burns	P & T Coaches
Aaron Foord	Foords Chocolates
Sonny Priest	Valhalla Brewery
Frances, Unst Resident	Baltasound Hotel drop in
Laurence Robertson, Chairman Unst Community Council	Baltasound Hotel drop in
Fiona Stirling	Unst Response Team (HIE)
Ross Gazey	PURE Energy Company
	Uyeasound Primary School
S1 & S2	Baltasound Junior High School

Telephone Calls – Unst

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
David Richardson	Saxa Vord Resort
Sarah McBurnie	See Shetland Tours
Ian Richardson	North Isles Industries
Ian Thomason	Uyeasound Salmon Company
Jack Barclay	Unst Inshore Services
Dennis Johnson	Lakeland Unst
Dennis Buddle	Unstoyst
David Niven	Unst Shellfish Ltd

Face to Face Meetings – Fetlar

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Malcolm Smith	RSPB Fetlar
Nic Boxall	Fetlar Shop, B&B, PO
	Fetlar Primary School

Telephone Calls – Fetlar

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Rose Duncan	SOLI Fetlar
Fiona Thomason	District Nurse, Fetlar

Face to Face Meetings – Yell

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Cllr Laura Baisley	Mid Yell Leisure Centre drop in
Robert Jamieson (R G Jamieson)	Mid Yell Leisure Centre drop in
Ian Clark (ex Yell ferry crew member)	Mid Yell Leisure Centre drop in
Keith Nisbet (skipper of the Bigga)	Mid Yell Leisure Centre drop in
Dr Mark Aquilina	Yell Health Centre
Eco Schools Committee	Mid Yell Junior High School
Michelle Morris Jackie Smiles	Initiative at the Edge (IATE)
Andy Ross	Wind Dog Café / Centre for Creative Industries
<i>Bigga Crew</i>	
<i>Fivla Crew</i>	

Telephone Calls – Yell

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Johnny Wilson	Thompson Brothers Salmon
David Coutts	SNPC Ltd
Robert Jamieson	R G Jamieson

Telephone Calls to Other Key Stakeholders (Mainland Shetland)

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
David Okill	SEPA
Jonathan Swale	Scottish Natural Heritage
David Paul	JBT
James Roberts	Shetland Line (1984) Ltd and Steamline
David Watson	Shetland Enterprise
Neville Davis	Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Duncan MacDougall	Fire & Rescue Service
Neil Leslie	Northwards
Peter Smith	Ambulance Service
Andy Steven	Visit Shetland

Responses received by ZetTrans (bluemullsound@shetland.gov.uk)

Name	Company / Organisation / Other
Stewart Owers	Sandisons (Unst) Ltd
Bob Kelman	Scottish & Southern Energy
Pamela Abernethy (Clerk)	Northmavine Community Council
Dr Susan Laidlaw, on behalf of Sandra Laurenson	NHS Shetland
Finlay MacBeath, on behalf of Chief Inspector Malcolm Bell	Northern Constabulary
Minnie Mouatt	
Morag Gerrard (on behalf of)	Sandness and Walls Community Council