
Island Communities Impact Assessments

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS	Responses
<p>Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.</p>	<p>Public Bus and School Transport Business Case</p> <p>Note: This ICIA relates to Option 3 of the public bus service element of the project, which is defined as the current bus network with minor enhancements. Dedicated school transport has its own policy (SIC School Transport Policy 2024) and impact assessments were carried out as part of the 2024 review of that policy.</p>
STEP 1 - Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	Responses
<p>What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?</p>	<p>The overarching rationale for the business case is the need to re-procure public and school transport contracts so that services are in place after the current contracts expire in August 2026. The initial five year contracts have been extended by 12 months to August 2026 to enable this work to be completed.</p> <p>The current annual gross cost of public bus services is £3.95m and school transport is £3.11m.</p> <p>The functional responsibility for public bus services lies with ZetTrans, Shetland’s Transport Partnership. ZetTrans holds the duty (following a transfer of functions from the Council in 2006) to secure the provision of such public transport services considered appropriate which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by the Partnership for that purpose. This duty is set out in the Transport Act 1985 and the Transfer of Functions to the Shetland Transport Partnership Order 2006.</p>

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>School transport services are the responsibility of the Council as the local Education Authority as laid out in Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended.</p> <p>In terms of the policy context for the business case, the central guiding documents are the ZetTrans 2040 Regional Transport Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plan (Our Ambition – Working together for a positive and sustainable future), the Council's Climate Change Strategy (2023-2027) and the ZetTrans Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report (2025-2029).</p> <p>The business case objectives and critical success factors are as follows:</p> <p>Business Case Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widening network coverage enabling more people to use the bus• Widening equality of opportunity by removing barriers to bus travel• Reducing carbon emissions• Improving the quality of the bus services provided to the public <p>Critical Success Factors</p> <p>Strategic: The option is aligned with the objectives</p> <p>Economic: The option network delivers the same or improved Value for Money to the existing network</p> <p>Commercial: The option network, form of contract, and delivery model is attractive to the market and incentivises growing the</p>
--	---

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>market</p> <p>Financial: The option is financially sustainable within the available ZetTrans funding</p> <p>Management: The option is deliverable within the procurement timeframes / within the resources at the Council</p>
<p>Do you need to consult?</p>	<p>Engagement activities undertaken at the Strategic Business Case stage were as follows:</p> <p>Public</p> <p>Online survey from 19th August to 19th September 2024 (898 responses received)</p> <p>Area Transport Forums (16) – meetings open to the public, presenting the intentions of the work and seeking input and understanding to the transport problems being experienced. A specific islands Area Transport Forum was held in Mid Yell Hall, Unst Leisure Centre, Fetlar Hall, Bressay Hall and in Whalsay Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Community Council meetings (all)</p> <p>Stakeholders</p> <p>Online survey</p> <p>Young people – engagement with Youth Services and all seven secondary schools across Shetland</p> <p>Youth Voice Transport Summit (January 2025)</p>

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	Bus Operators – specific operator survey, follow up meetings and Bus Operators Group meeting
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	All inhabited islands including Unst, Yell, Fetlar, Whalsay, Bressay, Foula, Fair Isle, Papa Stour, Skerries are considered in this impact assessment.
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	<p>The business case objectives are the same for the network across Shetland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening network coverage enabling more people to use the bus • Widening equality of opportunity by removing barriers to bus travel • Reducing carbon emissions • Improving the quality of the bus services provided to the public <p>The difference for the islands is that each island has a unique context with some services provided on the islands themselves and others linking to ferry or air services to/from the Shetland mainland.</p> <p>It would be fair to say that the needs of each island vary significantly, although the principles of access are very similar.</p>
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	Option 3 is constructed of the current bus network and minor enhancements to that network. These minor enhancements are related to the provision of additional evening and weekend services. No services are removed in this option.
STEP 2 - Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Responses
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	Service levels and usage is well understood and survey responses

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>and a recent petition from Unst residents, together with Community Council engagement have clearly demonstrated the islands' needs. Continued monitoring will form part of the ongoing service performance under this option.</p>
<p>Do you need to consult?</p>	<p>This has already been carried out during the public and stakeholder engagement phase (August-September 2024).</p>
<p>How does any existing data differ between islands?</p>	<p>Unst</p> <p>For Unst, services on the island are focussed on travel to and from Baltasound to access central facilities including the school, health centre, care centre and leisure centre. There are two shopper services provided once per week, split by geographical area (one for north and one for south), on a booking only basis. Other service considerations are getting to Belmont to meet in with a ferry, which then connects to a further bus service on Yell.</p> <p>Yell</p> <p>For Yell, services on the island are focussed on access to Mid Yell for the school, health centre and dentist, leisure centre, care centre and fish processing employment. Multiple local shopping opportunities across Yell require travel in the opposite direction which adds to the complexity of transport on the island.</p> <p>Fetlar</p> <p>For Fetlar, all services are bookable and primarily provide connection to and from the ferry. There are less facilities on the island with the leisure centre,</p>

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>health centre and dentist for the area located in Mid Yell.</p> <p>The three north isles are also covered by interlinked services which feed to a bus which travels the length of Yell and continues across the mainland to Lerwick (locally referred to as the overland/north isles integrated service).</p> <p>Whalsay</p> <p>For Whalsay, there are no services in the island itself. There is a bus service shared with the residents who live in the area surrounding the ferry terminals that connect to Whalsay.</p> <p>Bressay</p> <p>For Bressay, there is a scheduled service connecting to the ferry terminal three days per week with a bookable return and a shopper service takes people to Lerwick shops once a week. The ferry terminal in Lerwick which the Bressay ferry docks at is very close to the Esplanade bus stop for accessing onward services.</p> <p>Foula and Fair Isle</p> <p>For Foula and Fair Isle, there are connections both to the ferry terminals on mainline buses and also between Lerwick and Tingwall airport for flights to these islands.</p> <p>Papa Stour</p> <p>For Papa Stour there is a service which links to the transport hub at Bixter and directly from Lerwick in line with some sailings to/from the island.</p>
--	---

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>Skerries</p> <p>For Skerries there is a bookable service once per week to and from sailings that facilitate spending a weekend on the island.</p>
<p>Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?</p>	<p>Option 3 is the current network with minor enhancements. This option does not remove any existing provision and therefore cannot generate new transport disadvantage.</p> <p>The minor enhancements are primarily around evening and weekend service provision, however some timing alterations and the reconfiguration of one of the services on the mainland seeks to provide improvements for island residents in line with the needs identified in the stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Unst</p> <p>Unst – an additional overland/north isles integrated service to Lerwick has been incorporated on Sundays. This service will be bookable as it is new and as yet actual usage is unproven. Unst residents will also be able to access the bookable main road journey that goes through Yell to connect with external ferry provision.</p> <p>Yell</p> <p>Yell – an additional overland/north isles integrated service to Lerwick has been incorporated on Sundays. This service will be bookable as it is new and as yet actual usage is unproven. There will also be a journey northbound</p>

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

along the main road connecting Ulsta to Gutcher on Sundays, bookable and aligned with the arrival of the Northlink ferry in Lerwick, a new North Mainland service to Toft and the ferry crossing to Ulsta. There is also a bookable southbound journey which is aligned with connections to facilitate a link to the departing Northlink ferry from Lerwick in the evening. There is also a re-timed service to facilitate health appointments and incorporate a shopper service to Cullivoe now that the shop in Mid Yell has closed.

Fetlar

Fetlar - an additional overland/north isles integrated service to Lerwick has been incorporated on Sundays. This service will be bookable as it is new and as yet actual usage is unproven. There will also be a journey northbound along the main road connecting Ulsta to Gutcher on Sundays, bookable and aligned with the arrival of the Northlink ferry in Lerwick, a new North Mainland service to Toft and the ferry crossing to Ulsta. There is also a bookable southbound journey which is aligned with connections to facilitate a link to the departing Northlink ferry from Lerwick in the evening. In addition, there is a new bookable service on Fetlar that links with a re-timed bookable service on Yell to ensure residents can access the health centre, dentist and leisure centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Whalsay

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	<p>For Whalsay, the service on the mainland that connects to the ferry terminals has been reconfigured to separate Whalsay passengers on the morning service to Lerwick. This will enable it to wait for the ferry to arrive on days when the service is weather disrupted (this has been an issue in the past as the bus had other area residents on board who would have been late for their employment had the bus been delayed, these area passengers are now being fed to the junction to connect with another Lerwick bound service). In the evenings it will depart Lerwick a few minutes later as would-be passengers had commented that they could not use the service as it left too early. This service will also serve Nesting as there is time to do so prior to connecting to the ferry (the later departure from Lerwick does mean a later ferry in to Whalsay but does open the service up to more passengers).</p> <p>Bressay</p> <p>For Bressay, no changes are proposed.</p> <p>Foula and Fair Isle</p> <p>For Foula and Fair Isle, no changes are proposed.</p> <p>Papa Stour</p> <p>For Papa Stour, no changes are proposed, although discussions with the community are ongoing due to a recent population increase.</p> <p>Skerries</p>
--	--

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	For Skerries, there has been no recorded use of the service provided, therefore ongoing discussions are required to identify current needs as the population has decreased.
STEP 3 - Consultation	Responses
Who do you need to consult with?	Consultation has taken place, however continued conversations are important in the monitoring of the new and adjusted services and in the cases of Papa Stour and Skerries as noted above.
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	This will be ongoing.
What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	Review and monitoring will be ongoing with a focus on met and unmet needs, changes on each island that will impact future use or require service alterations or format changes.
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	In the public and stakeholder engagement stage, island communities raised issues with the lack of Sunday services and access to facilities on neighbouring islands as well as the mainland. Connections to external transport and internal ferry services was also highlighted. Full area analysis work has been undertaken from the surveys and Community Council representations and can be accessed in the Strategic Business Case Engagement Summary Report. The output of the engagement summary influenced the shape of the services in option 3 across all of the islands.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	Yes
STEP 4 - Assessment	Responses

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

<p>Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?</p>	<p>Yes – island residents experience significantly different transport realities due to multimodal dependencies, limited alternatives and lack of direct access to the mainline bus network except via ferry or air links. These factors amplify the effect of any change in provision compared to mainland communities.</p> <p>The residents of Unst and Fetlar may need to change transport mode four times during a journey to Lerwick (bus-ferry-bus-ferry-bus) and Yell residents twice (bus-ferry-bus). All other islands face only one change and are therefore on a similar par with outlying mainland areas who are served by feeder buses connecting to the mainline bus (however the mainland locations could have access to the mainline bus via active travel means which is not open to island residents).</p>
<p>Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?</p>	<p>There are no new or additional barriers created by Option 3 as it improves rather than worsens access.</p>
<p>How will you address these?</p>	<p>The service alterations and introductions are described above. There will be no further mitigation at this time.</p>
<p>You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).</p> <p>If your answer is NO to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and <u>you can proceed to Step SEVEN.</u></p> <p>If the answer is YES, an ICIA must be prepared and <u>you should proceed to Step FIVE.</u></p> <p>To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)? 	

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are these different effects likely? • Are these effects significantly different? • Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the mainland or between island groups? 	
STEP 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Responses
In Step Five, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	<p>Positive effect provided through introduction of new services, realignment of existing services and alignment of new services, all ensuring that journeys can be made in line with the needs identified through stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Sunday services address isolation and lack of access to/from Lerwick, whilst the bookable services address low/variable demand. The re-formatted/re-timed Whalsay link addresses weather disruption concerns and opens the service up to new passengers who could not make the earlier Lerwick departure time.</p>
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	<p>The new service and alterations are improvements for island residents. They will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that any unintended consequences of the changes are understood and addressed on an ongoing basis. Monitoring will include connection reliability against ferry timetables, assessing unmet demand for Sunday services and monitoring population changes that may trigger service reviews.</p>
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	<p>Further consultation is always important, particularly for island residents as their circumstances may change in context with factors which in other areas would be slight or unnoticeable (e.g. changes in population size, business alterations, shop closure, etc). This should be ongoing as part of the monitoring of services.</p>

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

	The monitoring frequency will vary and data drawn from the monitoring will be used to report performance quarterly and annually.
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	Detailed above.
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	The needs of residents have been incorporated in service design. Should any unintended consequences arise, mitigations will be considered at that stage, however further interventions may be subject to resource availability and funding.
STEP 6 - Making adjustments to your work	Responses
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	Yes, there are different contexts for each island and therefore different solutions offered. All detailed above.
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	We will continue to have ongoing contact with island representatives as part of the review and monitoring of the service effectiveness.
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	Yes
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	Not island-specific – all monitoring will be service specific.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	There are no specific targets, services will be monitored and reflections will be based on value (social as well as economic).
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	There will be a positive impact as needs are being addressed.
How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	Individual island context will be continually documented and close links maintained with Community Councils to ensure effectiveness.
STEP 7 - Publishing your ICIA	Responses
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	Yes
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No

Island Communities Impact Assessment
Public Bus and School Transport Business Case

Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	Yes
Who will sign-off your final ICIA and why?	Michael Craigie, Project SRO

ICIA's must be signed off by the staff member who completes it. They must then be approved and signed off by an executive manager or director. If an executive manager completes the ICIA, then the director should approve the ICIA.

ICIA completed by:	Elaine J Park
Position:	Transport Contracts and Operations Officer
Signature:	Elaine J Park
Date complete:	12/02/2026

ICIA approved by (Executive Manager or Director):	Michael Craigie
Position:	Lead Officer - ZetTrans Executive Manager – Transport Planning
Signature:	Michael Craigie
Date approved:	12/02/2026

Once approved and both the signature boxes are complete, you should publish the ICIA in PDF format on the [Island Communities Impact Assessments](#) page of the Shetland Islands Council website. All services should have a staff member who can edit the website. If not, please contact Community Planning and Development.

Even if a full assessment is not required (where the answer to Step 4 is no), this should still be published.