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ZetTrans
SHETLAND'S TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP



If calling please ask for
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Our Ref: STP/B3/MJC
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Date: 30 September 2010

Dear Sirs,

ZetTrans Response to Scottish Ferries Review Consultation Document – 30 September 2010

ZetTrans welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Scottish Ferries Review.

Detailed responses to each of the 33 consultation questions have been provided in the questionnaire which accompanies this covering document. This document summarises the principal issues and points ZetTrans wishes the Scottish Government to pay particular attention to in the development of the draft Scottish Ferries Plan.

As recognised by the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change in the Introduction to the Scottish Ferries Review Consultation Document, the Scottish ferries network needs to be treated as an integral part of Scotland's transport network.

This is a welcome statement and ZetTrans would ask the Government to consider fully not just the conventional view of ferry services but the changing role they fulfil now and in the future.

For economic and social sustainability the ability for individual islands and island groups to access services and opportunities outside their immediate boundaries has become an increasing and essential requirement. This is a consequence of how the economy and the administrative/ operational structures of our services in Scotland have evolved. The services and economic/ social opportunities that are essential to quality of life and economic growth are becoming increasingly more distant from island communities and therefore the need to travel, be it for commercial, economic, social or personal reasons, has greatly increased. This applies equally within island groups as well as between island groups and mainland Scotland.

Therefore, the need to use ferry services has moved from being relatively infrequent to now being a daily requirement for many on local services and even on the mainland Scotland to island group services the frequency of travel has had to increase. The means the ferry links

have become akin to the road network in terms of the purpose they serve yet the cost of using this essential part of the transport network is disproportionately high and the capacity and reliability disproportionately low relative to the road network for many island communities. It is not expected that the ferry network could ever provide the level of connectivity and cost to the user that the road network can but the Government is asked to acknowledge how significant the need to travel has become for communities that rely on ferry links.

It is recognised that the financial constraints in the public sector are reaching unprecedented levels and these constraints will have a bearing on how services and infrastructure can be provided. However, at this stage of the Review process it is important that we remain focussed on what is essential to support economic growth and the role ferry services need to play in that. After all, if we cannot support economic growth or if we undermine the current ability to be economically sustainable then we risk extending the period of recovery from the current economic challenges.

Looking specifically at the Shetland perspective there are several key issues ZetTrans wishes to make clear in this part of the review.

External Ferries

1. The significance of the constraints of cost and frequency/ reliability.
 - a. Shetland faces the highest costs in absolute terms for any Scottish Island group sometimes paying up to 4 times higher cost per journey for the user relative to other services to mainland Scotland
 - b. Lowest number of ferry links and lowest frequency of sailings for any Scottish Island group (only one daily vehicle/ passenger RoRo service, one (almost) daily freight service and one additional LoLo freight service twice each week)

Some of these services are coming under increasing pressure and the constraints are getting more significant over time and will be more significant in future.

2. The Future

There will be increasing demands on ferry/ freight links – some examples

- a. Total Gas Plant – 5 year project – 1000 worker plus all supporting contractors/ services
- b. Renewables – Viking 200+ workers plus all supporting contractors/ services
- c. Decommissioning – numbers not known yet but will be significant as Shetland will be a strategic base for this industry.
- d. Shetland Seafood Industry – value £250m, 25% of all UK fish landings in Shetland.
- e. Increasing Tourism Industry – 2010 best season ever and intending to build on that.

- f. Maintaining economically active proportion of population – requires around 3000 increase in population

The combination of these factors means there will be significant additional demands on the Northern Isles ferry service. For future services this means: -

- a. Finding ways to address capacity constraints (cabin capacity being the predominant issue);
- b. Finding ways to ensure affordability for the user does not decrease
- c. Ensuring frequency and reliability do not decrease
- d. Ensuring future services can be responsive to changing circumstances

Internal Ferries

Over the course of many years Shetland has developed a network of routes and services that enables high levels of accessibility between all of the major islands in Shetland. This has enabled communities to be highly mobile and therefore able to access services and opportunities throughout the islands leading to vibrant and sustainable communities. This is reflected in the volumes of traffic using the network.

Although fares for individual journeys are thought by some to be very low there is another important perspective to this that needs to be clearly understood and taken into account.

Centres of economic activity, employment, service provision and leisure/ social opportunities are spread throughout Shetland and island communities find themselves having to travel frequently to access these.

As a consequence of this the total cost of travel in a year is relatively high for many. For example, travelling 5/6 days per week at £8.40 return can lead to weekly costs of £40 to £50 for an individual with a car and when the cost to a family with several members travelling is considered it is not uncommon to find weekly costs significantly higher than this. So although the cost of an individual journey may be thought to be low, the need to travel frequently means that the overall cost of travel is in fact relatively high. In the Western Isles this burden has been overcome by the provision of fixed links where possible.

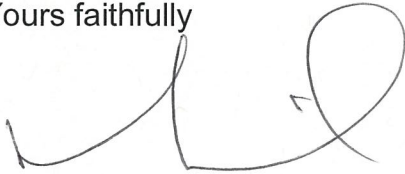
As Shetland Islands Council develops its policy of fixed links between its major islands it will be essential to manage and optimise the internal ferries network to support economic and social conditions in the island communities in an environment where capital spend must be kept at a minimum to enable investment in fixed links (with support from other funding sources).

To achieve this Shetland Islands Council aims to ensure that its ferry network becomes fully integrated with its roads and public transport networks not just in terms timetabling and connections with other modes but in terms of how priorities are set and how investment decisions are made to support an overall aim to develop and implement an optimised network of transport services, roads, fixed links and ferry infrastructure. Disaggregation of

the planning, control and operation of internal ferry services would undermine ability to achieve this objective.

Finally, ZetTrans would ask the Government to note that there is concern that some reports and fact sheets still contain inconsistent information and inaccuracies that undermine confidence that any conclusions reached and plans formed from these reports are fully and properly informed.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MC', with a large loop at the end.

Michael Craigie
Lead Officer