

Briefing Note

Elected Member Briefing – Project update: Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project

Elected Member Briefing Note Ref. No. 2026-36

About this Briefing Note

Briefing by: *Lee Coutts, Project Manager: Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project*

Date: *01/07/2026*

Subject: *Project update: Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project*

Public / ~~Exempt~~ / Confidential

if exempt or confidential explain risks and consequences.

Purpose

This briefing note provides an update on the Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project, covering:

1. Grutness Terminal completion and rock armour breakwater remedial works

Background

The Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project entered the delivery phase after the Council approved its Full Business Case in December 2024. This was followed by approval from the Department for Transport and confirmation of funding: £26.7 million from the UK Government, in addition to £18.3 million from the Council.

Key points

1. Grutness Terminal works are contractually complete, and we are now in the defects period.
2. There is one principal item remaining within the defects period – remedial works to the rock armour breakwater to achieve the specified quality standard. This will take approximately 6 - 8 weeks, anticipated to

commence week beginning 13th July 2026, involving the rebuild of sections of the rock armour breakwater.

Overview

1. In contractual terms the construction works at Grutness have been completed - as the work has been completed to a level where the facilities in Grutness are in use/operation as demonstrated by the current use by the Good Shepherd IV for the ferry service.

The construction works included piling, dredging, concreting works and installation of rock armour (up to end February 2026).

From March 2026 onwards the project transitioned from core construction into finishing works, with quay furniture, fenders, ladders, services, surfacing, kerbing and lining works within the site and operational areas being undertaken.

2. In May 2026 the Council's engineers and Council officers undertook inspections of the works completed to identify if there were any items requiring rectification by the Main Contractor prior to final acceptance. This is standard practice across engineering and construction contracts.

During the inspections a few snagging items were identified, which the Main Contractor continues to progress as part of the defects period allowed in the contract for the works.

The principal item identified during the inspections is the need for remedial works to the rock armour breakwater (this having previously been highlighted to the Contractor).

It should be noted that installation of the rock armour was undertaken during the winter construction period in challenging marine conditions. While this is not uncommon for projects of this nature, subsequent quality assurance inspections identified a number of areas where further adjustment is required to achieve the specified finished profile and construction tolerances.

Inspections confirmed:

- Voids between armour units.
- Areas where further interlocking of armour units is required.

- Sections where the finished slope profile requires adjustment.
- Areas requiring refinement to achieve the specified line and level tolerances.

Since the inspections the Main Contractor has undertaken appropriate surveys, to understand the extent of remedial works required, these have been reviewed by the Council's consultant engineers and areas out with the specified tolerances highlighted. The Main Contractor is currently reviewing the scope, liaising with sub-contractors and finalising their methodology. Formal proposals are expected imminently.

The anticipated remedial works methodology consists of two excavators operated from the top of the breakwater, assisted by a barge mounted excavator to remedy identified areas of rock armour, rebuilding from the bottom of the slope up as required to meet the specification requirements (line, level, and interlocked placing) before moving onto the next section requiring remedial work. The whole of the remedial works will be subject to the Main Contractor undertaking regular ongoing surveys. The remedial works will continue to be closely supervised by the Council's consultant engineers to ensure compliance with specification and quality standards.

The Council's consultant engineers are satisfied that the core layers of the rock armour breakwater meet the quality standards and specification within the contract. They have confirmed that there are no immediate safety concerns and no risk to the integrity or operation of the wider pier structure.

The remedial works relate to achieving the specified requirements prior to final acceptance.

The remedial works are anticipated to start week commencing 13th July for a period of approximately 6 - 8 weeks and will be carefully managed to minimise disruption. At present, there is no anticipated impact on overall project outcomes or operational readiness.

When a precise date for commencement of the remedial works has been confirmed, an update will be provided.

During the remedial works the Fair Isle ferry service will continue to operate from Grutness.

All identified items, including the rock armour remedial works, are being addressed by the Main Contractor in line with their contractual obligations. There is no additional cost to the Council associated with these works.

It is reiterated that the installation of the rock armour took place during the winter construction period, in challenging marine conditions. While this is not uncommon for marine works of this nature, such conditions can make achieving the final finished profile more challenging and increase the likelihood of remedial works being required following the initial installation.

Note:

The defects period is a standard part of construction and engineering contracts. It allows the Council to identify any items that do not meet contracted/specified requirements following completion, with the Main Contractor contractually obliged to return and rectify these at no additional cost to the Council.

The Council will incur additional costs to cover the Council's consultant engineer site attendance and supervision of the remedial work.

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Contact Details:

Lee Coutts, Project Manager: Fair Isle Ferry and Infrastructure Replacement Project

01595 744 929 or 07825 089 129

lee.coutts@shetland.gov.uk

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