

APPENDIX F – Meeting Notes

F.1 Bressay Public Meeting

FILE NOTE – Bressay Link Consultation, Stage 1

Stakeholder Consultation: Bressay Link Consultation - Public Discussion Meeting

Method: Meeting

Date Held: 8th October, 7.30pm Bressay Hall

Meeting chaired by: Cllr Allan Wishart

Inputs by: Michael Craigie and Emma Perring

Notes Taken by: Emma Perring

Estimated Attendance: 55 – 60 people

Allan Wishart, Councillor for Bressay and Chair of ZetTrans, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the officers present. He outlined the purpose of the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the issues, opportunities and constraints that the transport link should address and an opportunity to discuss the consultation process, to date.

Michael Craigie, Lead Officer for ZetTrans, talked through a short presentation, recapping on the previous meeting and addressing issues that had so far arisen in the process.

- He explained that the process wasn't sudden, as the need to revisit the issue had been raised as part of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) consultation process, which began in 2005;
- He reassured the community that the process wasn't being undertaken to pay lip service to a decision already undertaken, but it is sincere, open and transparent;
- He explained that the SIC has a policy to replace vessels every 20 years, and the Leirna would be 20 years old in 2012 and this was only one of the reasons that this process was being undertaken;
- The stage of the STAG process will provide the foundations from which objectives can be set and options to meet these can be developed;
- The questionnaire has had both positive and negative comments: some people feel it is too open and are not sure how to respond. The purpose is to enable people to record their ideas and issues and that people shouldn't be constrained by the questions, but see it as an opportunity to put down what is important to them.

Cllr Wishart then invited questions and comment from the floor, highlighting the importance of considering the impacts of the different options.

The following points were raised:

- There are 5 vessels in the SIC fleet currently older than the Leirna, and the Leirna won't need to be replaced in 2012. All that might be necessary would be to re-engine the vessel and extend its life. Michael explained that the SIC policy was an aid to planning;
- People would like to see an earlier ferry laid on to catch early flight and also to be able to book a late ferry when coming back from functions.
- The ferry is a major employer on the Isle, up to 20 people;

- There are times that the frequency could be improved (particularly at off peak times), for example the gap between the 2pm and 3pm ferry;
 - There are affordability issues, when running a business associated with tourism: the journey and costs of fares can prevent people coming to stay on the Isle, and is also a consideration for islanders. During this season the spa had 60 enquiries from Visit Shetland at Sumburgh, but only two resulted in business;
 - Tourists value the ferry as a means of making a break from the Mainland;
 - The time of the last ferries during the week and weekend means visitors have to leave functions early to return to their accommodation;
 - There is no similarity in cost of service for actual distance covered, land vs sea;
 - There is a need to extend the service and make it more affordable, either wise an alternative must be found;
 - Bressay suffers more than other islands due to its proximity to Lerwick;
 - Reference to free ferries in Unst (RAF withdrawal) whilst at the moment it costs 60p to get a box of freight across on the ferry;
 - Ferry fares seem to be stifling business viability and potential tourism development. Another example is the custodian of the Lighthouse who says that visitors are now only staying for the minimum of three days as they don't want to pay for the additional ferry fares for longer. A few years ago they would stay for a week;
- Cllr Wishart explained that the SIC was facing costs in a number of areas and highlighted the importance of ensuring affordability and sustainability.

- There was a question about Road Equivalent Tariffs (RETs) and what the SIC is planning to do about these. Cllr Wishart explained that they had asked to discuss these with the Transport Minister and would ensure that Shetland wouldn't miss out if there were opportunities from this.
- Later in the meeting Tavish Scott, MSP was asked to explain what could be expected from them. He said that consultants were currently examining the issues and the study was expected to conclude by Christmas. As a result of this a trial was expected on the Ullapool-Stornoway route. However there were no plans to introduce RETs to internal ferry routes. Because of the timescales involved, there would be no change in next financial year, but 2009-10 at the earliest. He pointed out that with RETs the taxpayer will be paying in some way, although this hadn't been fully explained, to date. Allan Wishart observed that given RET is linked to public funding, its sustainability could not be taken for granted in the longer term.

The following point, comments and questions were also voiced:

- A fixed link would be a one off capital cost, lasting 100 years or so, with minimal ongoing costs.
- What are the current running costs of the ferry?
- If the Bressay ferry is the only service to make any profit, and the ferry was lost from the fleet, what impact would this have on the running costs of the other ferries and what impact would this have on the 60% subsidy currently provided by national government?

Cllr Wishart highlighted the importance of the next stage of the STAG process, when the full costs of all the various options into the long-term would be known and affordability can be discussed.

- The community would want guarantees if low fare ferry costs were introduced that these would be permanent.
Cllr Wishart explained that any change of this nature cannot necessarily be guaranteed beyond the current Council.
- There was a question about the relevance of the Faroe trip to this study. Allan Wishart said that there are similarities and differences between their circumstances and Shetland. In Faroe a company was set up at arms length from the government, with some funding, but it was also required to raise additional funding. The reason the trip was undertaken was to fill a knowledge gap that existed in Shetland: there is plenty of experience with running ferries and there is knowledge about bridges because of the previous work, but there was limited knowledge about tunnels. He felt that the trip had been very informative and the knowledge gained will inform future work.
- The free ferries to Unst came about because of social deprivation: why has the same not been done for Bressay due to its social deprivation?
Cllr Wishart responded by saying that at the ASCC meeting the North Isles were asking why their transport link wasn't being considered first, and he had said that he felt that Bressay had suffered more than other islands because of its proximity to Lerwick.
- There are suggestions that the LPA are considering a cruise ship pier: could the LPA and SIC join forces and incorporate a tunnel into this construction?
This could be considered in the list of options, depending on LPA intentions.
- The ferry fares are the same as for the other islands, yet the time and distances are different: is this fair, shouldn't fares be by distance?
Allan Wishart said that, in recent times that has been the policy, similar to postage stamps having a single national rate, but the current study into ferry fares will be looking at this and other issues associated with ferry fares, such as the impact of no fares
- It has been estimated that with a fixed link property values would increase by 40%.
There is a need to ensure that if there was to be a fixed link then there would have to be very careful land use planning. That is why it is very important people consider the impacts on planning, service delivery and the economy of Shetland. However, there is also a need to consider the impact of the no nothing option.
- Bressay does not have the infrastructure to support mass housing developments, the upgrade of sewage systems would be years down the line.
- Bressay will become like part of Lerwick if you open it up, it won't be possible to stop development.
- Sandy Cluness has openly stated on the radio that he looked forward to being able to open up Bressay for housing development – is this a

personal view or Council view? Allan Wishart said he was not able to comment not knowing the context in which the comments had been made but said that he had not heard these comments being voiced in the new Council

- At the moment very few businesses are able to operate on Bressay and few have been established in recent years.
- The fuel costs of running the service are very little.
- Would it not be better to carry out this exercise with all island communities rather than making Bressay the guinea pigs each time?
Allan Wishart said that the RTS sets the strategic direction and priorities for Shetland. ZetTrans is now at the stage of looking at each of the individual transport links. There are differences between islands, and it is right that each one should have an individual study.
- There is concern about the need for interim measures to resolve current issues - ferry fares and times, as these issues will remain until the agreed option is implemented.
- In terms of timescales, feedback will be at the end of this month, objectives will be set in early November, with options generated by the end of November. Details of these options will be available after Christmas, study reporting to ZetTrans in March 2008. There will be a second round of consultation with the community when all the options and information regarding these is available.
- Look to expand Bressay Link Group to be able to show to the community how this analysis of options is carried out.
- If fares study means SIC decide to implement 0 cost ferry fares, it would significantly change this debate. There is little time between reporting on the ferry fare study (18 February) and this study reporting (end of March) The option appraisal process would take account of this as an option.
- Free ferries raises lots of issues in itself: sustainability, increase in number of cars wishing to use the service, funding. These will all be covered by the study.
- What are the costs of taking the ferry fares?
- Feel it is acceptable living on an island that you pay something for the service.
- Cost of parking on the Lerwick side is an issue on top of the ferry fare to take a car over.
- If you need a vehicle for your business, 5-6 days a week, this is a significant amount of money.
- Can cost you between £3-4 K per year for a family to use the ferry.
- In terms of long term impact, studies on the impact of fixed links have shown that the population declines for a while, but then rises up again. In Faroe at the moment, however, there are concerns about a hospital on one of the islands closing as they are now more accessible to the main hospital in Torshavn, resulting in over 100 job losses in a community of 5,000.
- Bressay needs significant upgrading of roads, and this would need to be part of any investment and appraisal process.

- There was some concern about the closing date given postal strike. However there will be a box at the shop.
- Views expressed by bairns at school, at a session during the afternoon reflected those of the community – it was excellent – the bairns shot from the heart.

F.2 Primary 4-7, Bressay Primary School

FILE NOTE – Bressay Link Consultation, Stage 1

Stakeholder Consultation: Bressay School: Primary 4-7

Method: Meeting

Date Held: 8th October

Present: 2 teachers, school secretary, 15 children, session facilitated by June Porter and Emma Perring

Notes Made By: Emma Perring

What kinds of things do you currently use the ferry for?

- To go shopping: supermarket, C and Js, Harry's
- To go dancing
- To go to Drama Club
- Work
- To see friends and family
- To go swimming / Clickimin
- To play golf
- To visit Hospital, Doctor, Health Centre, Dentist
- To use Northlink
- To visit Islesburgh, Bruce Family Centre

What do you think about the ferry?

- Good seats
- Drink machines
- Short journey: 7 minutes
- Cleaner than other ferries, the ferry men keep it tidy and make an effort, with litter bins
- The crew talk to you and look after you if there are folk that are scary
- It isn't expensive - just 40p when you come back
- Like travelling on the sea
- Can meet friends when you're going somewhere
- You can walk or drive to Lerwick
- If you miss a ferry you have to wait a long time
- People on Bressay look out for you
- The security cameras on the ferry make people feel safe

The above question also led into a broad input of views:

- If there was a bridge and you were coming back late, it wouldn't be good
- If there was a bridge it wouldn't be Bressay and there would be lots more people and houses - it would get too crowded
- It would be like every other place, it would be like Lerwick, and Lerwick is too crowded and noisy.
- At the moment there is Bressay and Lerwick, with a bridge you would have Lerwick and Lerwick
- At the moment we know everyone, and this wouldn't be the case if there were more people
- People would come to Bressay and Lerwick would empty

- People are cheerful and kind not like some folk in Lerwick
- If people were able to get to Bressay more easily and cheaply there would be more vandalism
- If there was a bridge people would throw rubbish in the sea, so it would be better for the environment to have the ferry, which has bins
- A bridge would have no toilets, unlike the ferry, which would make things difficult
- If there was a bridge, the ferry should also run
- Some felt the bridge should be shut at weekends, and others felt it should be shut in the week.
- Having a bridge at the weekend would mean the ferry crew wouldn't have to work at the weekend and people from the mainland who visit the Maryfield and people from Bressay who are on the Mainland would be able to get home.
- A bridge could be open during the week for people to get to work in Lerwick, but shut at the weekends.
- The bridge could be used for people who need to get to Lerwick fast, for example to work, and those who want to go to Lerwick for shopping could use the ferry.
- Those scared of a bridge could use the ferry. However, there might be problems with having a bridge and a ferry as they might get in each other's way.
- At the moment I can walk around the Isle, to friends, even at age 7. If there were more cars and people, I wouldn't be allowed to
- It would be too far to walk to Heogan to the bridge, it would be better if there was a bus to pick people up from certain places
- Some felt the bridge would be difficult for people that are scared of heights and that the bridge might fall down
- There would be a lot of traffic with a bridge and on the roads which would make it more difficult to walk, and roads would have to be improved
- They are concerned about the loss of the ferry crews' jobs, and they might get a job they don't like so much
- Ferry fares are more expensive than they should be - if they were decreased then people wouldn't want a bridge/tunnel
- If there was a bridge then the shop and Maryfield might go out of business or there might be more shops
- If there was a bridge people could be charged and have a gate for people to come
- At the moment there is plenty of room for a lot of animals and crops, but if more people moved to Bressay the animals would have to go somewhere else

When asked to choose one word to describe Bressay, children said:

- Quiet
- Brilliant
- Comfortable
- Pleasant
- Secure
- Friendly

- Fun
- Excellent
- Wonderful
- Polite
- Peaceful
- Kindly
- Cosy
- Happily
- Safe
- Gently

When asked if the current ferry service prevents them from doing or taking part in anything, they said:

- Lerwick isn't too big a place to be in, it isn't too busy or full, like Aberdeen - Bressay and Lerwick are not too small or too crowded. A bridge or tunnel would make it all bigger like a city (A bad thing).
- No one felt that the current service prevented them from accessing anything they wished to do.
- When asked if they could think of any other ways - a tunnel
- But this would be a waste of money because of the high costs
- The Council has money, but doesn't need to spend it on a bridge or tunnel
- But a tunnel would be better as people may be scared of heights
- A bridge would need to be high so boats can get passed
- What would happen to the ferry?
- If the tunnel/bridge was in the centre of Lerwick, then it would be easy to get to the street

Thinking ahead to when you move up to secondary school, what do you think will be important to you about how you travel across to Lerwick?

- You would have to buy more food
- Hope there they would still have a ferry, as you know everyone and there's nothing wrong with it, it is a waste of money to change the system.
- Walking across the bridge to school, you would feel alone, but at the moment the ferry is sociable and the ferry crew help you if you have problems and can walk to school
- The bridge would feel unsafe
- It would be a long walk to the AHS but would be better if there was a bus
- An up and down bridge would also be a waste of money, and it would always be going up and down and you'd never know when boats were needing to get through
- If there was a gale an up and down bridge might collapse

F.3 Shetland Islands Council Infrastructure Committee

FILE NOTE – Bressay Link Consultation, Stage 1

Stakeholder Consultation: Infrastructure Committee

Method: Meeting

Date Held: 16th October

Present: 19 Councillors

Notes Made By: Emma Perring/Michael Craigie

A number of points were made and questions asked:

- How much has it cost the Council to get this far with processes?
- Importance of resolving the poor state of the Whalsay terminals.
- The problem of maintaining and improving the inter-island ferry service in Shetland in the long-term: how do those costs for the next 50-60 years compare with building fixed links? With fixed links, this funding could be released to other services.
- Other communities, for example, the West side, have asked what the Bressay link has to do with them: the impact on the capital programme and therefore the need to secure funding from the Scottish Government if these projects are to go ahead.
- Possible impact on drift to central areas.
- Concern that SIC still has in place policy to build a bridge, with £19 allocated, however there is concern that the current policy is not necessarily relevant at this time and perhaps the SIC should debate the policy.
- Acknowledgement that whatever the outcome of the process it is likely to need significant funding support and therefore the current funding allocation should remain committed to the project.
- A member stated that the principle of capping budgets prior to sufficient work being carried out to understand costs is “crazy”.
- A clear programme of links replacement is required so that the Council can understand the funding challenges.

F.4 Association of Shetland Community Councils (ASCC)

FILE NOTE – Bressay Link Consultation, Stage 1

Stakeholder Consultation: ASCC

Method: Meeting

Date Held: 6th October

Present: Community Councillors and Clerks from around Shetland

Notes Made By: Emma Perring

Northmavine: fixed links are a good idea, and a visit to Faroe can demonstrate the positive impact they can have. However, the order in Shetland is wrong, in that putting a fixed link to Bressay first would open up development and accelerate the drift to central areas, to the detriment of more rural areas. Fixed links should start in the North Isles, providing them with time to be strengthened first.

Yell: there is a perception that the Bressay Link is providing a log jam to fixed links elsewhere in the Isles. The new service is splendid, but rising concern about ferry fares and the problems associated with this.

Unst: agreement, and also that if there was to be a fixed link across Bluemull this would also assist Fetlar in that it would require its own ferry service.

Bressay: does suffer at the moment as being close to all the services in Lerwick. Example of the cost to each council tax payer of running ferry services in Shetland.

Whalsay: important to resolve, as infrastructure is old.

F.5 Lerwick Community Council

FILE NOTE – Bressay Link Consultation, Stage 1

Stakeholder Consultation: Lerwick Community Council

Method: Meeting

Date Held: 15th October

Present: 9 or 10 Members, 4 Councillors, Michael Craigie – Lead Officer, ZetTrans

Notes Made By: Emma Perring

Michael informed the meeting about the purpose of the study, the STAG process and this first consultation stage.

A number of questions and points were made by members of the Community Council:

- How long will it take to implement the decision?
- Will a ferry be included as an option?
- Was a causeway considered in 1999, and will it be included this time?
- If there is to be a fixed link, will a ferry be ruled out?
- There is the ongoing cost of ferries, which will only multiply. At the moment about 20% of Council Tax is used to pay for the ferry service in Shetland. In terms of employment opportunities, this is an odd way to pay men;
- A fixed link would enable the East side of Bressay Sound to be used for harbour developments. Lerwick is constantly expanding and there is huge potential for the north end of Bressay in terms of industrial development;
- Fixed links should be developed throughout the isles;
- There are current constraints on housing in Lerwick, a fixed link would provide opportunities for housing;
- A fixed link will bring changes to the way of life on Bressay;
- There is a need to look at what is best for Shetland;
- What will be the impact of fixed links on the rural areas of Shetland?
- Bressay relies on Lerwick for its services and leisure facilities. It costs over £10 for a young family to get to the Clickimin, so there need to be improvements fast;
- Concern expressed about the impact on the community of losing ferry jobs.
- There is concern for the ferrymen, however how viable is a community that relies on ferry jobs? There is a need to create sustainable communities;
- Opening up Bressay to development will provide the community with more employment opportunities, for example, decommissioning based on Bressay;
- Would like to see an option developed that provides two solutions, such as a fixed link that allows berthing for cruise ships;