

Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study



Whalsay Public Engagement Meeting
Monday 29th August 2016 – 1600–2000
Symbister Hall



Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study

Welcome to the **Whalsay Public Engagement Meeting** for the Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study (SIITS).

The Shetland inter-island transport network, which consists of a combination of ferry and air services, connects nine islands with Shetland mainland. These lifeline connections support the economies of Shetland's island communities as well as providing personal accessibility to employment opportunities and access to key services such as education, health and leisure opportunities.

The inter-island transport network has been supported in both capital and revenue terms by the Council over many years. Whilst this remains the case, ageing assets, escalating costs and a reduction in the funding available to local authorities has led to a need to consider the future of the inter-island transport network at the strategic level. To this end, the Council, in partnership with ZetTrans, Transport Scotland and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, commissioned the Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study (SIITS), with a view to developing and appraising options for the future of the inter-island transport services.

The purpose of this exercise is to determine the **appropriate level of service for each island / island group** and the **funding implications** of this. This will provide the Council and ZetTrans with an evidence base to inform discussions with Scottish Government. To this end, the study team, led by Peter Brett Associates LLP, has developed, appraised & costed a set of capital (e.g. vessels, harbours, fixed links, airfields and aircraft (where appropriate)) and revenue (i.e. additional sailings and / or flights) options. These options are based on identified transport problems within each island, which we have had initial confirmation of from each local Community Council.

Following the submission of the final report in October 2016, a subset of these options will be taken forward for further development and appraisal. **This is your chance to have your say on the options** – please speak to the team, provide your feedback and fill up the brief exit questionnaire which we have provided.



How have we determined what level of service is needed by the community?

There are two elements used to inform this process:

- Transport Scotland's Routes & Services Methodology (RSM)
 - Provides an initial 'model' ferry service depending on a range of inputs
 - The RSM is one of a number of inputs used to inform the appraisal
- An appraisal based on the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and Business Case Guidance
 - provides a much more detailed analysis based on the local context and circumstances
- The study is joint-funded by Shetland Islands Council, Transport Scotland, and Highlands & Islands Enterprise
 - All stakeholders have had an input into the development of the study, ensuring consistency with other Scottish ferry-related studies



Routes and Service Methodology

As part of the Scottish Ferries Review, Transport Scotland developed a 'Routes & Services Methodology' (RSM), which is designed to produce a consistent approach to ferry service transport provision across Scotland.

The RSM is a six-step, evidence-based process which:

- Identifies the current level of service to an island
- Establishes a 'model' level of service for an island in terms of the:
 - number of sailing days
 - number of connections per day
 - the length of the operating day
- Develops and appraises options to address any gaps between the 'current' and 'model' service provision

The RSM does not imply an immediate or indeed any commitment to scale-up to the 'model' level of service, but is a tool which is taken into account in the analysis, and potentially an outcome worked towards over time.



Whalsay – RSM Findings

- The RSM findings for Whalsay are as follows:

| | Sailing Days | Sailings Per Day | Operating Day |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| Current Service | 7 Days | 17-18 connections per day Mon-Fri, 11 per day Sat & Sun | Approx. 16.5 hours |
| Model Service | 7 Days | >8 connections per day | More than 14 hours |
| <i>RSM Outcome</i> | <i>Acceptable</i> | <i>Acceptable</i> | <i>Acceptable</i> |

- Whalsay has 7 day connections year round.
- The number of connections per day is in keeping with the RSM model service.
- The length of the operating day is in keeping with the RSM.



Current Ferry Service (1)



Current Vessel:
MV Linga

Vessel Age:
14 years

Scheduled Replacement Date:
Long-term – 2027-2032

Carrying Capacity:
18 cars

Ship-Shore interface:
Linkspan

The vessel overnights at Symbister

Vessel Issues: The power management system will not be supported after 2018 – potential conversion of vessel to direct drive to address this; capacity can be an issue on peak sailings.

Access for Disabled: Vessel has full disabled access.

Accommodation Issues: No issues – passenger accommodation is of a very high standard for the relatively short crossing.



Current Ferry Service (2)



Vessel Issues: Ageing vessel; capacity can be an issue on peak sailings.

Access for Disabled: Disabled access to the passenger lounge is challenging.

Accommodation Issues: Passenger accommodation below the water line.

Current Vessel:
MV Hendra

Vessel Age:
34 years

Scheduled Replacement Date:
Required in short-term – 2017-2022

Carrying Capacity:
12 cars

Ship-Shore interface:
Linkspan

The vessel overnights at Symbister

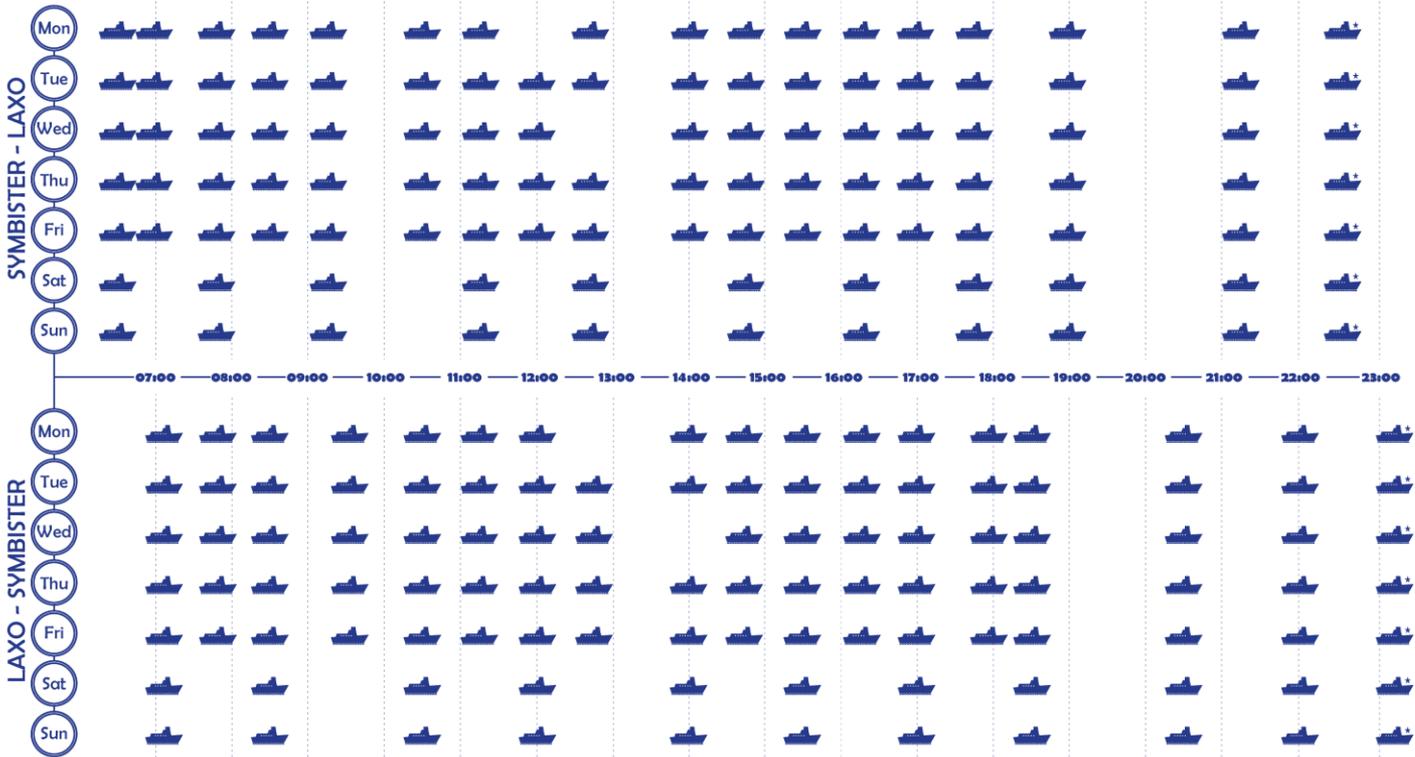


Whalsay - Current Service – departures by day of week



WHALSAY

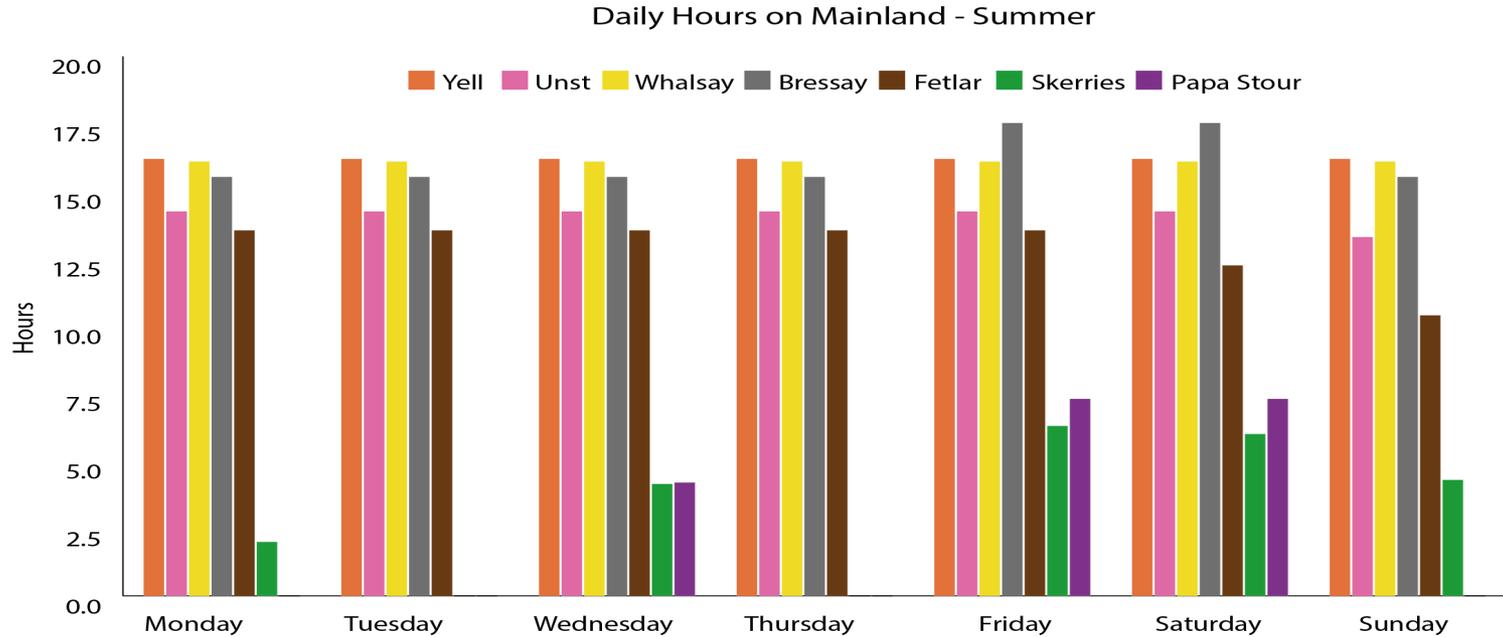
Direct
 Indirect



* Sailings are on Request



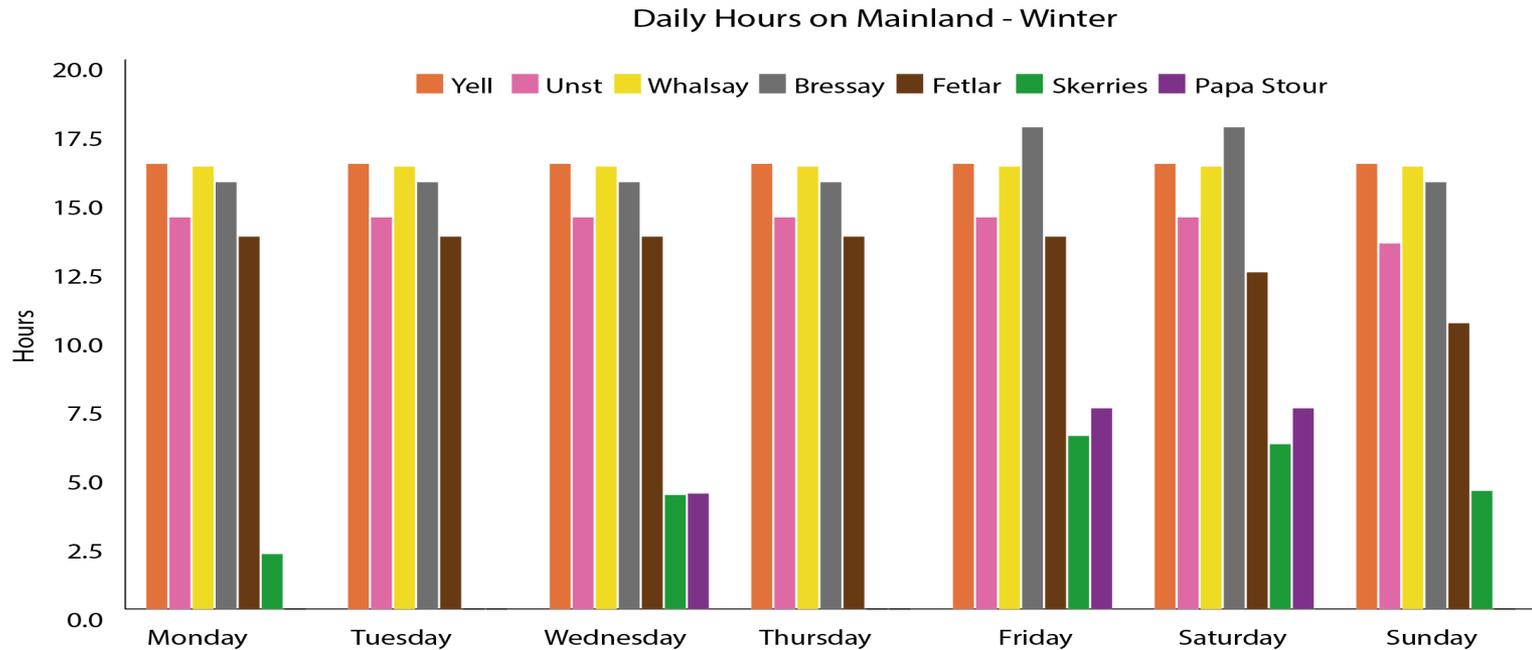
Daily Time in Shetland Mainland – Ferry - Summer



- Whalsay residents generally have over 16 hours on Shetland mainland seven days a week – this is one of the highest levels of ferry service in Scotland



Daily Time in Shetland Mainland – Ferry - Winter



- The hours available on Shetland mainland from Whalsay are the same in winter as in summer.



Problems, Objectives & Options



Whalsay Transport Problems

| | Service Characteristics | Rating | Why is this a problem or not? |
|----|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Overall journey time to Lerwick | ✓ | The overall journey time to Lerwick was not cited as an issue in previous consultations. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx). It was explained that the overall journey time to Lerwick can be a problem for commuting workers, especially if the ferry goes to Vidlin. Weekend workers face more problems as the service is restricted to one ferry and commuters travelling by bus cannot make the journey in the 80 min time frame due to the bus timetable not linking with the ferry timetable as only 1 ferry is running at the weekend.</i> |
| 2 | First sailing / flight | ✓ | The first departure from Symbister is early in the morning at 0630. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx).</i> |
| 3 | Last sailing / flight | ✗ | The consultation suggested that the timetable is not seen to be conducive to undertaking social activities in Lerwick. However, even in winter, the first departure from Whalsay is 0630 and last departure from the mainland 2310 (on request), which suggests that the inability to undertake social activities on mainland is purely a function of distance. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx).</i> |
| 4 | Time on mainland | ✓ | The current timetable allows for a significant amount of time on the mainland 7-days per week. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a minor problem (x). The response noted that a lack of capacity and low frequency at weekends impacts negatively on this.</i> |
| 5 | Time in Lerwick | ✓ | The current timetable allows for a significant amount of time in Lerwick 7-days per week. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a minor problem (x). The response noted that a lack of capacity and low frequency at weekends impacts negatively on this.</i> |
| 6 | Time on island | ✓ | The current timetable allows for a significant amount of time on the island daily. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a minor problem (x). The response noted that a lack of capacity and low frequency at weekends impacts negatively on this.</i> |
| 7 | Frequency / Sailings per Day / Timetable gaps | ✗ | The timetable for Whalsay is relatively thin in the evening compared to Yell Sound (the population of Yell being a similar size of island to Whalsay). Whalsay has three timetabled and one request sailing after 1800. This compares to five timetabled and one request sailing on Yell Sound. This is largely a product of the longer crossing-time and the reduction to a one vessel service in the evening. This is considered a problem by Whalsay residents. The limited evening connectivity is seen as being a contributing factor to younger people leaving the island, although there is no firm evidence to support this point. There is also a gap in the timetable on a Wednesday (one return sailing removed from timetable for drills and maintenance) for parents returning to Whalsay to collect their children from school. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx).</i> |
| 8 | Capacity | xxx | The Whalsay route has issues in terms of peak vehicle capacity. The 0750 departure from Symbister is the most constrained service, with 31 of these sailings showing greater than 80% car deck utilisation in summer 2014. Further, all of these sailings are concentrated on Mondays and Tuesdays. In the winter, the 0630 (22 occasions with car deck utilisation over 80%) and 0750 (15 occasions with car deck utilisation over 80%) are the busiest sailings from Symbister. In the reverse direction, the peak sailing is 1755 ex Laxo, which has 16 sailings in summer and 47 sailings in winter (generally concentrated on a Friday) which have over 80% car deck utilisation. Finally, the gap in the Wednesday timetable is evident from the carryings data, with the 1445 service ex Laxo frequently showing high utilisation levels. The shortage of capacity on key sailings means that desirable journeys, particularly for commuters, can be delayed (with the potential for a late start to the working day or missed onward connections) or cancelled altogether, particularly where the journey is short notice or discretionary. |
| 9 | Reliability (weather / mechanical) | ✗ | The Laxo – Symbister route is very exposed to winds from the south-east. On occasions where the service cannot be operated, the vessels divert to Vidlin. The longer at sea and on land journey times impact negatively on the travel-to-work market, particularly in terms of journey time disbenefits. The timetable is designed to accommodate the longer Vidlin leg, meaning that one diversion does not disrupt the timetable across the day. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a major problem (xxx). The response explained that the vessels are ageing and that this is set against a background of maintenance budget reductions. There were also concerns raised over the reliability of the MV Linga.</i> |
| 10 | Comfort | ✗ | The facilities on the MV <i>Linga</i> are appropriate for the length of crossing, less so on the MV <i>Hendra</i> . <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx).</i> |
| 11 | Physical access | ✗ | The MV <i>Hendra</i> is a relatively old vessel and physical access can be challenging for those with a mobility impairment. The passenger accommodation on this vessel is also below the waterline, which means stairs also have to be negotiated once on the vessel. Physical access can therefore be challenging for the elderly and disabled, although passengers with impaired mobility usually travel on the other vessel, MV <i>Linga</i> , when possible. The MV <i>Linga</i> has good disabled access. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a major problem (xxx).</i> |
| 12 | Integration with PT (local bus) | xx | There is very limited bus integration at Laxo (and indeed Vidlin) for Whalsay residents. Opportunities to commute to Lerwick using the bus are very limited. The dependence on the private car has a negative environmental impact and increases the cost of travel for islanders, leading to further comparative disadvantage. |
| 13 | Integration with PT (strategic) | xx | Whalsay has a timetable which allows islanders to easily access NorthLink services from Lerwick. However, residents cannot catch the first Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness or Kirkwall flights, although the first flight to Glasgow is accessible. The inability to catch the first morning flights to various locations means that Whalsay residents cannot carry out a day return visit for meetings, appointments etc, leading to potentially costly overnight stays. |
| 14 | Crossing / flight times | ✓ | The crossing time was not cited as an issue in previous consultations. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx). They note that the crossing time is a problem for those with a disability as the toilets are not accessible for passengers in a wheelchair.</i> |
| 15 | Onboard facilities | ✓ | The facilities on the vessel are appropriate for the length of crossing. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx). This is due to the lack of disabled access to the toilets.</i> |
| 16 | Weekday / weekend service variation | ✗ | Whalsay has a reduced service at the weekend. There are ten timetabled plus one request sailing on both a Saturday and Sunday, which compares to 16/17 timetabled sailings plus one request sailing during the week. Whilst overall weekend provision is lower, weekend provision to/from Whalsay compares very favourably to many other Scottish islands with a similar crossing time. This was a problem identified through the consultation and is believed to be a cause of younger people leaving the island, although there is no firm evidence to support this point. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a major problem (xxx). It was noted that reduced weekend sailing frequencies as a result of the 2013 budget cuts have caused problems for those who have to work weekends, people attending social, sporting or cultural events, families wanting to have weekend excursions when they are neither working nor studying and anyone wanting to travel from Whalsay to Yell, Unst, Fetlar.</i> |
| 17 | Landside infrastructure issues | ✗ | Vidlin, the diversionary port for Whalsay, is accessed via a single track road. The marshalling area is very limited. This can give rise to operational and safety problems but the current situation is workable. <i>The community consultation response noted that this is a moderate problem (xx). The response reiterated the issues at Vidlin and noted that current fares are leading to an increasing number of people parking their cars at the ferry terminal rather than taking a car onboard.</i> |
| 18 | Landside human resources | ✓ | There are not currently any problems with landside human resources. |

Study Objectives

In the light of the problems identified across the Shetland Islands, the following objectives have been defined as the basis for the options appraisal:

- **Transport Planning Objective 1:** The capacity of the services should not act as a constraint to regular and essential personal, vehicular and freight travel between the island(s) and Shetland mainland.
- **Transport Planning Objective 2a:** Where an island has a 'commutable' combined ferry or air & drive / public transport / walk time to a main employment centre (e.g. 80 minutes), the connections provided should reliably facilitate commuting.
- **Transport Planning Objective 2b:** Where an island does not have a 'commutable' combined ferry or air & drive / public transport / walk time to a main employment centre (e.g. 80 minutes), the connections provided should reliably permit a half day (e.g. 4 hours) in Lerwick, 7 days a week, all year round.
- **Transport Planning Objective 3:** The scheduled time between connections should be minimised to increase flexibility for passengers and freight by maximising the number of island connections across the operating day.
- **Transport Planning Objective 4:** The level of connectivity provided should minimise the variation within and between weekdays, evenings, Saturdays and Sundays.
- **Transport Planning Objective 5:** Where practicable and realistic, islanders should be provided with links to strategic onward connections without the need for an overnight stay on Shetland mainland.



Whalsay – Capital Options

In light of the analysis of transport problems and objectives, the following **capital options** have been identified for Whalsay:

- Option CO1 (Do Minimum): Replace the MV *Hendra* & MV *Linga* on a like-for-like basis
 - Vessels would carry approximately 15 cars
- Option CO2: Replace the MV *Hendra* & MV *Linga* with two larger vessels
 - Vessels would carry approximately 22 cars
- Option CO3: Replace the MV *Hendra* & MV *Linga* with three like-for-like vessels
 - Vessels would carry approximately 15 cars
- Option CO4: Construct new North Voe Harbour on Whalsay which would accommodate the ferry service
- Option CO5: Construct a fixed link between Whalsay & Shetland mainland



Whalsay – Revenue Options

The current timetable is determined by the level of crewing resource and working hours legislation.

The funds generated through ticket sales do not cover the costs of running air and ferry services, and this deficit is funded through the Council's annual *revenue* budget.

The following **revenue options** have been identified for Whalsay:

- Option RO1: Offer an on-request early departure from Whalsay (0500) Monday - Friday, which would allow connection with the first flights from Sumburgh
- Option RO2: Offer additional request sailings on a Friday and Saturday evenings (through to 0200)
- Option RO3: Operate standard weekday timetable seven days a week
- Option RO4a: Run both vessels for the full operating day seven days a week
- Option RO4b: Run both vessels for the full operating day to Monday to Friday

Note that in our exit questionnaire, we will ask you what your priorities for the service would be, were more operating hours to be available.



Rationale for Selection / Rejection

| Option | Take Forward (✓) or Reject (✗) | Rationale for Selection / Rejection |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Option CO1 (Do Minimum): Replace the MV Hendra & MV Linga on a like-for-like basis | ✗ | Does not deliver required level of capacity |
| Option CO2: Replace the MV Hendra & MV Linga with two larger vessels | ✓ | Alleviates current capacity issues - detailed demand & cost analysis required in next stage |
| Option CO3: Replace the MV Hendra & MV Linga with three like-for-like vessels | ✓ | Alleviates current capacity issues & provides step-change in service potential - detailed demand & cost analysis required in next stage |
| Option CO4: Construct new North Voe Harbour on Whalsay which would accommodate the ferry service | ✓ | This option should be taken forward for further consideration, particularly where larger vessels are being considered. |
| Option CO5: Construct a fixed link between Whalsay & Shetland mainland | ✗ | <p>This option is rejected from further consideration given the very high up-front capital costs. In addition, there are very high levels of technical and funding uncertainty, whilst the elapsed time before this option could be realised means that it will not be considered further in the appraisal.</p> <p>This elapsed time would also mean that if taken forward, this option would not be in place until the tail end of the strategy period, meaning that an interim ferry-based solution would be required, adding further to the cost.</p> <p>Should a nationally funded programme of fixed links emerge in future, the proposal could be revisited at this stage.</p> |
| Option RO1: Offer an on-request early departure from Whalsay, which would allow connection with the first flights from Sumburgh | ✓ | Would provide early morning access to the Scottish mainland for Whalsay residents for a relatively low cost. |
| Option RO2: Offer additional request sailings on a Friday and Saturday evenings (through to 0200) | ✓ | Low cost option – merits further consideration |
| Option RO3: Operate standard weekday timetable seven days a week | ✓ | Major increase in weekend service – merits further consideration |
| Option RO4a: Run both vessels for the full operating day seven days a week | ✗ | This is considered to be disproportionate given current demand |
| Option RO4b: Run both vessels for the full operating day to Monday to Friday | ✓ | Major increase in frequency – merits further consideration |

Fixed Link

- Detailed review of options for a Whalsay fixed link have been considered
- Priced by a UK and Norwegian contractor – this has resulted in a cost estimate of £91-£115 million. For appraisal purposes, contingency and optimism bias increases this cost to £169-£214 million.
- It is not feasible that SIC / ZetTrans could fund a project of this scale in the foreseeable future, which is why this question has to be taken to government
- A fixed link is rejected in the appraisal for the following reasons:
 - The cost of a fixed link to Whalsay significantly exceeds the costs associated with ongoing ferry services, even when considered over two ferry replacement cycles
 - A project of this nature would represent a nationally significant infrastructure scheme and would be competing for funding against other committed and planned national infrastructure schemes
 - There would also be competition with other fixed links proposals within Shetland and across Scotland for any available funding
 - Prior to construction, there would be a costly and extended period of technical development and preparation, which is not included in the above costs
- However, whilst fixed links are rejected in terms of the appraisal, there remains a wider question as to whether there should be a policy commitment to island fixed links. This is a question SIC / ZetTrans will raise with Scottish Government



What to do Next?

- Thank you for taking the time to read through the above material – we would be grateful if you could now complete a short questionnaire in relation to the options presented
- Please follow this link to access the questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Bluemull-Bressay-Whalsay-Yell-Aug2016>

