

Bressay Link

First Stage Consultation Report



October 2007

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	
- Background	5
- Structure of Report	6
The Consultation Process	
- Introduction	7
- How It Was Undertaken	7
Consultation Findings	
- Residents	
o Bressay	10
o Wider Shetland	16
- Businesses	
o Bressay	17
o Lerwick/Shetland Mainland	21
- Scottish Government and Transport Scotland	23
- Elected Representatives	24
- Services	26
- Community and Interest Groups	30
Next Steps	31
APPENDIX A: Information Sheet	32
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire	34
APPENDIX C: List of Consultees and Respondents	40
APPENDIX D: Findings, by Stakeholder Group	44
APPENDIX E: Questionnaire Results	56
APPENDIX F: Notes of Meetings	66
- Bressay Public Meeting (8 th October)	
- Primary 4-7, Bressay Primary School (8 th October)	
- Infrastructure Committee (16 th October)	
- ASCC (6 th October)	
- Lerwick Community Council (15 th October)	

Thanks are extended to everyone who gave up time to respond to this study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the problems associated with the current transport link between Bressay and Mainland Shetland and the opportunities in the future that the link should address.

This information has been obtained from a consultation exercise carried out with the Bressay community, businesses and services, and from businesses and services operating on Mainland Shetland, as well as from individuals and representatives elsewhere in Shetland.

The issues and opportunities will provide the foundations for setting objectives that the transport link will need to address. These objectives will be used to appraise various transport options.

Current Service

- The service is described as reliable and relatively unaffected by weather. The service is felt to be frequent and the journey short
- It is centrally located, making it convenient
- It provides a social hub

Issues Associated With The Current Link

Accessibility

- Heavy reliance of Bressay on Lerwick and Mainland for employment, services, leisure and learning
- Examples of restricted access to opportunities available on the Mainland
- Length of daily service restricts early morning and late evening needs and limited Sunday service
- Lack of accessibility for those residents without access to a vehicle and unable to walk to the ferry, e.g. to health services
- Lack of integration between the ferry service and bus services on the Mainland
- Lack of promotion of service, for example to visitors

Current Fare Levels

- The overall cost to travellers in general is high, which has to be paid despite necessity of using the service to access most opportunities
- Additional business costs (Bressay and Mainland based) particularly freight/ machinery, not readily passed on to customers
- To what extent would reducing fares and amending the timetable alleviate current problems? Would it be sufficient to enable Bressay to be a sustainable community in the long-term?

Business Constraints

- Loss of time planning and waiting for ferry, with direct and indirect impacts on businesses operating from Bressay and other Shetland businesses using service
- Belief that Bressay is not currently conducive to business expansion or new development: e.g. restricts visitors choosing to stay on Bressay
- Previous debate was detrimental to harbour developments

Service Delivery

- Ageing population and difficulties in being able to provide adequate services: residents are not getting the service they need or equality of community care
- Difficulty of accessing Bressay out-of-hours, unless able to call an emergency

- Still gaps in knowledge to be addressed across the breadth of services provided to or accessed by Bressay. Specific consultation event being arranged

Long-term Impacts

- Lack of economic development opportunities on the Isle and the high costs of accessing employment, services, recreation and learning may be accelerating an ageing and possibly declining population
- To what extent is this a Shetland-wide issue?
- Is the current service sustainable?
- Unresolved decision about a fixed link, resulting in other aspects of the community's development not being addressed and house sites seldom available

Opportunities For The Future

- Need for an affordable, efficient, flexible transport link for the long-term

Economic Development

- A fixed link could provide opportunities to sustain the community
- A fixed link could provide opportunities for housing: the land is seen to be desirable
- A fixed link could provide opportunities for economic development:
 - Existing Bressay businesses could expand
 - New business could become established
 - There is the potential for harbour developments, although there are no immediate requirements to do so
- Knock-on benefits to Mainland businesses of economic growth and house building
- This would have to ensure LPA would be able to continue to 'manage, maintain, and regulate the Port and Harbour of Lerwick, including the undertaking to improve and deepen the harbour area' in interests of industries operating in harbour, and ensure their business potential can be achieved
- Are there constraints on the economic development of Lerwick at the current time, and/or would opening up Bressay for development have a negative impact on Lerwick?
- In terms of potential economic growth, there is a need to consider the impact of fixed links on local marine engineering companies that receive regular work from SIC ferries
- Employment based on Bressay is heavily reliant on the ferry.
- To what extent would tourism (locals and elsewhere) be improved or disadvantaged by a fixed link: a fixed link could provide greater circulation of people and more convenient access for those with a car, but the novelty of accessing an island could be lost.

Social and Health Impacts

- A fixed link could lead to a loss of island identity and associated social benefits, such as knowing everyone in the community; feeling and being safe; and using the ferry as a social hub.
- More people living on Bressay could lead to improved social interaction
- Importance of understanding the health impacts of different options (e.g. currently opportunities for walking).

Accessibility

- Would a fixed link improve or exacerbate social exclusion? At the moment people who access the ferry can easily get by foot to central Lerwick, this may not be the

case with a fixed link, depending on location and frequency of public transport. Yet the ferry (particularly the cost) currently prohibits access to employment and opportunities. The Isle status of cars means private transport is cheaper now than it would be with a fixed link and people can drive without a full license: some older people do not have a full license and may not take a test.

Environmental Impacts

- Importance of understanding: for example, how would carbon emissions change? How would sheep and cattle be affected? Importance of retaining remote biologically diverse areas of the island

Long-term Financial Sustainability

- What would be the impact of doing nothing?
- In terms of Shetland's finances: how sustainable is the inter-island ferry service in the long-term compared to fixed links?

Strategic Direction

- There is a need for robust plans to be in place: for land use (including wildlife protection) and service delivery. At the moment there is a lack of knowledge about the plans of the Council and other services if there is to be a fixed link. For example: land use planning (industrial and/or housing), long-term planning of service delivery, the school estate, and roads, for example.
- There are housing shortages in central areas of Shetland: to what extent could a fixed link to Bressay assist with this? How could it be planned for? To what extent, if any, is it already being addressed through developments outwith Lerwick? What would the impact be on the current population drift to central areas and the Council's commitment to decentralisation?
- If a large amount of capital expenditure is going to be spent on the transport link then it is important all the potential benefits are pursued in terms of savings in delivery of services, and housing, industry and harbour developments
- Other areas of Shetland may be better suited to have a fixed link/the first fixed link.
- There will be impacts on other areas of Shetland and other projects if funding is used for this project.

Suggested Options

- Retain *Leirna* with different shift and crew configuration, running more hours, more efficiently, possibly re-engine
- Bridge: plans are in place, iconic, restrictions on harbour, environmental impacts
- Lift Bridge: iconic, access for vessels
- Swing Bridge
- Tunnel: reliable, less restrictions on harbour (limit to depth able to dredge to), lower maintenance costs, have brought benefits to Faroe, some people unable to use, unable to walk across. Combine with cruise ship pier?
- Chain Ferry: low costs, reliable, no restrictions on harbour
- Causeway, possibly with tidal generators and/or marinas
- Fixed link and centrally located passenger ferry
- Fixed link allowing berthing for cruise ships
- If fixed link: leave room for utilities; must be able to transport artic lorries (16-17ft) and emergency services at all times; provision for chemicals to be transported; retain linkspan for Skerries ferry.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Consultation Report presents the findings from the first round of consultation on the Bressay Link, carried out between 12th September 2007 and 12th October 2007. There will be a second phase in the new year, focusing on different options.

Derived from the first stage of consultation it presents the problems with the current transport link and the opportunities in the future that the transport link between Bressay and Mainland Shetland should address. From this:

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

The result, expected to report in March 2008, will be a recommendation of an option that takes into account all the various stakeholder inputs and the option appraisal. This option may be the Do Minimum.

Background

Within Shetland's Regional Transport Strategy¹, ZetTrans acknowledged there was a need to draw a line under the previous debate over the proposed 'Bressay Bridge' and to revisit this issue with a fresh pair of eyes.

'there is a need to draw a line under the previous debate over the proposed 'Bressay Bridge' and to revisit this issue with a fresh pair of eyes. ZetTrans acknowledges this and proposes to initiate a 'Bressay Link' study examining all possible future options to provide an efficient link between Bressay and Lerwick, whether this is in the form of an improved ferry service, a bridge or a tunnel. This study will be undertaken in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and will be taken forward by ZetTrans in co-operation with SIC and LPA.'

To do this, a joint working group involving representatives from ZetTrans, Shetland Islands Council, Lerwick Port Authority and Bressay Community Council was set up, adopting the title 'The Bressay Link Group'.

This group agreed to a study *'To identify means of providing sustainable efficient transport links between Bressay and Mainland Shetland for the long-term and identify the most appropriate measures 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 Bressay Link 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

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

² Now Scottish Government.

throughout. This first stage of consultation, presenting the present and future problems and opportunities, provides the foundation for the rest of the process.

The Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG): process and appraisal criteria

The STAG planning and appraisal process is:

- 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 & security)
- Economy (transport efficiency & 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.

Report Structure

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

Section 2: Consultation and Participation, describing the consultation process that has been adopted for the purposes of establishing the opportunities, constraints, problems and issues. The range of techniques used and list of meetings held are outlined.

Section 3: Findings, summarising the main results. A more detailed list of findings and specific comments on the strategy are presented as an appendix to this report.

Section 4: Next Steps outlines what will happen with these results.

2. CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Introduction

This section discusses the consultation process adopted for the purpose of establishing the opportunities, constraints, issues and problems that the transport link between Bressay and Mainland Shetland should address.

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

- What do you like about the current link provided?
- Would you like to see any improvements in its operation, in terms of timings, links with other services, for example?
- Are there any problems that arise out of the current arrangements?
- If so, what options could be considered to address these problems?
- Are there any opportunities that are perhaps being missed as a result of the current situation?
- What would be the impact in the future of continuing with the current situation?
- What would be the impact in the future of providing a fixed link?

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: how Bressay develops will affect Lerwick, and how Lerwick develops will affect the rest of Shetland. And any funding set aside to implement a Bressay Link could also impact on the resources available to improve infrastructure and services to other parts of Shetland.

How It Was Undertaken

An information sheet provided background to the study, what it was being designed to achieve and the sorts of issues feedback was encouraged on (Appendix A). This was available on the web, at key locations in Lerwick and for publicity by the local media (adverts on Shetland News and the Shetland Times, articles on Radio Shetland and the Shetland Times).

Anyone was able to respond via email or in writing. In addition broad categories of consultees were targeted, using different approaches. For all meetings and workshops, a note was provided, and agreed by each of the consultees.

Residents

There were three groups identified under this category.

Bressay residents: each household on Bressay was sent an Information Sheet early on in the exercise and a public meeting, attend by 65-70 people, was held on 25th September, in the Bressay Hall outlining the study, how the community could get involved and explaining the questionnaire.

In parallel to this, 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, or two or more adults living in a household. Therefore each household received one or two questionnaires, depending on their Council Tax status, and all adults on Bressay were encouraged to complete and return. Those households who did not receive sufficient

were asked to phone for more. It was valuable to have this register, but it is not a substitute for the electoral role and did complicate distribution. The Community Learning and Development Worker had contacted front line staff working on Bressay, such as the Housing Officer, to inform them about the study and the questionnaire and ask that they provide assistance, if required, to any clients.

An additional complication was the postal strike. However, it did not affect distribution of mail within Shetland and the Bressay Shop kindly allowed a box to be put on the counter for completed questionnaires.

Those young people living on Bressay, who attend the Anderson High School, were invited to a session at the school on October 10th, to discuss the issues and complete the questionnaire. 19 young people attended. A workshop was held with 15 primaries 4-7 at the Bressay Primary School on October 8th, to hear the views of this age group.

An open day was held on October 8th, in the Bressay Hall, with displays of Bressay transport links in the past and aerial views of the harbour and Bressay in 2006. About 40 people came along for a cup of tea and discussion. In the evening a public discussion was held, attended by 55-60 people.

Lerwick residents: a public meeting was held on 1st October, 2007, outlining the study and how people could respond. 9 people attended it. A discussion, open to anyone, was held at Lerwick Community Council meeting on 15th October 2007.

The rest of Shetland residents: people were informed through the local media and adverts and were invited to respond by letter or email and through their Community Council representatives.

Service Providers in Shetland

This includes NHS (Board and GPs practice), HIE Shetland, Trusts, emergency services, utility providers, and representative bodies. All were informed of the study and invited to respond by email, writing, or via a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone call. A meeting was held with NHS Board and senior management team on 16th October 2007.

Since the SIC covers a number of services, a workshop was held on 9th October, with all Executive Directors and Heads of Service invited to attend.

In addition a face-to-face meeting was held with the NHS nurse who lives and works on Bressay, which is a non-doctor island. The SIC ferry crew were informed of the study early on, and a discussion meeting was held with 12 crew on 7th October.

Businesses and Business Representatives

All Bressay businesses were informed and invited to a face-to-face meeting.

Those businesses based on the Shetland Mainland who currently make use of the ferry service to Bressay and/or operate in the port of Lerwick were informed and invited to a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone conversation. The list was compiled from a list used for consultation by the Lerwick Port Authority (LPA) in 2004 and the SIC Roads Service in 1999. Also included were business that may consider new opportunities arising as a result of any outcome of this study. This group of consultees included freight operators.

The Government And Transport Scotland

These were informed and encouraged to attend a face-to-face meeting or formal telephone conversation.

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 informed of the study and of the various means for providing comment and input. In addition a progress report of the study was discussed at the Council's Infrastructure Committee on 16th October 2007.

All Community Councils in Shetland were informed and invited to respond, as one method of ensuring the wider Shetland community were able to input. In addition information was provided and a discussion held at the Association of Shetland Community Councils on 6th October 2007.

Community and Interest Groups

A list of community groups, both on Bressay and those on the Mainland known to use or be impacted on by the transport link was compiled by the Community Learning and Development Worker for the area. They were all informed about the study and invited to respond. A follow-up phone call to some was made.

3. CONSULTATION FINDINGS

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

Residents

Bressay Community

These results come from the questionnaires distributed, the open day and public meeting held on 8th October, and discussions held with primary and secondary school pupils.

42% of questionnaires were returned. These are a fair reflection of the community in terms of gender, age, employment status and disability, although there were a higher percentage of returns from older and retired members of the community than the 20-29 age group.

Details of patterns of use can be found in Appendix E. As would be expected, daily trips are most frequently made for work, with trips made 2-3 times a week for shopping, participating in sport and leisure and visiting friends and family. Trips are less frequently made for business meetings, childcare and accessing health care. People can be making up to 2-3 trips a day to access what they need.

The main reason people gave for liking the ferry service was that it is to the centre of Lerwick, making it convenient and enabling them to walk or cycle rather than rely on a car. It is also convenient from Bressay as many people are able to reach the terminal by foot. The service is described as reliable, regular and relatively unaffected by weather. The service is felt to be frequent and the journey short.

Another important factor stated was the social hub the ferry provides. This was particularly important when moving to the Isle, providing an opportunity to meet people, which might not otherwise be available. The crew are seen to be friendly and helpful: for younger members of the community they value the crew making sure they are safe and they can help if there is a problem.

The ferry link is also seen to provide a default security system for the Isle, protecting Bressay from crime and other community safety issues, such as joy riders. By having the ferry everyone knows each other. Other reasons given were that it provides a break between home and work, and is a relaxing way to get home. It has good seats and a drinks machine and is clean.

There were some who said they liked nothing about the current service.

There were a number of operational improvements suggested for the current service:

- Extend length of time the service is available each day: to reach the first flights from Sumburgh and attend evening events on the Mainland without having to stay overnight elsewhere; and to enable commuters and shift workers more flexibility and opportunities for employment. These services could be booked in advance.
- Improve the service on a Sunday, perhaps by undertaking maintenance at night.
- Introduce a shuttle service, for example every 15 minutes, improving access and cutting down on the wait if a ferry is missed.
- Introduce a 0800 sailing for commuters.

A number of other timetable suggestions were made, or to ensure certain times remain, such as the 1545 from Bressay that enables primary school pupils to attend after-school activities in Lerwick.

People would like to see improved integration with bus services, so they can access other parts of Shetland without need for a car and improvements to the bus service available on Bressay.

A number of other suggestions were made, for example: to allow passengers off first; to introduce traffic lights operated by the ferry crew or a roundabout at the ferry terminal in Lerwick so that vehicles could off-load more quickly; to better utilise the electronic signs, for example include the next sailing times; to be able to pay by credit card; free parking at the Lerwick terminal; enlarge timetable print; not to load passenger buses in the centre lane of the ferry; update the drinks machine and have a snack machine; tie up in Lerwick overnight to improve access for emergency services and enable maintenance to be carried out overnight.

Other comments included stopping the service and putting in place a fixed link; employing better crews; and cutting down on administration at Sella Ness.

The most significant issue about the current service is the fare levels. Although some felt they are affordable, including those at school, there is a belief that the fares are exacerbating issues of accessibility: the proximity of Bressay to Lerwick means the community rely on the ferry to access most employment, education and leisure opportunities, yet the fares are the same as to other islands, which do not have to use the ferry to the same extent. Families can spend £3,000 or more a year on fares and there is concern that this is leading to people moving away. There is also the additional cost of parking once in Lerwick.

Fares are seen to stifle business viability and development. In terms of tourism there is evidence that fares are putting visitors off staying on the Isle, or staying on the Isle for as long as they did a few years ago when fares were cheaper. A number of suggestions were made, including:

- Concessions for young people who have left school
- Free fares at weekend, free fares all the time, as was the case in the 1970s
- Free for foot passengers
- Islander discount on car fares, free car fares for pensioners
- Yearly and monthly ferry passes at discount rates (able to travel as many times as you wish)
- Multi-journey tickets in blocks of 5 as well as 10

There is recognition that introducing free fares could lead to problems in terms of capacity and financial sustainability of the service and there is some acceptance that fares are part of living on an island. The community would want as much guarantee as possible on the level of fares for a period of time.

There are also a number of questions, such as whether Road Equivalent Tariffs would be introduced on inter-island ferry services; the current cost of collecting fares; and why Unst was granted free ferry fares because of issues of economic deprivation and Bressay has not?

The situation is felt to be critical, with a need to resolve accessibility issues, fares and times, as soon as possible.

Opportunities people currently miss out on, or find it difficult to access include early flights from Sumburgh, shift work, employment elsewhere in Shetland, attending leisure facilities, social events and education, such as night classes and health care. A trip to the Clickimin with a young family requires a car, and is costly, for example. It can be difficult to see family on the Mainland, and it is costly for family and friends to come across to visit. Business meetings can be cut short in order to make ferry times. There are restrictions on emergency transport and higher construction costs.

Comments were made about the ageing population of Bressay and that the current impact of the ferry is making it difficult for people to consider moving to the Isle, young people are not returning and there is little or no economic investment. There is agreement that a solution needs to be found to ensure the long-term sustainability of the community: for some the solution is a fixed link whilst for others this could be achieved by addressing the frequency of the ferry and the fares.

A number of people commented that the statement in the questionnaire was misleading by saying that the *Lierna* would need to be replaced in 2012. It may need a new engine and to be refurbished, but would not need to be replaced for a considerable time. There is a suggestion from the crew to enable the service to run earlier in the morning and later in the evening, with little in the way of additional crew. There could be costs savings as pool crew would be able to be collected from the Mainland side, rather than being put up on Bressay, as at present. Another suggestion is, given the sheltered waters and 24 hour surveillance of Lerwick Harbour, that four crew members would be sufficient at anyone time, enabling crewing patterns to work around the clock.

A fixed link is seen to provide the community with a more flexible and affordable link with Mainland Shetland. The sort of opportunities respondents felt could be opened up included enabling existing business to expand and encouraging others to be established, increasing employment opportunities locally. There may be harbour developments. It could provide more opportunities for tourists to visit and lead to further tourist development. There is a belief that the economic developments a fixed link could bring could provide plenty of employment opportunities for the ferry crew and more people could move to the area enhancing community and social opportunities.

Emergency response times are good, but some commented that they could be greatly improved. Other examples given included: easier access to police services and to taxis, one of the advantages being that people would be less likely to drink drive; less disruption than the ferry due to weather and breakdowns; and an opportunity for an improved bus service on Bressay and improved road structure.

There is an acknowledgement that the community could change with a fixed link, but some commented on the ongoing progress of the transport link to Lerwick over the years, and this is the next stage: people should not be nostalgic about the past. Mention was made about how the sense of community has changed in recent years: that there are not as many events on in the hall, and the youth club is not as good.

The main reason given for seeing a fixed link as a disadvantage was the impact it could have on the community and current way of life: at the moment everyone knows each other and people like the sense of community and safety that they believe would change if there were a fixed link. Associated with this is the increase in housing and

industry, and less land available for farming. There is a fear Bressay could become a housing development like Gulberwick, and that Bressay could lose its sense of identity and become the suburban sprawl of Lerwick. It is believed the Council has in place plans for housing on the Isle.

Another frequently mentioned disadvantage was the loss of jobs from the ferry and the knock on impact of this on the community.

Access was another important issue: a fixed link in the area currently set aside would require a 14 mile return trip, taking more time and fuel than using the current ferry. This could have an impact on carbon emissions. There is concern that for those who currently rely on foot or lifts to get to the ferry could experience a decrease in accessibility as the bus service would not provide the same level of frequency or convenience. At the moment parents are able to drop children off at the ferry and they can access activities easily themselves in Lerwick. Both older and younger people are able to drive with a provisional license, and running a car can be relatively cheap.

Mention has also made of the impact on the shop and Post Office and people are uncertain what would happen to the school. Roads would have to be improved and there could be more traffic, making the roads less safe. At the moment, for example, primary school children are allowed to walk around the Isle to friends and this would not be possible if there were more vehicles.

Some respondents believe a fixed link would lead to increased tourism opportunities, whilst others think the attraction of Bressay to tourists, as a unique experience, would be lost. One of the main reasons people visit Shetland is its remoteness: so it is important this is retained. Therefore it would be important to protect the habitat of East Bressay, one of the most remote and biologically rich areas of Shetland, only two miles from Lerwick.

There would also have to be very careful land use planning, and it would be important for land to be made available for affordable housing and first time buyers.

In terms of opinions about different options:

- A bridge: plans are already in place and have been costed. It has the potential to be an iconic structure. However, it would constrain development of Lerwick harbour and there could be more weather disruption than the current ferry. There would also be environmental impacts including rubbish getting thrown in the sea. People might be scared of crossing on a bridge. Consideration should be made to have a swing bridge.
- A tunnel: not affected by weather, could have no visual impact and would not constrain activity at the port. The excavated stone could be used to upgrade the roads. However, it could take a long time to progress and could be expensive and some people may not feel secure about using a tunnel. A suggestion was that a tunnel could be incorporated into future designs for a cruise ship pier.
- A chain ferry: not obstruct shipping or other harbour developments, fuel efficient option, proven to work on busy tidal rivers. It would require relatively low investment and lower running costs (three crew), meaning that a 24-hour shuttle service could be put in place and a number of the existing ferry crew could be retained. It is slower than the *Leirna*, the current route would take 15 minutes, but across the north entrance it would take six minutes.
- A causeway: possibly able to generate power with tidal generator.

- A fixed link for vehicles and small central passenger ferry: possibly open at different times.

Concern was expressed about whether the current ferry service can be maintained, given the increasing costs and that a fixed link would be a one-off capital cost for the long-term, with minimal ongoing costs. Whilst others think a fixed link would be a waste of money. People would like more information on the finances, such as:

- What would the ferry fare be if there was no national subsidy or no subsidy at all?
- 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?

A number of comments about the process were made:

- Who are ZetTrans and the Bressay Link Group?
- Some of those involved directly have a vested interest
- Only the Bressay community should have a say
- The ferry crews have a vested interest
- Why not undertake this exercise elsewhere, instead of using Bressay as the guinea pigs each time?
- Questionnaire: excludes those unable to read and/or write; too long; being distributed by Council Tax caused problems; misleading by saying that the *Lierna* needs to be replaced in 2012; should have asked whether people wanted to live on an island; should have asked whether in favour of a fixed link or not, not pros and cons.
- This issue has been going on so long, people are disillusioned
- Lack of trust due to people's experiences last time
- This needs to be resolved, a decision made, and move on
- It is important that the costs and implications of various options are considered fairly and openly
- There needs to be a referendum/secret ballot so that people can then accept the view of the majority, and move on, questionnaire not sufficient
- There is a feeling a decision has already been made: the Council need to listen to the islanders

There was also concern that more information needs to be made available before a decision can be made:

- What is the SIC's intention regarding housing and industrial development?
- What road improvements are necessary for a fixed link? For example the Heogan road is badly affected by snow and ice, and would not be reliable as the main route out of Bressay.
- What would be the impact on road safety and congestion in Bressay and Lerwick?
- What would the environmental impacts be, such as CO2 emissions?
- What changes to service provision, such as health facilities and school, would there be?
- What are the plans for ferry fares? If they were significantly reduced, people could have a different opinion as to whether there should be a fixed link, for example.

BRESSAY COMMUNITY

Current Problems

- Examples of restricted access to opportunities available on the Mainland
- Comments about the ageing population, young people not wishing to return and Bressay not being conducive to economic development and population growth
- Affordability of the fares is becoming critical, particularly when the community relies so heavily on Lerwick for employment, services and recreation
- Length of daily service restricts early morning and late evening needs and limited Sunday service
- Other minor operational improvements could be made/shuttle service
- To what extent would reducing fares and amending the timetable alleviate current problems? Would it be sufficient to enable Bressay to be a sustainable community in the long-term?
- Unresolved decision about a fixed link, resulting in other aspects of the community's development not being addressed
- Lack of internal public transport
- Is the current service sustainable?

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- What would be the impact of doing nothing?
- Bressay needs an affordable, efficient, nearly round the clock transport link
- Levels of accessibility need to be retained for those who can walk to the ferry terminal in Bressay, and improved for those who are currently unable to
- A fixed link could provide opportunities to sustain the community:
 - o Business expansion, business development, employment
 - o Increase housing and more people
- A fixed link could lead to:
 - o Loss of island identity and associated social benefits, including safety
 - o Housing and industrial development
 - o Loss of employment
- There is a lack of knowledge about the plans of Council and other services if there was to be a fixed link: how much development would there be? What would happen to the school, for example?
- There is a need for robust plans to be in place: for land use (including wildlife protection) and service delivery
- Are other areas of Shetland more needful?

Options Suggested:

- Retain *Leirna* with different crew configuration, running more hours, more cheaply, re-engine
- Bridge: plans are in place, iconic, restrictions on harbour, environmental impacts
- Tunnel: reliable, no restrictions on harbour, lower maintenance costs, some people unable to use, unable to walk across. Combine with cruise ship pier?
- Chain Ferry: low costs, reliable, no restrictions on harbour
- Causeway, possibly with tidal generators
- Swing Bridge
- Fixed link and centrally located passenger ferry

Wider Community

One respondent believes the inter-island ferry service is no longer the best or most appropriate way of connecting Shetland's islands, as it is not sustainable in the long-term. The solution is tunnels, which should be built to all of Shetland's main islands, linking them into one island, as is the philosophy in Faroe.

Another felt that a fixed link would provide advantages to Bressay, Lerwick and Shetland in terms of industrial and housing development, and stressed the importance of looking for the best solution for Shetland. However, it was felt a fixed link across Yell Sound would be more appropriate, as it would benefit three islands. There was concern for the distance required to travel with a fixed link and suggested that the *Brenda* might run again if bus service provision was too expensive.

Two respondents are concerned about the impact of a fixed link on Bressay: in that it would become a suburb of Lerwick. The ferry provides an important community role in terms of providing an opportunity for people to meet. A fixed link would lead to problems with security, traffic congestion and, with wider roads, joy riders and would have an impact on the shop, school and other amenities. It would also be a long journey around on the road.

One respondent put forward a suggestion of a lift bridge, similar to one recently installed in Rouen, France, with an 80m opening and 55m clearance. It would be visually attractive and put Lerwick 'on the map'. Fishing boats would be able to pass through at all times, but for larger vessels it could be lifted. There would be some delay in traffic, but it would be minimal.

Another suggested a causeway, seeing it as cheaper to construct than other options, low on maintenance and an opportunity for employment and recreation with marinas included in it.

WIDER COMMUNITY

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- Inter-island ferry service is no longer sustainable in the long-term
- Advantages of a fixed link for Bressay, Lerwick and Shetland in terms of industrial and housing development
- Importance of finding the best solution for Shetland
- Which would be the most appropriate island to have the initial fixed link?
- Loss of island identity and associated social benefits with a fixed link

Options Suggested:

- Tunnel: benefits to Faroe
- Lift Bridge: iconic, access for vessels
- Causeway, possibly including marinas: low cost, dual solution with marinas

Businesses - Bressay

The ferry service is used by Bressay businesses in a number of ways:

- The farms use it to collect materials required, such as fencing and feeding, and to take stock to the Marts. This varies, depending on the time of year, but could average out to be about once a week through the year. On occasion farms hire in machinery/ trucks to take away stock
- The shop uses the service at least once a day, for goods and papers;
- Access for customers to the Maryfield Hotel (about 99% of trade) and 1-2 times a day for supplies and to the spa/B&B;
- To access business on the Mainland. For those concerned this is usually at least once a day, five days a week;
- For workers to access SFP.

In general, businesses believe the service provided is good, as it is regular and easily accessible. There are seldom constraints on capacity and the shuttle service minimises the wait. For those who discussed weather disruption, it was felt to be rare, although it did not run for 36 hours one recent winter.

A number of improvements to the current service were suggested:

- A service to enable people to get to the early morning flights from Sumburgh;
- To return to the 1200, 1300 and 1330 sailings on a Sunday from Lerwick, as this meant the Hotel could achieve three sittings rather than the two, closer together, they can do now;
- A more regular service at more times of the day, possibly a shuttle service more frequently, as the engines run all day. This would require improvement to the way vehicles and passengers are unloaded and loaded, including giving preference to foot passengers, so as to speed up turnaround times;
- A similar service to Yell Sound, nearer 24 hours, perhaps charging more for night sailings and enabling workers at SFP to start work for the 6am shift;
- Promote the service more to visitors, for example better use of the electronic signs, and the attractions of Bressay/Noss and bird-watching from the ferry, to increase income.

Concern was expressed about fares, which are an additional cost to Bressay based businesses, and not easily passed on to customers. This makes starting up a business on Bressay particularly difficult. It is believed it costs more per mile to travel across the sound than Concorde. A number of suggestions for change were made, such as free fares, day tickets, weekly or monthly passes, passenger tickets able to go as much as they wish for a set price, reduced rate for islanders. At the current time pensioners from abroad can travel on the ferry for nothing but young adults starting out in the workforce pay full-fare.

Some businesses do not believe the current service constrains them, and do not mind having to plan ahead. Benefits include:

- It is easy to get goods from Lerwick, put to the ferry by shopkeepers and suppliers in Lerwick;
- It provides employment and revenue for the Isle;
- The frequency of service is better than could be provided by a bus;
- An enhanced experience for visitors, with easy access for foot passengers from central Lerwick.

Others see it as a constraint, as time is lost working around the timetable and waiting for the ferry. A number of examples:

- If materials or equipment are required it can mean one to one and a half hours away from the work, to collect from Lerwick;
- When machinery is hired businesses have to pay for freight and the time it is on the Isle. If the machinery misses a ferry, it can be an additional hour's hire;
- The recently opened B&B has received a lot of enquiries, but few bookings, as people are put off by the ferry ride: out of 65 enquiries only two rooms were let. And customers have to leave events early on the Mainland in order to get to the last ferry at 11pm, Sunday-Thursday and 1pm, Friday and Saturday.

Due to the constraints the ferry imposes on any business and establishing new businesses some believe that this is exacerbating the noticeable ageing of the population and dwindling school roll; young people brought up on the island decide not to return as adults, as they have become used to the opportunities and access available on Mainland Shetland.

Over the past few decades, Bressay has not experienced the same improvements in facilities as other areas of Shetland because of its proximity to Lerwick.

A fixed link could provide benefits to some businesses on Bressay: it would be more convenient, costs would be lowered as people would have more time, and there would be increased opportunities for market expansion and business growth, increasing employment locally. One respondent said there would be the opportunity for a small business park at the north end of the island.

A business is concerned about the negative impact a fixed link could have on their trade, as it would probably put them at the end of a road.

Some businesses said that a fixed link would be more inconvenient as it would require a drive across to Lerwick rather than currently being able to pick up supplies from the ferry. Another disadvantage would be that SFP would have to increase security of the site and piers.

Other disadvantages expressed had more to do with social aspects of island living: more vehicles, more people and dogs roaming land, joy riders, loss of security, for example. There was also concern about access: those that can walk to the ferry terminal at the moment, or rely on lifts, could find Lerwick more inaccessible. There would also be a cost implication to those who currently run an Isle car (taxed and insured, but exempt from MOT) as this status would no longer exist. There would also be the cost implications of higher mileage, such as higher fuel costs, wear and tear and insurance. The Isle status also means people can drive unaccompanied as learners, and there are a number of older folk who currently rely on a car who have never had a test.

In recent years very few house sites have been available because those with land have been waiting for a fixed link, and the focus on this debate has meant other issues, such as improving roads, pavements, the play park and sport's ground, have been forgotten.

In terms of a fixed link, those who would prefer a tunnel give reasons such as: lower maintenance costs, unaffected by wind and no navigational obstacles involved.

However, people wouldn't be able to get across by foot and some people would be unable to use a tunnel. Those who use the harbour are aware of the need for the dredging to go ahead, as currently boats can have to wait a number of hours on the Lerwick side before being able to get across to Heogan to off-load, and vessels are getting bigger.

Those who prefer a bridge do so because it is ready to go and there is a danger that the plans for a tunnel could go through the same process as that of the bridge, with a need to dredge deeper. It was stated that the current bridge option was likely to be closed more often than the current ferry as it will be exposed to all wind directions and the current ferry only has problems with a south-westerly.

Another option suggested was to improve the existing ferry service, by phasing in a less qualified crew of four: the opinion is that there is not the current need for deep-sea crewing levels and qualifications in the harbour. The ferry has been well maintained and can last another 20 years if re-engined to cope with high winds.

A further option is that of a chain ferry. This could require a crossing further north than the current service where the entrance is narrower. The advantages are that for a relatively small investment a ferry would be able to carry about 50 cars, would have low fuel requirements and only require three crew: Boatmaster (grade 3), Mechanic (not engineer) and Labourer to operate the ramp and issue tickets. This could halve the wage bill, retain nine jobs and provide a 20-hour service. There would be no constraints on shipping, but a lights system would have to operate as large ships would not be able to travel too close to the ferry. Chain ferries successfully operate in Plymouth, with stronger currents and a major navy base upstream.

One respondent said that for any link developed towards Heogan, a new road would have to be built, as the current road suffers badly with snow and ice. This would open up access to Cruister. It is important that if road improvements are to be made, sheep and cattle are not affected.

It is also important that if tolls are to be introduced they are not too high, making it difficult for SFP to attract workers.

BRESSAY BUSINESSES

Current Problems

- Current timetable not always ideal
- Loss of time planning/waiting for ferry
- Unable to access early flights from Sumburgh or workers to start shift at SFP
- Unable to return late at night
- Lack of promotion of service
- Ferry engines running idle: shuttle service could be operated more regularly
- High cost of fares, particularly freight/machinery, not readily passed on to customers
- Ferry restricts visitors choosing to stay on Bressay
- Bressay hasn't experienced same developments as other areas of Shetland and relies on Lerwick to access most employment, services and leisure facilities, yet have to pay ferry fares to do so
- Bressay is not conducive to business expansion or new development
- Young people are not wishing to return as they are aware of the opportunities provided on Mainland Shetland and the population is ageing
- Unresolved decision about a fixed link, resulting in other aspects of the community's development not being addressed and house sites are seldom available

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- A fixed link could provide opportunities for:
 - o A business park at the north end
 - o Some business to expand and more time available for business growth
 - o New businesses to become established, helping sustain the population
- Would a fixed link improve or exacerbate social exclusion? At the moment people who can access the ferry can easily get by foot to central Lerwick, this may not be the case with a fixed link, depending on location and frequency of public transport. Yet the ferry (particularly the cost) currently prohibits access to employment and opportunities. The Isle status of cars means private transport is cheaper now than it could be with a fixed link and people can drive without a full license: some older people do not have a full license and would be unlikely to take a test.
- A fixed link could lead to loss of:
 - o island identity and associated social benefits
 - o ease of collecting supplies from the ferry
 - o direct access to central Lerwick
 - o direct link of foot passengers to Maryfield
 - o employment of ferry crewsAnd the danger of more people and dogs, affecting wildlife and stock.

Options Suggested:

- Bridge: plans are in place
- Tunnel: reliable, no restrictions on harbour, lower maintenance costs, some people unable to use, unable to walk across
- Ferry with different crew configuration, running more hours, more cheaply
- Chain Ferry: low costs, reliable, no restrictions on harbour

Businesses - Lerwick/Shetland Mainland

In terms of businesses on the mainland, the ferry service is good and reliable. Depending on the extent to which a business uses the service, there is concern about time lost waiting for a ferry and the time required to plan around the timetable.

Examples were provide:

- If an employee misses a ferry, this is costly.
- Delivery firms can loose money on deliveries to Bressay. For example if an urgent delivery is required it can take one to one and a half hours of an employee's time, which is not profitable. It also puts a limit on when deliveries can be made
- At certain times, trucks are prevented from crossing in favour of isle residents commuting to work. For one company this enforced delay of 30 minutes can make the difference between profit and loss on a job.

A shuttle service could be introduced, but this might lead to higher costs.

In general, businesses do not believe the service prevents other opportunities being pursued or that a fixed link would increase opportunities. The main direct advantage would be greater convenience and a more cost effective means of getting to Bressay, assuming that if tolls were introduced these were reasonable.

Some businesses expressed concern about the ongoing costs of running the ferries and the need to move to fixed links or other options, whilst another is concerned about the impact on Shetland of funding fixed links.

Businesses, such as marine engineers, currently receive regular annual work on SIC ferries, and this would be lost. However there is some recognition that business opportunities may be opened up by a fixed link.

Some businesses believe a fixed link would bring economic benefits to Bressay and Shetland: industrial and housing development and further harbour developments. This would have a knock on positive effect on certain industries. For example, building firms recognise the potential and believe Bressay would be a very desirable location for housing. LPA recognise the potential for harbour developments on Bressay, but at the current time do not believe there to be real demand for any of these and LPA has land available on the Lerwick side that is yet to be developed.

For a number of industries it is important that, should a fixed link be constructed, it has no impact on Lerwick harbour operations. Businesses who use the port to operate stressed the importance of Lerwick Harbour to the Shetland economy.

At the current time the port is able to provide 24-hour access and shelter, with vessels able to enter under any weather conditions, because of its two entrances. It is one of only 3 or 4 deep-water ports in the North and East of Scotland. According to LPA few ports can compete in terms of depth, services available and the diversity of industry sectors operating within it (ferry and cargo, offshore oil and decommissioning, fishing (white and pelagic) and leisure). Lerwick is important in this area of the North Sea, as it is open when Aberdeen and Peterhead are shut. LPA has considerable flexibility in being able to move vessels around relatively easily within the different areas of the port. LPA recently commissioned an Economic Impact Study that states Lerwick Harbour as the main employment location in Shetland.

LPA Board is supportive of improving access to Bressay, but with no view as to the method used. If it is the wish of the community and developers then they are not opposed to a fixed link, but it must not impede the port's ability to function and develop.

Examples of industries:

- Fishing: it is important that navigation for boats is not impeded. During 2006 Shetland Seafood Auctions Ltd. reported that 95 individuals white fish boats landed fish at the market. 75 of these were Scottish or Scandanavian and it is important that business from elsewhere continues to be attracted. During the same year the value of white fish being landed in Shetland was £16.5 million.
- Decommissioning: this is a relatively new industry, and to date, Shetland has been relatively successful in attracting work in this area, as it is in a good location and has deep-sea access to facilities. At the moment Shetland is the first site in the UK to have brought in such a large structure, and is the most advanced site in terms of industry available to service off-shore decommissioning. The port has purpose built facilities and is industry accepted. LPA stressed how important the industry is to Shetland as it is able to provide increased employment for existing companies, rather than requiring a large influx of workers from elsewhere. There are already a number of companies who are relying on future developments in this area in order to remain viable and/or expand. In recent years businesses have invested considerably in Lerwick as a base for decommissioning. It is estimated that around 50 people will be directly employed in decommissioning in the next few months. Over the next 50 years the industry is expected to support around 60 FTE. Those working in this industry stressed how competitive and it is, and the importance of Shetland retaining advantages.

Those businesses that had an opinion as to what form a fixed link should take all tended towards a tunnel. The reasons given were that it would impose no constraints on shipping and the decommissioning industry, in particular. Businesses stressed the importance of having no obstructions coming out of the water: impeding navigation and restricting what can pass between the pillars. Part of the problem of pillars is that besides being a physical obstacle they are also perceived to present navigation difficulties and this is sufficient to prevent vessels using the harbour and decommissioning contracts being won. Therefore an opening bridge could not be an option, as it would still require pillars. Those involved in the decommissioning industry provided the example of the barge and off-lifting of a large structure, which worked well, but if a bridge had been in place there would have been significant risk to the structure, and the companies would not choose to use Lerwick as a port.

LPA has investigated the option of a tunnel, and believe it would satisfy the requirements of a fixed link and would be cheaper than the currently proposed bridge. As far as LPA is concerned no bridge would be acceptable until a tunnel had been explored to the same degree as the current bridge.

In addition some businesses stated that a bridge is not appropriate for Shetland's climate, with the danger of it being shut. Windy conditions would be particularly difficult for empty trailers. It is believed a tunnel would have lower maintenance costs than a bridge.

A tunnel would have to be of a size to get artic lorries through (16-17ft). EU regulations mean that no load larger than this can be carried on vehicles, and it is possible to make loads this size: for example making trusses of a size to suit and dismantling machinery. If it was a dual lane, then a lane could be shut for larger vehicles or traffic lights could operate for single lane. There might need to be provision to get large loads and hazardous loads across by sea. For example, SFP require chemicals on occasion.

An alternative suggestion is to have a pier wall on both sides of a causeway, with a road, closing off the passageway through, but enabling boats to come in north or south. This would prevent the flexibility of moving boats around the harbour.

If a fixed link were to proceed at the north end of the harbour, there is concern over the impact on businesses at and beyond Greenhead during the construction phase and once in place. The existing Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) at the Point of Scotland is believed to be constraining business developments in the area. There is also a query as to why the CPO is still in place if this consultation process is starting from a clean slate.

There is concern over the impact of a fixed link using the current area proposed, as it will cause access problems to some businesses, and exacerbate traffic congestion.

LERWICK/SHETLAND MAINLAND BUSINESSES

Current Problems

- Loss of time planning/waiting for ferry, impacting on profits
- Some capacity constraints
- CPO remains in place, constraining business developments (meeting to discuss is pending)

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- Sustainability of inter-island ferries vs. cost of fixed links
- A fixed link could provide opportunities for industrial and housing development: harbour developments, desirable housing land, with knock on effects to existing businesses
- Mindful of regular work received by marine engineering companies from SIC ferries
- Must ensure there is no impact on Lerwick harbour's operations: the port currently experiences a number of competitive advantages within this area of the North Sea and it is important to all industries currently operating that this is retained

Options Suggested:

- Tunnel: reliable, no restrictions on harbour (shipping, decommissioning), removes obstacle to safe navigation, believed to be cheaper than bridge option, lower maintenance costs. Need to be able to transport artic lorries (16-17ft) and need for chemicals to be transported.

Elected Representatives

There was only one response from a list MSP, who had seen the benefits that causeways had brought to the Western Isles. Others responded wishing to be kept informed.

During Infrastructure Committee on 16th October, Councillors discussed the problem of maintaining and improving the inter-island ferry service in Shetland in the long-term and how these costs, over the next 50-60 years, compare with building fixed links. With fixed links in place, revenue funding could be released to other services. There is a need to secure funding from the Scottish Government to minimise the impact of fixed link projects on the capital programme, which will affect the whole of Shetland.

The possible impact on the continued centralisation of Shetland's population was mentioned.

There was concern that SIC still has in place a policy to build a bridge, with £19mn allocated, and that the current policy is not necessarily relevant at this time. It was acknowledged that whatever the outcome of the process it is likely to need significant funding support and therefore the current funding allocation should remain committed.

In terms of the process there was a question about how much it had cost the Council to date to look into the transport link and the importance of progressing other transport links, such as Whalsay, where the terminals are in a poor state. The importance of carrying out sufficient work in order to understand the costs before capping budgets was also made.

A clear programme of links replacement is required so that the Council can understand the funding challenges.

Community Councils

There is some concern over the costs, which continue to rise, of providing ferry services, believed to currently be around 20% of each household's Council Tax. This is not seen as sustainable for Shetland in the long-term, and there is a need to look for more cost-effective transport links.

There is a recognition that Bressay currently suffers at the moment, due to its proximity to Lerwick: it relies on Lerwick for most services and leisure facilities, but residents must pay ferry fares to do so.

There is concern amongst mainland Community Councils such as Sandness & Walls and Northmaven, that a fixed link to Bressay could accelerate drift to central areas and destroy Bressay's island identity. Unst, Yell and Northmaven would favour a fixed link across Bluemull Sound, as a means of assisting the North Isles to retain population and attract new residents. There would be an additional benefit, as Fetlar would have its own ferry service.

There is also concern about so much of Shetland's money being used up on one project when other, more rural areas, need improvements.

Lerwick Community Council believe that a fixed link would enable the East Side of the harbour to be developed and the north end of Bressay to be developed for industry. One example provided was a decommissioning base. This would provide sustainable

employment opportunities for the Bressay community, rather than a reliance on ferry jobs. A fixed link could also open up housing opportunities, which would relieve the current housing constraints of Lerwick.

The North Isles see a strong need to resolve the Bressay Link issue, as there is a perception that it is holding up progress on transport links on other islands.

On an operational side, Skerries Community Council is very concerned about the potential loss of the Lerwick link span if there was to be no ferry to Bressay. It is currently used twice a week and is an important link for the community.

In terms of options to consider, both a causeway and dual solution such as a fixed link that allows berthing for cruise ships, were put forward.

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Current Problems

- Bressay relies on Lerwick to access most employment, services and leisure facilities, yet have to pay ferry fares to do so
- Need to resolve Bressay link, so that other links can be explored and resolved for the long-term

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- Employment based on Bressay is heavily reliant on the ferry. There is a need to provide sustainable employment opportunities on the island. There is a need to look for more cost effective transport links
- How do the costs of running Shetland's inter-island ferry service in the next 50-60 years compare with the cost of fixed links?
- Importance of having a clear programme of link replacement to understand funding challenges
- What would the impact of a fixed link be on current population drift to central areas?
- What would be the impact on other areas of Shetland, if this level of Shetland's funding is used for one project?
- Which would be the most appropriate island to have the initial fixed link?
- Current SIC policy to build a bridge
- Loss of island identity and associated social benefits with a fixed link
- Need to retain linkspan for Skerries ferry

Options Suggested:

- Fixed link allowing berthing for cruise ships
- Causeway
- Tunnel or bridge

Services (see Appendix D for more detailed information)

The ferry service is believed to be reliable and frequent and is also readily available in an emergency, for example for the Scottish Ambulance Service, Hydro Electric and Scottish Water. There were no complaints about the service. The direct link to Lerwick Town Centre is appreciated by businesses in that area.

There was recognition of the need to plan ahead and be organised in order to work around the timetable, and there may be lost time in waiting either side, particularly if a ferry is missed. The extent to which this was a problem depended on the extent to which services used and required the link. For a number of services it was felt that it did not prevent service delivery or meeting the needs of customers/ clients, and the lost time was accepted.

In terms of tourism, Visit Shetland believe that tourists like the ferry service and the novelty of accessing an island within a group of islands: Bressay is relatively accessible.

In terms of operational improvements:

- the need for an early ferry to meet the first flight, both to benefit business on the Isle and assist employees living on Bressay;
- a need to better join up ferries and buses (the bus meeting the last flight at Sumburgh can miss the 2030 ferry);
- Additional sailings would improve the convenience and therefore potentially the number of visitors.

Visit Shetland stated that tourists believe ferry fares are 'too good'.

The service and current link span don't impose any constraints or restrictions on the operation of Lerwick Port Authority (LPA).

Some examples of constraints were provided:

- If visitors to Shetland miss a ferry they may decide not to visit;
- Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency (SFPA) has a requirement to monitor and inspect landings of industrial species at Shetland Fish Products on Bressay, whenever a vessel arrives in port. When the ferry is operating the vessel has permission to go alongside the discharge pier at SFP and await SFPA arrival for inspection. This is satisfactory, except if it is outwith ferry working hours, adverse weather or unsuitable tidal conditions when Masters would prefer to go straight to Bressay side;
- In terms of Community Care, it is felt residents of Bressay are not getting the service they need or the equality of care of others in Shetland and day care cannot be provided. At the moment it takes two hours to deliver home care that can be delivered in an hour in Lerwick and this care is delivered at times to fit with the ferry service, rather than the needs of clients;
- In terms of construction, the cost of providing building and related trades on Bressay is higher than on mainland Shetland. This is because of: waiting time for ferries; less flexibility in the building process due to constraints on travel; cost of getting plant and materials to Bressay; capacity constraint on ferry can sometimes lead to delays in getting plant and materials on the ferry of choice; the time taken to carry out work is longer.

There are a number of examples when a fixed link would be able to improve service delivery, as well as less waiting time:

- Hydro electric is required to restore customers supply after a fault in a certain time limit, with a fixed link this would be easier, particularly at night or if there were difficult weather/sea conditions;
- An ambulance would be able to get to all houses faster than the current ferry, particularly out-of-hours. However, there were no exceptional examples of where the current service hasn't been sufficient;
- Shetland Taxi Owners' Association believe it would provide more flexibility for those wishing to attend appointments or social occasions as people would be able to hire taxis from Bressay to Mainland Shetland or vice versa, whilst at the moment it is expensive to wait for the ferry each side;
- If there was a fixed link construction costs for Bressay would be the same as for Tingwall/ Scalloway/ Quarff and firms would be better able to respond to the need for additional labour and materials at short notice.

In terms of advantages, fixed links:

- Believed to increase tourism as they provide easier access to more remote areas and greater circulation of people. With transport links such as the Stansted-Sumburgh link, people may be visiting for a shorter time and will wish to get to locations more easily. In terms of Bressay, a fixed link could increase the number of visitors to the Isle and Noss: Eshaness café is a recent example of attracting a large number of locals;
- Would open up development opportunities by releasing land, potentially increasing employment. There is some perception at this time that there are bottlenecks on development in Lerwick, and a study is being carried out, due to report shortly, led by HIE Shetland. This could have a negative impact on Lerwick, by businesses vacating property in Lerwick and moving to Bressay. Any housing development would have to be well planned, including associated infrastructure and community facilities. It has been suggested that Bressay be included in the Gulberwick/ Lerwick Masterplan study, if it goes ahead. At the moment the Local Plan allows for developments at the north end of the Isle, with stronger control over housing towards the south.
- If out of the centre of town, would remove unnecessary vehicular traffic from the town centre, particularly heavy goods vehicles using the ferry service.
- If a cruise liner pier was to be developed in the centre of Lerwick, benefiting local shops and businesses, the current ferry service may impact on such a development in the future.

Some concern was expressed about the impact on the community of losing the ferry link, as at the current time it was recognised that it is an important focal point for the community. There is also uncertainty about what would happen to the shop, Post Office and School, for example, which are also important parts of the community. There was also concern about the impact of the loss of 18 jobs on the Isle and the multiplier effect of this on the local economy and amenities. A fixed link may increase anti-social behaviour (ASB) and/or people's perception of an increase: at the moment the ferry provides a barrier to the degree of ASB seen in Lerwick.

The importance of examining potential implications of a fixed link was highlighted, both in terms of operational service delivery and long-term planning. For example:

- Bressay school could become Lerwick's third primary school, requiring transport links from Lerwick to Bressay. A study into provision of primary education in the Lerwick cluster, which includes Bressay, has begun. It will be important that there aren't four primary schools.

- There is the potential for other services to be based in Bressay, such as social work headquarters and care services. Such opportunities cannot be pursued at the current time because of timetable constraints.
- It was felt there is a need for the Council to make some significant decisions before the development process can be established, in terms of whether they wish to increase the sustainability and employment opportunities of rural areas. At the current time, if Bressay is opened up to development then that may lead to increased centralisation: by concentrating the population in more central areas there are potential savings in service delivery, but conversely this is taking the workforce required to sustain services away from rural areas.
- The Council is committed to carbon reductions: ferries are the largest source of emissions. A fixed link would assist in reducing targets, although this will be offset to a degree by vehicle emissions and emissions during construction, but the public transport system would need to be improved.
- Are there other opportunities for this funding to be used which would have greater benefits to Shetland?
- What are the health impacts of the current service, for example the opportunities it provides for walking and cycling within Lerwick, and how would these compare with the health impact of other options? NHS Shetland recommends that Health Impact Assessments (HIA) are undertaken of all the options.

In relation to what form a fixed link could take, tunnels were generally believed to be more reliable in Shetland's weather conditions. There is concern that a bridge could be shut for periods of time, and it would be essential that emergency services could access Bressay at any time. For an ambulance this would be a 9x20ft vehicle. In terms of sea safety, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency believe a tunnel would be safer, as a bridge can be bumped into and things can be dropped off or people could jump off, depending on design.

In terms of the LPA and representative groups of those operating in the harbour, a fixed link would need to have no negative impact on the port of Lerwick or put in place anything that restricted operations or an ability to improve or maintain safe navigation. Vessels are getting bigger and wider and LPA's statutory requirements means it must continue to 'manage, maintain and regulate the harbour area'. This 1877 Act also states that the undertaking of the authority shall consist of the improving, deepening and cleansing of the harbour. The LPA believe a tunnel would be the best solution as it would not place any restrictions on the harbour, and there is a limit to the depth of which dredging can be done, as the deeper the dredging the greater area that would have to be dredged, making the costs uneconomic. The current plan is to dredge mainly to 9 metres but to the maximum 10 metres depth in the location of the proposed fixed link in order to future-proof that area. Any tunnel would need to be designed below the -10 metres dredged area.

A number of respondents provided examples of industries operating in the harbour area and possible impacts:

- Offshore decommissioning has the potential to be a multi-million pound industry for Shetland. Shetland is located competitively in the middle of the oil industry, but the size of the structures coming in means the harbour needs to be of a certain depth and not constrained in what it can be used for.
- Shetland Fish Producers Organisation would not be concerned about the development of a fixed link as long as it did not have an impact on members safe navigation through Lerwick harbour, impede access to their important points of

business throughout the entire harbour area and does not stifle the opportunity to further develop potential of Lerwick harbour in relation to the fishing industry.

- Shetland Islands Tour Guides Association ask that there is no impact on cruise liner traffic.

Some respondents highlighted that the previous process was detrimental to harbour developments, particularly when decommissioning was in its infancy.

Other important considerations were that a fixed link includes room for utilities, such as district heating, water and sewerage. If there was a fixed link it would speed up Scottish Water's long term plans to incorporate a permanent link between Bressay and Mainland Shetland.

Lerwick Town Centre Association would like to ensure any new route developed would encourage people to continue to use the town centre: with access routes improved greatly; car parking readily accessible and available; full signage to the town centre placed along route; and public transport put in place from Bressay to Town Centre.

Some service providers expressed concern about current accessibility of the Isle. There is a shopper service twice a week and heavy reliance on a volunteer Red Cross Driver to enable older people to access health services, when he is available. In addition there is a post-bus, but little awareness that this is available to use and restricted in its operation. Access is particularly restricted for those unable to get to the ferry terminal on Bressay.

Other issues are in terms of accessing evening activities and out-of-school opportunities as it can require two ferry trips a day, which is costly, particularly for those on low incomes. At the current time Bressay is disadvantaged because most things people wish to access are not available on the island, because there is an assumption that they are close to Lerwick. Childcare is dependent on having extended family on the Isle.

In terms of the process being adopted:

- There is concern it will result in people asking for more, when the Council's financial strategy is for savings on revenue and capital;
- It is important that all potential savings to services are quantified and used to inform the option appraisal.
- If a large amount of capital expenditure is going to be spent on the transport link then it is important all the potential benefits to this link are pursued in terms of savings, and housing, industry and harbour developments.
- There is a need to ensure the Council's capital programmes prioritisation process is compatible with the STAG process. This requires further consultation with the Head of Housing and Capital Programme Services.
- Health is not a specific national objective, however it could be a local objective and the Health Action Team have offered to undertake a Health Impact Assessment.

SERVICES

Current Problems

- Lost time in operational planning to deliver services and staff time waiting either side
- Lack of integration between different transport services
- Unable to access early flights from Sumburgh
- If tourists miss a ferry, they may decide not to visit. Do tourists wish to pay more?
- Higher building costs than Mainland Shetland
- Difficulty of accessing Bressay out-of-hours, unless able to call an emergency
- Ageing population and difficulties in being able to provide adequate service: Bressay residents not getting the service they need or equality of community care
- Unable to easily access taxi services, and therefore associated opportunities this provides
- Previous debate was detrimental to harbour developments
- Lack of accessibility for those residents of Bressay without access to a vehicle and unable to walk to the ferry, e.g. to health services
- Bressay relies on Lerwick to access most employment, services and leisure facilities, yet have to pay ferry fares to do so: expense of a second return trip to Lerwick after school/evening for activities

Future Opportunities/Issues:

- Fixed links enable greater circulation of people, and therefore more opportunities for tourism and tourist development projects
- Are there constraints on the economic development of Lerwick at the current time, and/or would opening up Bressay for development have a negative impact on Lerwick?
- There are housing shortages in central areas of Shetland: to what extent could a fixed link to Bressay assist with this? How could it be planned for? What would the impact be on the current population drift to central areas?
- What would the land be needed for? Industrial or housing development?
- How would a fixed link change the long-term planning of service delivery?
- To what extent is the Council committed to decentralisation?
- What are the opportunity costs?
- Importance of understanding the health impacts of different options.
- If a large amount of capital expenditure is going to be spent on the transport link then it is important all the potential benefits are pursued in terms of savings, and housing, industry and harbour developments
- Need to ensure LPA able to continue to 'manage, maintain, improve and conserve the harbour area' in interests of industries operating in harbour
- A fixed link could lead to loss of island identity and associated social benefits; social cohesion provided by the ferry; novelty to tourists of accessing island; direct link to shops and businesses in central Lerwick; and lead to possible increase in ASB.

Options Suggested:

- Tunnel: reliable, safer, no restrictions on harbour (limit to depth able to dredge to)
- Leave room for utilities
- Improved crewing arrangements on existing *Leirna*

Community and Interest Groups

There were no responses from the above: feedback suggests that many were unable to meet to discuss as a group during the response period, and that some may do so after their next meeting.

4. Next Steps

As a result of this first stage of consultation and reporting the following steps will be taken in the timescales provided:

- November: Setting Appraisal Objectives
- December: Option Generation; Initial Sifting of options; Broad appraisal of options
- Early January: Second round of consultation
- Mid January: Detailed Appraisal

The outcome of the STAG process will be reported towards the end of March 2008.

More information on the STAG process can be found in Section 1.

In addition suggestions have arisen which will be forwarded for consideration in other ongoing studies and service planning, such as timetables and fare structures.