

Mr. Neil Grant
Shetland Islands Council
Solarhus
3 North Ness
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 0LZ

4 July 2022

Dear Mr. Grant,

Fair Isle Ferry - Application to UK Government Levelling Up Fund – Round 2

I write in support of Shetland Islands Council bid to the UK Government Levelling Up Fund to support the Fair Isle Ferry replacement Project.

This world-renowned island came into the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland (the Trust) in 1954. The island is of exceptional natural heritage significance with important seabird colonies and a rich marine environment. Fair Isle's cultural heritage is similarly impressive with many archaeological sites dating from prehistoric times to the present day, both on land and on the seabed. All these features are set within a nationally important landscape, alongside a particularly distinctive social heritage through traditions such as Fair Isle knitting. Fair Isle is one of just two sites in Scotland and only 70 in the whole of Europe to hold the prestigious Council of Europe Diploma which recognises sites of outstanding natural quality where communities live in harmony with their environment.

The community is indeed crucial to a great deal of the general conservation of the island, through crofting tenure and working for and with the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT), these special qualities of Fair Isle also provide a unique experience for visitors and tourism.

Fair Isle is the most remote of any inhabited island in the UK, and its continued occupancy is a testament to the spirit of the people resident on the island. Island communities face all of the challenges of rural living with the added difficulties of limited and weather-dependent access. The Trust considers that improving transport links to Fair Isle are crucial for the social and economic health of the community.

The Trust also recognises transport is critical to the ongoing sustainability of this special place, replacing the MV Good Shepherd IV with a bespoke Roll on – Roll off (Ro-Ro) vessel with supporting harbour works at Grutness and North Haven will be transformative for the community and visitors alike, bringing additional benefits by allowing greater flexibility for transporting vehicles and cargos to the island.

To date NTS have been involved in preliminary discussions with Shetland Islands Council (SIC) to ensure we are up to speed with proposals including the need to expand the 'Noust' area, for the new ferry.

This sits on NTS owned land that forms part of the Fair Isle Common Grazings and the Trust are very willing to enter an agreement with the shareholders so it can be made available to SIC for this important community purposes. In this process we will follow procedures that are familiar to us such as seeking shareholder agreement, agreeing terms with SIC and securing any permissions. We are entirely open to all options including sale, long lease and/or a tripartite agreement with shareholders.

Yours sincerely



Clea Warner
Regional Director – Highlands and Islands

The National Trust for Scotland