

**Special Infrastructure Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 29 June 2005 at 9.30 a.m.**

Present:

J C Irvine L Angus
R G Feather F B Grains
B P Gregson L G Groat
I J Hawkins J A Inkster
E J Knight J P Nicolson
J G Simpson T W Stove
W Tait

Apologies:

Capt G G Mitchell W A Ratter
F A Robertson W N Stove

In Attendance (Officers):

G Spall, Executive Director, Infrastructure Services
S Cooper, Acting Head of Transport
C Albutt, Senior Assistant Accountant/Asset Registrar
D Haswell, Committee Officer

Chairperson:

Mr J C Irvine, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Members' Attendance at External Meetings

The following Member provided a brief synopsis of his attendance at the following meeting:

Mr J C Irvine advised that he and the Executive Director had recently travelled to Edinburgh to launch the Council's case for a Shetland Transport Partnership. Mr Irvine said the exercise had gone very well and a comprehensive Press Release had been issued.

Referring to the recent appointment of Tavish Scott, MSP to Transport Minister, Mr Irvine said that Mr Scott should be congratulated for achieving such a very important appointment. However, he said he did not wish to compromise Mr Scott's appointment in any way as the Council's case for a stand alone Transport Partnership had been presented to Mr Nicol Stephen, the incumbent.

Mr Irvine concluded by saying that he had discussed the meeting with the local media and the media in Edinburgh and had indications were that the Council had presented a strong case.

The Committee considered a report by the Acting Head of Transport (Appendix 1).

In introducing the report, the Chairperson said that the proposed membership of the Group, as detailed in Appendix 1, included those Members who strategically needed to be on the Group. With regard to the membership, the Chairperson suggested that, because of the economic overlap, it would be useful for the Shetland Economic Development Spokesperson to Chair the Group.

Mr L Angus moved the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and agreed to the suggestion that the Shetland Economic Development Spokesperson should Chair the Group. Mrs I J Hawkins seconded.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to section 2.2 and the reference to the STAG process, the Executive Director confirmed that this process would be carried out on a strategy and project basis.

Mr J Simpson said that, from his experience with the Whalsay Ferries and Terminals Working Group, STAG appraisals could be a long process. Therefore, it was important that the Group did not get overloaded with small issues.

The Chairperson agreed and said that was why it was crucial that progress reports were presented to the Infrastructure Committee each cycle in order to allow all Members to be updated on the work of the Group.

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Inter-Island Air Services

The Committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Transport Operations (Appendix 2).

The Chairperson said that during a meeting with Loganair some time ago in Islesburgh Community Centre, Mr B P Gregson had raised the issue of the possibility of air services to Unst and Fetlar. The Chairperson assured Mr Gregson that this proposal had not been dismissed and would form the second phase of the process. The first phase was to ensure a contractor was in place and, thereafter, issues that had been raised from all areas would be addressed.

Mr B P Gregson said he was assured by the Chairperson's comments. He explained that he was not looking for anything that would cost a lot of money but when Loganair lose the Air Ambulance Contract next year, there might be some spare capacity on the inter-island air service and the possibility of utilising that capacity to the best advantage should be examined. Mr

Gregson said that tourism in Fair Isle and Foula had been greatly enhanced since the introduction of air services to those islands. He said that he could ask "Initiative at the Edge" to do some market research on tourists visiting Unst and Fetlar this year to gauge how beneficial air services would be. The Chairperson said that this information would be extremely useful and much appreciated.

The Executive Director advised that during consultation with island communities, there were demands from the communities for additional services. Some of these could be addressed but others would conflict. Therefore, as indicated in the report, it was proposed that the minimum service be advertised for tender, as per current timetables and the specification should invite bidders to submit proposals and costings for additional flights. The Chairperson confirmed that, once the proposals and costings had been received, further consultation would take place with the island communities.

Mr L Angus said it became obvious when Loganair lost the Air Ambulance Contract just how vulnerable air services are. He suggested it would be useful to engage Mr Tavish Scott, Transport Minister, in discussions to see if there were synergies that could be achieved given that air services were a baseline service in Shetland.

The Chairperson and the Executive Director agreed and said that this was a very salient point. The Executive Director undertook to progress this suggestion.

CHAIRPERSON