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## **Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project**

**Island Communities Impact Assessment**

On behalf of **Shetland Islands Council**



**Shetland  
Islands  
Council**

Project Ref: 332610145 | Date: 18 June 2024

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## Document Control Sheet

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This report represent an update to an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) report that was previously prepared as part of the outline design and consenting process for the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project, which comprises of a new vessel and associated landside infrastructure. The project requires ICIA to fulfil requirements under The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The Act places a duty on relevant authorities to have due regard to island communities in exercising their functions.
- 1.1.2 Section 8 of the Act states that relevant authorities must prepare an ICIA in relation to a policy, strategy or service which, in the authority’s opinion, is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions. These provisions came into force on 23rd December 2020.
- 1.1.3 The 2018 Act lists the following areas that are relevant considerations for islands and island communities:
- Depopulation
  - Economic Development
  - Environmental protection
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Community empowerment
  - Transport
  - Digital connectivity
  - Fuel poverty
  - Land management
  - Biodiversity
- 1.1.4 In December 2019, the Scottish Ministers published the first ever National Islands Plan. The Plan established 13 strategic objectives which seek to improve the quality of life for island communities. Fairness is a key value that underpins a commitment to equality and human rights. The plan recognises that every member of society has a right to live with dignity and to enjoy high quality public services wherever they live.

## 1.2 The ICIA Process

- 1.2.1 The ICIA process is intended to describe the likely significantly different effect(s) of a policy, strategy or service on island communities. It must also assess the extent to which the authority considers 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.
- 1.2.2 Section 7 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 states that a ‘Relevant Authority’ must have regard to island communities in carrying out its functions. Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans are ‘Relevant Authorities’ with regards to Section 7(2) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. A related duty in Section 8 of the Act requires relevant public bodies to undertake an Island Communities Impact Assessment “*in relation to a policy, strategy, or service which, in the authority’s opinion, is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions*”.

- 1.2.3 Section 10 of the Act sets out how a ‘Relevant Authority’ demonstrates compliance with the duty imposed by Section 7:
- a. By making such arrangements as it considers appropriate to review any policy, strategy or service (as the case may be) which it develops or delivers in carrying out its functions; and
  - b. Either;
    - i in the case where the authority must prepare an Island Communities Impact Assessment under section 8(1), by preparing that assessment; or
    - ii in any other case, by making such an assessment or taking such other steps as the authority considers appropriate.
- 1.2.4 In terms of Section 8 of the Act, in particular: (3) An island communities impact assessment prepared under subsection (1) must — (a) describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service (as the case may be), and (b) assess the extent to which the authority considers that the policy, strategy or service (as the case may be) can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.
- 1.2.5 In the context of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project, the ICIA should consider impacts on Fair Isle (as well as Shetland overall) – to validate that policies and actions contained within the *project* are fit for purpose for Fair Isle and Shetland. The ICIA should assist in shaping the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project implementation plan to address the factors that can disadvantage island communities. The ICIA will hence be used as part of the development and roll-out process, assisting with the development, progression and refinement of delivery parameters.
- 1.2.6 The table below sets out the structure of the report

Table 1.1: Report structure

Section	Description
Section 1	Introduction
Section 2	The Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project
Section 3	Engagement approach
Section 4	Key island issues – Fair Isle (and Shetland)
Section 5	Island Community Impact Assessment Framework
Section 6	Assessment of impacts
Section 7	Concluding remarks

## 2 The Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section presents a brief overview of Fair Isle and a summary of the evolution and resulting preferred option to address the issues, challenges and opportunities that have been determined through several years of work with the Fair Isle community in the form of the Strategic Outline Case (SOC), Outline Business Case (OBC) and now the Full Business Case (FBC).

### 2.2 Fair Isle

2.2.1 Fair Isle is the United Kingdom's most remote community, lying 24 miles off the southern tip of the Shetland Islands. The island is separated from mainland Shetland by a body of water known as the 'Roost', which has a reputation amongst seafarers as being one of the most demanding stretches of water in the UK, and indeed Europe. This means that the island is not just geographically remote but is also remote from a connectivity perspective – indeed, the island had no transport connections on 183 days in 2022. The Fair Isle ferry route is shown in the map below:



Figure 2.1: The Shetland internal ferry network

- 2.2.2 The island is within the Shetland Islands Council administrative area and is connected to mainland Shetland by two lifeline transport links. The main passenger link is through an air service delivered by an eight seat Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander aircraft. The ferry service provides the critically important supply-chain and freight link as well as capacity for 12 passengers per sailing.
- 2.2.3 The ferry serving Fair Isle, MV *Good Shepherd IV*, is 38-years old, built in 1986. The vessel is entirely deficient in meeting disabled access requirements. It is also significantly beyond what should be its service life and its condition puts it within two years of 'end of life'. There is an urgent need to replace the vessel and the supporting harbour infrastructure to avoid severely harmful impacts on this unique community.
- 2.2.4 Fair Isle is a place rich in wildlife, cultural heritage and community spirit. In addition to its famous knitwear, the island is best known for its bird observatory (FIBO), which was founded in 1948. FIBO has provided a continuous record of bird migration patterns and thus plays an essential role in UK scientific research, particularly as we seek to better understand the implications of climate change on avian life and migration patterns.
- 2.2.5 Despite its peripherality, island residents have demonstrated remarkable flexibility, resilience and innovation in making Fair Isle a successful place. However, the island has suffered from population decline in recent years and the main reason given by those leaving is the poor reliability and experience of the transport links. Furthermore, in March 2019, the island suffered the devastating loss to fire of one of its defining features, the recently completed Bird Observatory building, a facility of international renown that attracted visitors from all over the world. This tragic event was compounded by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which effectively suspended all visitor trips to the island.
- 2.2.6 Fair Isle is now in a perilous position – it is not an exaggeration to say that, if the life-expired vessel and inadequate infrastructure are not replaced in the immediate future, there is a serious threat to the sustainability of the community. In a small island, it only takes one or two families to leave to undermine key services such as the primary school, health care or fire cover at the airfield. The provision of a new vessel and supporting infrastructure is integral to the future of sustainability of the island and is the focus of this business case.

## 2.3 Project Background

- 2.3.1 Shetland Islands Council funds lifeline<sup>1</sup> transport connections to nine islands across the archipelago. These connections are delivered through a combination of air and ferry services. The majority of ferry services are operated directly by the Council, with the exception of the Foula ferry route, the operation of which is contracted by ZetTrans and operated by BK Marine. Air Services are also provided by ZetTrans. ZetTrans has a statutory funding agreement with Shetland Islands Council, who are obliged to fund any financial deficit.
- 2.3.2 In 2014, Shetland Islands Council, through the *Our Islands, Our Future* initiative, began a dialogue with the Scottish Government on establishing some principles for the 'Fair Funding' of Shetland's inter-island transport services and infrastructure. The basis of these discussions was that the financial burden upon the Council of providing inter-island transport is disproportionate. The Scottish Government accepted in principle that a 'fair funding' position needed to be established and, to inform that, Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans agreed to undertake a programme level business case to establish and appraise the service and infrastructure requirements for the inter-island transport network over a 30-year planning horizon.
- 2.3.3 In September 2015, the Council commissioned this programme business case, known as 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 output of the study was the development of a programme level

<sup>1</sup> As defined on page 53, paragraph 8 of the *Scottish Ferries Plan 2013-22* - <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/30208/j254579.pdf>

Strategic Outline Case (SOC) that established the 'case for change' and identified a set of capital and revenue options for each island which, if delivered, would in-part or in-full address the identified transport problems.

- 2.3.4 The SOC was completed in Autumn 2016 and set out a range of capital and revenue options for all nine islands connected to mainland Shetland by the air and ferry services, together with a timeline for progressing specific elements of the SOC to Outline Business Case (OBC) stage. One of the priorities emerging from the SOC was the development of an OBC for a **new vessel and supporting infrastructure for Fair Isle**. This OBC was commissioned in August 2018 and was completed in December 2019. It was subsequently updated in 2021 in preparation for the first round of the *Levelling-Up Fund*.
- 2.3.5 Following an unsuccessful application to Round 1 of LUF, the Council reapplied in August 2022 and was successful in securing **£26.8m** of UK Government funding.

## 2.4 Proposed Option Overview

The scope of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project has gradually evolved over time – significantly higher than forecast costs led first to a value engineering exercise and then latterly a descoping exercise. This section briefly summarises the chronology of events and the current preferred option package.

### Initial preferred option – summary

- 2.4.1 Through the analysis undertaken in the OBC and updated at the outset of the FBC, it was determined that the preferred option was the **replacement of MV *Good Shepherd IV* with a bespoke Ro-Ro vessel**, which was Option 1 in the OBC. The main components of Option 1 are summarised below.

#### Strategic approach

- 2.4.2 The preferred option is to progress with a bespoke solution for Fair Isle with the **retention of an island-based vessel and crew**. To de-risk the adoption of an island-based option, the Council and the Fair Isle community are developing contingency and long-term crewing arrangements to ensure a clear succession plan for crewing the vessel.

#### Vessel

- 2.4.3 The preferred option for Fair Isle is a larger, faster monohull vessel built to modern standards. This new vessel is to be coded as a workboat, limiting the number of passengers to 12.

#### Ship-to-shore interface

- 2.4.4 The preferred option at OBC and submitted to the LUF was initially to provide a linkspan at both Fair Isle and Grutness to enable Ro-Ro capability at all states of the tide. This position has now changed, as will be described below.

#### Overnight berth

- 2.4.5 The preferred option is to upgrade the current overnight berthing arrangement at Fair Isle. The noust will be extended and will be accompanied by the provision of a new winch, winch house and cradle.

#### Procurement strategy

- 2.4.6 The LUF funding was predicated on full drawdown of all monies by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This was a key constraint identified and, recognising this, an Infrastructure Procurement Strategy was developed which

recommended the use of a framework available to the public sector - SCAPE Procure Scotland Ltd (“SCAPE”). Through the SCAPE Framework Agreement, the Council was able to initiate a call-off for the civil engineering construction elements of the project much quicker than going to market as would typically be expected, essential given the fixed end date imposed by the governance surrounding the funding.

### Revised preferred option – ship-to-shore interface

2.4.7 In **July 2023**, Council Officers and advisors from Mott MacDonald and Stantec engaged the SCAPE Delivery Partner, to ensure the buildability of the design and develop costs informed by market engagement. Following iterative design work and the securing of quotations from sub-contractors, a budget estimate of **£64.14 million** emerged, which represented a **funding shortfall of £34.41 million in relation to the original total funding availability of £29.73 million**. Faced with this level of cost escalation set against a fixed LUF funding pot, it was necessary to **revisit and de-scope the ship-to-shore interface options**.

#### Investment Scenarios

2.4.8 Over the period **November 2023 to January 2024**, Council Officers and advisors from Mott MacDonald and Stantec identified a number of **potential future scenarios** exploring **value engineering** and **de-scoping** options. In these scenarios:

- **Value engineering** was defined as a reduction in the engineering works to reduce costs whilst still delivering the benefits the LUF grant was based on
- **De-scoping** was defined as eliminating elements of the project, resulting in a reduction in the benefits the funding was predicated on

2.4.9 Seven different scenarios were developed covering all options from delivering the initial preferred option without any amendment through to cancelling the project. These scenarios are summarised in the table below:

Table 2.1: Ship-to-shore interface investment scenarios

	Scenario	Description
Baseline	Deliver within current funding availability of £29.73m	Descoping of project to reduce costs to agreed funding.
1	Deliver full benefits with value engineering	Continuation of project through SCAPE Scotland Framework delivering all elements of the project that the funding was predicated on.
2	Replace linkspans with fixed ramps	Replacement of linkspans, which can operate at all states of the tide with fixed ramps, which are tidally constrained.
3	De-scoping	Removal of Ro-Ro capability, with the exception of occasional tidally constrained Ro-Ro operations across the existing quay at North Haven, Fair Isle.
4	Delay and go to the market with a de-scoped product	Same de-scoping as Scenario 3 but the relationship with SCAPE Delivery Partner would be terminated and a competitive tender carried out instead.
5	Like-for-like replacement	This option is the 'Do Minimum' as presented at outset of the Economic Dimension.
6	Early termination	Cancellation of the project subject to further work to find an alternative solution.

2.4.10 Shetland Islands Council approved the decision to progress with **Scenario 3** at its meeting on **24<sup>th</sup> January 2024**. However, following further cost escalation, **the Council decided at a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 to progress with Scenario 4** (the key difference with Scenario 3 being that the relationship with the SCAPE Delivery Partner was ended and the infrastructure works tendered). Details of the revised preferred option are set out below.

#### **Revised preferred option**

2.4.11 As noted at the outset of this section, the only element of the preferred option that is being substantively amended is the ship-to-shore interface, replacing the initial preferred option of Ro-Ro with Lo-Lo. This section therefore sets out the proposed new arrangements at North Haven and Grutness.

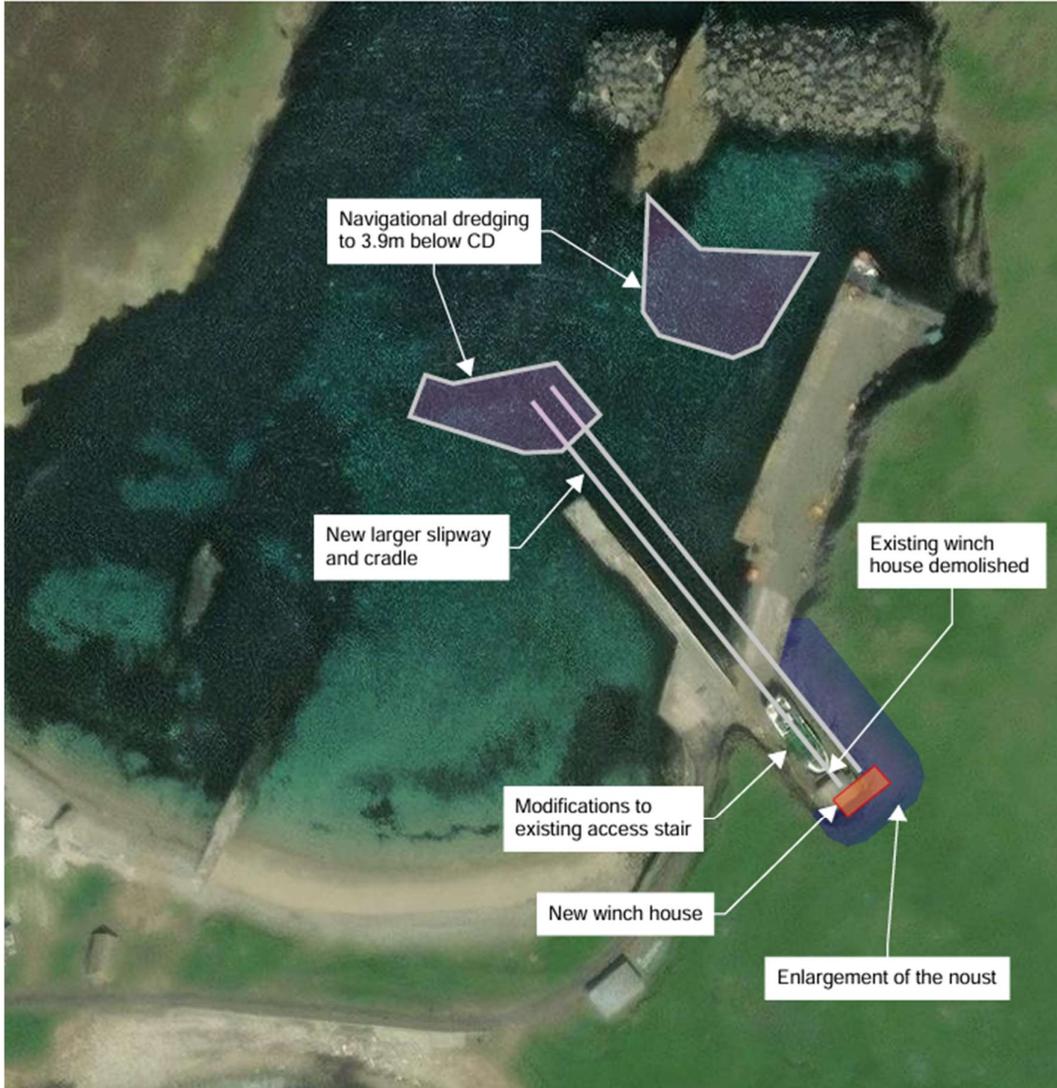
2.4.12 The objective of the Fair Isle and Grutness project is to upgrade the existing ferry terminals to facilitate a larger vessel to operate from these ferry terminals and create more sheltered conditions at Grutness pier.

#### **North Haven**

2.4.13 The proposed infrastructure works at Fair Isle include:

- Enlargement of the noust to accommodate a wider, longer vessel
- Construction of a new slipway and new boat cradle to accommodate a wider vessel
- Construction of a new winch house containing new winch and associated machinery for raising and lowering the vessel up and down the slipway
- Surfacing works
- Coastal protection works to South Haven beach using rock arisings from the noust enlargement (being progressed as a separate project)
- Dredging

2.4.14 The figures below show the revised proposals for North Haven, followed by a 3D visualisation:



2.2: North Haven, Fair Isle preferred option

Figure



Figure 2.3: North Haven, Fair Isle preferred option 3D visualisation

- 2.4.15 This option retains much of the original proposals for Fair Isle, but the quay extension and linkspan have been removed. These elements of the scheme would have facilitated Ro-Ro options at all states of the tide and would have expanded the footprint of the quayside up to the existing breakwater.
- 2.4.16 This option also offers the occasional ability to operate Ro-Ro sailings from North Haven to Lerwick at certain states of the tide, by mooring to the existing quay at North Haven, in the area which has a removable cope. Such opportunities will be irregular given the need for tides, weather, crewing hours etc to align, but it is nonetheless an opportunity which does not routinely exist at present. This is the current practice when the Skerries vessel MV *Filla* (very infrequently) visits – to aid visualisation, an image of this vessel undertaking Ro-Ro operations at Fair Isle is provided below:



Figure 2.4: MV *Filla* undertaking Ro-Ro operations a Fair Isle, with MV *Good Shepherd IV* in the foreground

### Grutness

2.4.17 The proposed infrastructure works at Grutness will upgrade and extend the existing berth and include:

- Construction of a new steel piled pier which encapsulates the existing pier and extends a further 22m beyond the length of the existing pier
- Construction of a 52m breakwater extension with dog leg to create a more sheltered wave climate on the berth
- Surfacing works
- Dredging

2.4.18 The figures below show the revised proposals for Grutness, followed by a 3D visualisation:



Figure 2.5: Grutness, preferred option



Figure 2.6: Grutness preferred option, 3D visualisation

2.4.19 At Grutness, the de-scoping of the project from Ro-Ro to Lo-Lo involved the removal of the linkspan, with a corresponding reduction in the length of the pier extension required.

## 3 Engagement Approach

### 3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 The ICIA guidance stresses the importance of consultation and robust community engagement so that island residents are given a platform to voice their opinions, concerns and suggestions. It also addresses the need to consult island communities in order for a Relevant Authority to comply with the Section 7 duty.
- 3.1.2 To these ends, this section sets out the continuous approach to community and stakeholder engagement that has been employed throughout the evolution of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project.
- 3.1.3 It is worth noting that the background to this project – identifying the ‘case for change’ through the earlier stages of the business case approach pre-dated both the National Islands Plan, and the development and adoption of the ICIA approach and requirement – only in October 2020 did the Scottish Government issue guidance on ICIA under Section 11 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and relating to the duty imposed by Section 7 of the Act.
- 3.1.4 That said, the principles of the ICIA approach, evidenced from consideration as part of this ICIA of the Strategic Outline Case (SOC), Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) reporting, have been fully embraced and deployed throughout earlier phases of work, that is:
- Promote the voice of island communities – consultation and robust community engagement so that island residents are given a platform to voice their opinions, concerns and suggestions
  - Helping to support strong, resilient and vibrant island communities
  - Helping to meet the four principles of fairness, integration, environmental protection and inclusiveness that underpin national work to support island communities
  - Recognising that every person in Scotland has a right to live with dignity and to enjoy high quality public services wherever they live
- 3.1.5 This overview section presents and describes the key and ongoing community and stakeholder engagements, evidence bases and strategic viewpoints, dating back and commencing with the Fair Isle Development Plan, published in 2015.

#### Fair Isle Development Plan (2015)

- 3.1.6 Recognising the challenges facing the island, the Fair Isle Community Association (FICA) initiated work on a Community Development Plan for Fair Isle in summer 2014. The community-led plan was published on 7th April 2015 and provides a framework for the future economic development of the island. The Fair Isle Development Plan (FIDP) has been drawn upon throughout the evolution of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project, and referenced as part of SBC, OBC and FBC reporting, but it is worth specifically drawing out the transport related considerations in this section.
- 3.1.7 The overarching ‘Vision’ for Fair Isle set out in the FIDP is as follows:
- *By 2020, Fair Isle will have a sustainable future with a growing, economically secure population with access to good quality affordable housing, reliable essential services that are fit for 21st century living and opportunities for employment. The community will have retained its strong cultural heritage and is dynamic, inclusive and outward looking. All that is special about the island’s unique environment will be safeguarded and managed to the benefit of all.*

- 3.1.8 Whilst the FIDP worked on a plan period of 2015-2020, it can be argued that the 'Vision' remains relevant, even as the end of the Plan period has now passed, and despite the significant local, national and global changes, including the catastrophic fire that destroyed the Fair Isle Bird Observatory in March 2019, the changing national policy context, including the National Islands Plan published in December 2019, and the global COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020 and onwards.
- 3.1.9 The FIDP is also currently in the process of producing a new development plan for the island and have been engaged throughout the detailed design and preparation of the FBC.

### Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study – Strategic Outline Case (2016)

- 3.1.10 The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) was developed between September 2015 and October 2016. It took the form of a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) based appraisal, developing and appraising options for the nine island communities served by the inter-island transport network.
- 3.1.11 The SBC set out a range of capital and revenue options for all nine islands connected to mainland Shetland by Council funded air and ferry services, together with a timeline for progressing specific elements of the SOC to Outline Business Case (OBC) stage. One of the priorities emerging from the SOC was the development of an OBC for a new vessel and supporting infrastructure for Fair Isle.
- 3.1.12 Given the varied nature of the study area, it was essential to undertake a systematic baselining exercise to establish the specifics of each community and the problems and opportunities associated with their current transport connections to mainland Shetland. There were two parallel streams to this baselining exercise – the first component of this was a review of the services from the perspective of the public. This included engagement with the island transport representatives and public sector stakeholders.

### Fair Isle Outline Business Case (2019)

- 3.1.13 The Fair Isle OBC was developed with critical input through engagement with the island transport representatives, the crew of the ferry, *MV Good Shepherd IV*, and public sector stakeholders. This was supplemented with a number of specific and focussed engagements, including:
- In terms of how **goods** are moved to and from Fair Isle, this has been established through consultation with the crew of *MV Good Shepherd IV* (who effectively act as the island 'haulier') and suppliers to the island
  - Fair Isle has an established **tourism** industry and is a destination of global renown, famous both for the Fair Isle Bird Observatory (FIBO) and its knitwear. As well as attracting short and long-stay visits, the island is enticing an ever-increasing number of small cruise vessels, which tend to be at the high-value end of the market. As is common with small islands, data on tourism numbers is relatively limited – in order to develop an understanding of the tourism industry, the OBC process included a telephone consultations with VisitScotland (Shetland) and FIBO (shortly before the fire)
  - In terms of **education**, consultation with the Council Education Service was undertaken to consider both the delivery of primary education on the island and the transport of children to and from and secondary education at Anderson High in Lerwick
  - In terms of **health**, consultation was carried out with NHS Shetland to better understand how the needs of the island are served in terms of primary care, GP provision, dentistry, ante natal care and travel to hospital for appointments and emergencies
- 3.1.14 In order to collect the views of residents on the island's transport connections and how these impact on their lives, a **household survey** was carried out in early 2019 – see below.
- 3.1.15 In order to gauge public opinion of the options developed, two public exhibitions were also held in Fair Isle:

- The SOC public exhibition was held on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 and presented the process and outcomes of the Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study, including the shortlisted capital and revenue options for Fair Isle
- The outcome of the OBC – and in particular the preferred option – was presented to the community on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

3.1.16 Members of the public were invited to view the material, discuss the options with the team and complete a short feedback form. Some 40 Fair Isle residents attended the OBC consultation (almost the entire adult population of the island), of which 24 completed the feedback form. There was universal buy-in to the proposed preferred option, a roll-on, roll-off ferry service operating from linkspans at North Haven in Fair Isle and Grutness on mainland Shetland.

### Fair Isle household survey (2019)

3.1.17 To collect the views of island residents on Fair Isle's transport connections and how these impact on their lives, a household survey was carried out in early 2019 (as part of the OBC process). Responses were received from 22 island households (likely to be around a half or more of the total households on the island). Salient points (as at 2019) from the survey are as follows:

- **85%** of respondents do not consider the island's air and ferry connections as sufficient for their family's day-to-day needs, now and in the future
- **67%** of respondents do not think that the current air and ferry connections to the mainland are sufficient for tourism in Fair Isle. This is a key finding as all respondents to the survey noted that they would like to see tourism develop further in the island
- Whilst there is a belief that services need to be improved, **77%** of respondents did note that the current air and ferry connections are sufficient to ensure the long-term sustainability of the community
- **80%** of respondents believe that improved connectivity between Fair Isle and mainland Shetland would make it a more attractive place for people to live and bring up families. This is a key finding given the aspirations of the Fair Isle Development Plan

3.1.18 Further specific findings with respect to the ferry service include:

- **One third** of residents had not used the ferry in the year prior to the survey being undertaken. For those who had used the ferry, they tended to do so less frequently than the air service – **32%** had used it 1-3 times and **23%** used it 4-6 times. Journey purposes when using the ferry service were similar to air. Conversely, all survey respondents had made at least one trip by air in the past year, with three quarters making between 4-9 trips per annum
  - This compares to the National Islands Plan survey (in 2020) when nearly half of all 'Shetland Outer Isles'<sup>2</sup> respondents travelled 'at least once per week' by ferry – which indicates the more self-reliant or self-sustainable nature of Fair Isle, in part due to geography and connectivity, compared to the other 'Shetland Outer Isles'<sup>3</sup>
- The principal reason for using the ferry rather than taking the plane was disruption to the air service (**50%**) or inability to get a booking on the plane (**23%**), which further highlighted the important role of the ferry as secondary / fallback mode of passenger travel, particularly for essential travel
- The primary sources of dissatisfaction with the ferry service were crossing time (**95%**); comfort onboard (**80%**); onward transport connections from Grutness (**74%**); and arrangements for those with a disability (**70%**). Two thirds of respondents noted that aspects of the ferry service prevented

<sup>2</sup> That is all inhabited isles in Shetland other than mainland Shetland.

<sup>3</sup> [Scottish National Islands Plan Survey \(2020\): results explorer \(shinyapps.io\)](https://www.shinyapps.io/scottish-national-islands-plan-survey-2020/)

them using it more frequently, with the above reasons again being cited as the primary factors deterring use

- In travelling less frequently than desired, residents were predominantly missing out on health appointments (**36%**) and visiting friends and relatives (**32%**)
- Of the **12** respondents who noted that they would use the ferry service more often if their concerns were addressed, a modest uplift in usage could be anticipated – **58%** noted that they would make 1-3 additional return trips per month
- **85%** of respondents supported a combination of Grutness and Lerwick calls for the ferry service

### Shetland's Islands with Small Populations – Locality Plan (2020)

3.1.19 Elected Members, Shetland Partnership partners and island communities, through consultations and forums such as the Commission on Tackling Inequalities, were increasingly expressing concerns and raising issues about Shetland's more remote island communities. The communities of Fair Isle, Fetlar, Foula, Papa Stour and Skerries are all remote from Lerwick (and in most cases mainland Shetland itself, in terms of distance or connectivity, or both) and all have permanent populations of fewer than 100.

3.1.20 In September 2019, representatives of the five communities were brought together to share experiences, discuss aspirations and establish shared priorities. The approach drew heavily on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was designed to ensure communities have greater influence and control over things that matter to them: committing government and public services to engage with, listen to and respond to communities, with communities having increased opportunities to develop and deliver services and initiatives that will have a positive impact on the outcomes of those living within them.

3.1.21 A final consultation on the Locality Plan itself was planned for March 2020 but postponed in light of the global pandemic. An online and virtual consultation process was subsequently run with communities and organisations during the summer of 2020.

3.1.22 One of the benefits of the restrictions has been that meetings have become online by default. For some of the islands, this has meant that attendance has been higher than under pre-COVID-19 conditions. The absence of travel time and greater availability of people means that Councillors and Officers have been more available to attend community and Community Council meetings.

3.1.23 Key facts, challenges and priorities for the future of Fair Isle as developed participatively with the community through the *Islands with Small Populations Locality Plan* are as set out in the figure inset.

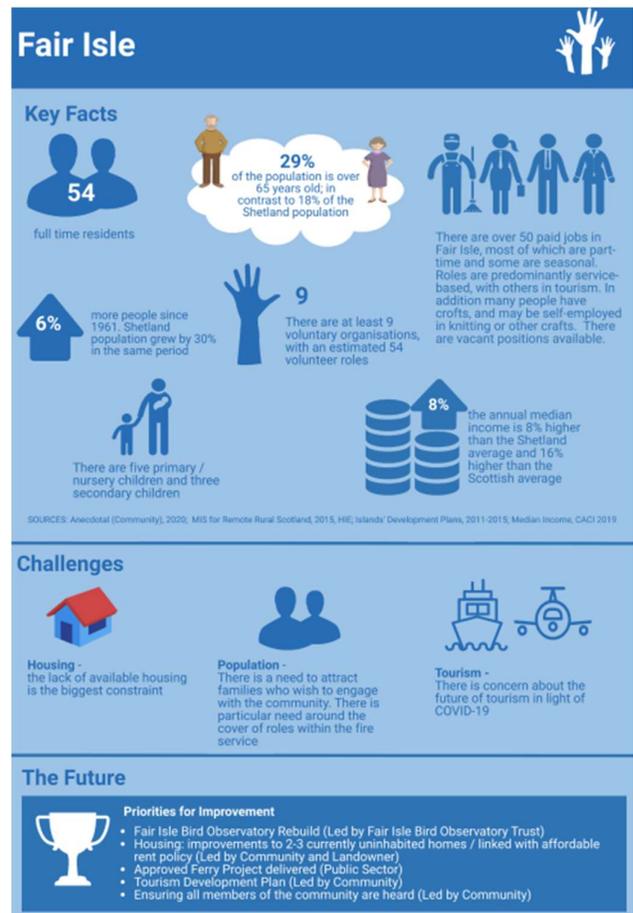


Figure 3.1 Islands with Small Populations – Locality Plan

3.1.24 Ongoing engagement has been held throughout the FBC process. This includes in-person workshops held in Fair Isle and Grutness to discuss the preferred option for the Fair Isle Ferry Upgrade in September 2023. In January 2024 a hybrid community engagement event was held to provide an update on de-scoped options following cost increases (8<sup>th</sup> January 2024). Online community engagement events have been held to discuss the de-scoped and preferred options following board meetings on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

## **3.2 Conclusions**

3.2.1 Consultation and community engagement with island residents has been critical and a major element of the development of the Fair Isle ferry project, giving residents the platform to voice their opinions, concerns and suggestions for the future of transport infrastructure and services, and how this infrastructure and services do and could support the sustainable future of Fair Isle.

3.2.2 This ICIA has drawn from these earlier and ongoing consultations and community engagements.

## 4 Key Island Issues – Fair Isle (and Shetland)

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Ensuring that an ICIA is both done well and developed from an island-perspective is important because island communities can face many challenges when compared with mainland and urban areas. For example, on an island, it can be more difficult to access public services or employment, including high-quality employment. Also, the consequences of geography can create problems for island communities. These might include for example, a higher general cost of living, more expensive and more complex transport options, higher fuel or construction costs, higher costs from a public service perspective that is not always fully understood or covered by central government funding, as well as environmental factors and infrastructure issues such as poor digital connectivity.
- 4.1.2 This section provides an overview of key island issues for Fair Isle (and Shetland), drawing largely on secondary research, published data sources, wider policy and an understanding of the issues faced by small and remote island communities. It focuses specifically on the body of work that has been amassed during the earlier stages of the Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study and, critically, placing significant weight on the community involvement that has fed into the study process.
- 4.1.3 In general terms, sourcing of island-level data can sometimes be difficult due to both levels of spatial disaggregation and reporting lag. It is recognised that, in order to ensure a comprehensive and transparent delivery of the National Islands Plan, there is a requirement for solid and reliable data, yet there is currently a lack of robust disaggregated socio-economic data at island level. Taking into consideration the amount of research that will be necessary to fill these data gaps, the Scottish Government's Islands Team is undertaking a gradual approach to the amalgamation of island-level data, which will develop over the lifetime of the National Islands Plan. This will be of relevance to the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the Shetland Inter-Island Transport Study in future years, and the Fair Isle ferry project specifically.
- 4.1.4 This section is opened with an overview and summary of the present Fair Isle transport services and connectivity for context.

### 4.2 Present Transport Services and Connectivity

- 4.2.1 Shetland Islands Council funds lifeline transport connections to nine islands across the archipelago. These connections are delivered through a combination of air and ferry services which have been supported in both capital and revenue terms by the Council over many years.

- 4.2.2 The Fair Isle services comprise:

- Flights, which leave from Tingwall airport, approximately ten-minutes drive from Lerwick. There are flights to the isle each weekday, weather permitting, and Saturday flights during the summer months. There were also commercially-operated summer flights to Fair Isle from Kirkwall, but these were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic – the future of these flights has not been confirmed by the commercial operator
- MV *Good Shepherd IV* carries twelve passengers, and the journey takes about two and a half hours from Grutness. In summer the ferry sails three times a week to / from Grutness at the south end of Shetland (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) and once a fortnight it sails to Lerwick. In winter there is only one sailing per week (Tuesday)



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- 4.2.3 The current Fair Isle vessel is 38-years old and does not meet current accessibility standards. It has circa two years remaining service life (at the time of reporting) with some expenditure. The service is unreliable and there are consequences of this in terms of:
- **Supply-chain** – e.g., import of fresh produce, export of goods etc
  - **Service provision** – e.g., providing health care and facilitating access to secondary school
  - **Personal travel** – e.g., missed appointments and limited opportunities on the mainland for Fair Isle residents
  - **Visitors and tourists to Fair Isle**, both in terms of the choice to visit the island and travel disruption en-route or on the return journey
- 4.2.4 In the 2019 Fair Isle household survey, 2/3 of respondents indicated that aspects of the ferry service prevent more frequent travel to mainland Shetland – more than half of respondents cited comfort, crossing time and the absence of Ro-Ro as key barriers to travelling more by ferry.
- 4.2.5 The current crane-based cargo operation also:
- Poses a potential medium-term regulatory risk to the continuation of the service
  - Places limits on the weight / type of goods carried
  - Affects vessel turnaround times, reducing the number of weather windows within which the service can operate
- 4.2.6 There is a local desire for improvements as evidenced in the OBC household survey. 85% did not think the current air and ferry connections to the mainland are sufficient for their family's day-to-day needs, now and in future; 2/3 thought that connections were not sufficient for tourism; 3/4 wanted to see tourism develop further; 1/4 felt current connections were not sufficient to ensure long-term sustainability of Fair Isle; and 80% felt that better connections would make Fair Isle more attractive for in-migrants.

### 4.3 Key issues

- 4.3.1 This section describes the key issues facing Fair Isle (and Shetland) in the context of the considerations for island communities set out in the 2018 Act, and as detailed in Section 1.2. Unless otherwise stated, the detail in this section has been drawn from the reports introduced and described in the previous section of this report.

#### Depopulation

- 4.3.2 From the 2020 mid-year population estimates, on 30 June 2020, the population of the Shetland Islands was **22,870**. This is a decrease of **0.2%** from 22,920 in 2019. Between 1998 and 2020, the population of the Shetland Islands increased by **0.7%**. Between 1998 and 2020, the 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (**20.8%**). The 65 to 74 age group saw the largest percentage increase (**70.1%**), so the population of Shetland overall is clearly aging.<sup>4</sup>
- 4.3.3 Fair Isle's population demonstrated relatively strong growth between 1981 and 2011 but this cumulative growth was offset between 2011 and 2018, with the permanent population now understood to be in the region of 50-55. Fostering population growth is a key element of the FIDP and addressing the transport issues facing Fair Isle is deemed to be an important element of this plan.
- 4.3.4 The Fair Isle population is also ageing. Addressing this issue and raising overall economic activity rates is essential to the future sustainability of the island. Moreover, the ageing population brings the issue of

<sup>4</sup> National Records of Scotland: [Shetland Islands Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

physical access to and from Fair Isle by both the ferry and air service, which is inadequate on both modes of transport, more sharply into focus.

### Economic development

4.3.5 The cost of living on Fair Isle is high. There is no empirical data showing wages at the Fair Isle level, but the economic base of the island suggests that they are likely to significantly lag both the Shetland and Scotland averages. Indeed, Fair Isle is in some respects a closed or circular economy, where much of the income of island residents is spent locally.

4.3.6 The Fair Isle population is highly qualified / skilled (measured in terms of formal qualifications), which is clearly beneficial in a community where each individual needs to have a wide array of talents. The high qualification levels hint at a pattern of in-migration amongst the more highly skilled cohorts.

4.3.7 The loss of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory in March 2019 was a major setback for the island, as it provided the majority of the island's tourist accommodation and brought a significant number of visitors to Fair Isle each year. However, in May 2022, the plans for the rebuild of the Bird Observatory received planning permission, with the Council's Planning Service noting that the £7.4 million development has a *"key role in promoting the environment, is a focus for tourism and provides a source of employment in the island"*. The new observatory is now wind and watertight, and it is hoped that it will be open in 2025.



Figure 4.1: Artist Impression of New Fair Isle Bird Observatory, sourced: Shetlandnews.co.uk

4.3.8 Whilst Fair Isle is currently facing a number of challenges, it is both a resilient and cohesive community. The population is committed and highly skilled, and the island has global recognition and goodwill. Moreover, there have been a number of recent improvements to island infrastructure, including the provision of 24-hour electricity.

4.3.9 Fair Isle is a traditionally crofted island and has a strong local sheep farming industry which is an important component of economic activity on the island. Very little livestock moves out of Fair Isle through the year, other than in September. This is consistent with the overall movement of livestock from Shetland. Fair Isle livestock is considered high quality and attracts good prices, so weather disruption can materially affect the return crofters can make if livestock misses the 'peak' sales and condition opportunities.

4.3.10 The Fair Isle ferry is based in and crewed from the island, with seven members of crew, providing an important source of local employment. Moreover, ferry crew hold multiple other jobs on the island, including the provision of fire cover at the airfield.

4.3.11 Beyond agriculture and crofting, the economy also includes arts, crafts production, tourism and other micro enterprises. This includes production of eponymous high-end and globally recognised Fair Isle knitwear.

### Environmental protection

4.3.12 Fair Isle is privately owned by the National Trust for Scotland and is covered by numerous environmental designations.

- 4.3.13 Fair Isle's community Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative saw its seas become the first designated Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area in Scotland. It is used to research the ecological features and impacts on local seabird populations and the wider marine environment, as well as to consider the socio-economic value of a healthy marine environment and partnership-led management.

### Health and wellbeing and education

- 4.3.14 Current health care provision in Fair Isle is effectively worked around existing transport connections.
- 4.3.15 Medical cover for Fair Isle is provided by the Levenwick Health Centre. There is also a resident district nurse. Services such as podiatry and dentistry visit the island and see patients at the nurse's surgery or home as is necessary.
- 4.3.16 Fair Isle is described as "a place rich in wildlife, cultural heritage and community spirit".<sup>5</sup> For a community of its size, it is extremely active with a number of formal and informal groups. Social activities and traditions are a significant part of the island's culture with regular activities taking place around the hall, school, museum, two churches and observatory.

### Early Learning and Childcare and Primary Education

- 4.3.17 There is a combined Early Learning and Childcare (ELC, i.e., a nursery) and primary school on Fair Isle. Having a local primary school is critical to the sustainability of an island, and this is particularly the case in Fair Isle where it would not be possible to travel daily to mainland Shetland or another island for schooling. However, as with many small island primary schools, the roll at Fair Isle Primary has declined in line with the more general reduction in population. The Fair Development Company noted that there are currently five children enrolled at the school (as at November 2023).
- 4.3.18 The school is staffed by a single teacher and Learning Support Assistant, with 'McCrone' cover<sup>6</sup> provided by an off-island supply teacher who flies in for a week at a time. Whilst this is an effective means of maintaining the school and managing staff numbers, the transport connections need to reliably facilitate the incoming supply-teacher in travelling to and from the island.
- 4.3.19 In order to ensure that Fair Isle children benefit from the full range of curricular activities, the teaching staff and Council organise events for primary school children in Lerwick, sometimes for a week at a time. This includes transition to Anderson High for Primary 7 children. This brings together children from across the islands and gives them a chance to learn and socialise in a larger group setting and engage in activities which they otherwise could not, such as swimming and visits to the library and museums.

### Secondary Education

- 4.3.20 Fair Isle children undertake their secondary education on mainland Shetland at either Sandwick Junior High School or Anderson High School in Lerwick (predominantly the latter). The children live in hostel accommodation and return to the island every three weeks or so, using the air service to fly home on a Friday and back on a Monday morning. The accommodation building at Anderson High is new and there is a weekend flat attached that parents have use of to visit whenever they wish. There are currently two children attending secondary education on mainland Shetland.
- 4.3.21 Consultation with the Council Education Service suggested that, whilst parents would perhaps prefer for their children to return to the island more frequently, there is a degree of acceptance that it is part of the way of life in Fair Isle. However, whilst this may be the case, a survey of the Fair Isle diaspora

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<sup>5</sup> [Fair Isle - Home](#)

<sup>6</sup> McCrone cover is a proportion of a teacher's weekly hours which is allocated as non-class contact time. An alternative teacher will usually cover a class during this period.

undertaken as part of the FIDP found that the need for children to leave the island at the age of 12 for extended periods is unattractive and acts as a deterrent to people returning to the island. Whilst recognising that this can provide some benefits in terms of expanding life experiences for young people, feedback provided indicates that effectively having their children leave home at the age of 12 is not a choice that most families would make.<sup>7</sup>

### Community empowerment

- 4.3.22 Nationally, and within Shetland, there is a recognition of the need for community participation in the design and delivery of public services and to build community capacity, recognising the particular needs of communities facing multiple social and economic challenges.
- 4.3.23 Community involvement has been central to the evolving progress of the SOC and OBC in recent years – community co-design has been an ongoing participatory approach to designing the solutions, in which community members have been treated as equal collaborators in the design process. The crew of MV *Good Shepherd IV* have in particular been integral to the ongoing vessel and infrastructure specification process.
- 4.3.24 To support this, most recently, a public exhibition was held in Fair Isle on 29th May 2019. The study process and options, together with recommendations on the preferred option, were presented on display boards. Members of the public were invited to view the material, discuss the options with the team and complete a short feedback form.
- 4.3.25 Some 40 Fair Isle residents attended the consultation (almost the entire adult population of the island), of which 24 completed the feedback form. Respondents to the feedback form were specifically asked whether they agreed with the preferred option. There was universal agreement with the proposed preferred option – of particular importance to residents were the proposals to:
- Retain the vessel on-island
  - Improve access to the vessel through boarding via the linkspan
  - Offer a faster and thus potentially more reliable crossing
  - There was also a desire to ensure that vehicular access to the island by non-residents is controlled

### Transport

- 4.3.26 Lifeline transport to / from Fair Isle, as has been described, is delivered through by a combination of air and ferry services, with the ferry predominantly fulfilling a supply-chain role.
- 4.3.27 As the National Islands Plan describes *“transport (air, road, ferry, bus and other shared transport, active travel and mainland rail services) is of great importance to island communities and is a key factor in the ability of individual residents to, for example, access services and enjoy fundamental human rights.”* Furthermore, *“without adequate transport links to and from an island and between islands, the island community will be in a disadvantaged position compared to similar mainland communities...transport is, hence, a key part of an integrated and sustainable approach to island policy.”*<sup>8</sup>

### Digital connectivity

- 4.3.28 The National Islands Plan also describes that digital connectivity is a key enabler of economic growth, particularly in Scotland’s more remote and rural areas. *“Access to good quality digital infrastructure is*

<sup>7</sup> Securing Fair Isle’s Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> The National Islands Plan for Scotland’s Islands: [Supporting documents - The National Plan for Scotland’s Islands - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

*essential to improving the majority of other sectors on islands, including sustainable economic development, depopulation and health and wellbeing.”*

- 4.3.29 In 2018, guaranteed, round the clock electricity was introduced in Fair Isle. The following year, 4G mobile data was switched on, giving residents access to faster internet speeds. Some Fair Isle residents have had satellite broadband, but its cost has been off-putting for other. A fibre cable is to be installed as part of the Government’s R100 project that will bring speeds of up to 30Mbps to households on Fair Isle. This will support the ability to undertake more tasks remotely but will not replace the need for improved transport connections as much of the Fair Isle economy is built around crofting, tourism and craft industries, which all rely heavily on the ability to bring goods and people to and from the island as reliably and timeously as possible.

### Fuel poverty

- 4.3.30 The National Islands Plan flags that extreme fuel poverty<sup>9</sup> rates are higher for most of the island authorities (ranging from 18% in Shetland to 25% in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar over the 2015-17 period) than for Scotland as a whole (12%). It is also known that extreme fuel poverty can be particularly difficult to eliminate in island communities where building types are harder to improve to the required energy efficiency standard and opportunities to reduce fuel costs are more limited. This is particularly the case in Fair Isle, where physical limitations with the ferry and overall connectivity act as a barrier to bringing necessary materials to Fair Isle or make it particularly expensive to do so.
- 4.3.31 The latest government statistics (Scottish House Condition Survey) show that 31% of all households in Shetland are in fuel poverty with 22% living in extreme fuel poverty as compared with 11% in urban areas. This situation is only likely to have become worse with the recent exponential increase in wholesale energy prices.
- 4.3.32 That said, as part of the Fair Isle Energy Project, which was officially opened on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018, providing the island with 24 hour electricity for the first time through a renewable electricity system (Scottish Government, 2018)<sup>10</sup>. The Fair Isle Energy Project consists of three 60kW wind turbines, a 50kW solar array, battery storage to allow 50 hours of energy to be stored and a new high-voltage system across the island.

### Land management

- 4.3.33 The majority of the land on Fair Isle is owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), with any prospective residents having to apply to the Trust should they wish to move to the island. The NTS owns 25 properties on Fair Isle that are let and lived in, of which 14 are croft houses and 11 are residential terraces (as at December 2023). These properties range from circa 4-20 hectares in size.
- 4.3.34 Whilst the NTS owns the majority of the croft houses, many residents have carried out extensive renovations to the houses and other croft outbuildings for which the Trust would have to recompense crofters on transfer to a new tenant. The current housing tenure rules safeguard the island against absentee owners, which is important for the long-term future of the island (i.e., the population and housing stock is too small for owners to live off-island and the community still to be viable).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the rents charged by the NTS are small, which partly offsets the higher cost of living and working on the island.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the NTS noted that Fair Isle is one of the few properly crofted islands remaining –

<sup>9</sup> In Scotland, extreme fuel poverty is measured, occurring where more than 20% of the income after housing costs is spent on required fuel costs and there is insufficient residual income to maintain an acceptable standard of living (ONS, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government, 2018. Powering Fair Isle. Available online: <https://www.gov.scot/news/powering-fair-isle/>

<sup>11</sup> Securing Fair Isle’s Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Securing Fair Isle’s Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 15.

- there has been very little decrofting and the 'one house, one croft' principle remains strong on the island.
- 4.3.35 There are three further NTS units that require renovation to be habitable. Of these, the downstairs of South Lighthouse is in the best condition and has scope to be renovated as two units (one and two bed). The renovation of these homes is an important future opportunity as both the NTS and community recognise the need for around six new homes, as well as starter / gateway housing catered to small families who wish to try island living.
- 4.3.36 Outwith crofting properties, there are a small number of privately owned homes, two Council social-rented houses, a teacher's house and a house for NHS staff.<sup>13</sup> The new Fair Isle Bird Observatory will also have permanent accommodation for the wardens and their family.
- 4.3.37 Whilst the property mix on the island promotes continued crofting and provides housing for key occupations; it is not without its challenges and is a constraint to the growth of the island:
- The FIDP notes that the NTS was previously highly active in renovating crofts and also undertook a regular programme of capital works on the island. However, as with many organisations, a reduction in funding and increasing costs has reduced the level of investment<sup>14</sup>
  - There is also considered to be a shortage of linked housing for key workers, whilst there is also a concern that the allocation of social housing by the Council can be done in such a way that it does not take account of the specific needs of Fair Isle<sup>15</sup>
  - The cost of getting construction materials to the island is a challenge. The weight limitation on MV *Good Shepherd IV's* crane as well as limited deck space means that she cannot always be used for bringing in larger pieces of kit. In addition, the inability to move goods on wheels means double handling, and all of the costs and challenges that come with that. This compounds the already challenging lack of local building skills, which adds delay and cost to any newbuilds or maintenance<sup>16</sup>
- 4.3.38 The NTS highlighted in our consultation with them that additional housing is required to support the emergence of a long-term sustainable population. The Trust has no issue attracting applicants to live in Fair Isle, but the lack of properties is seen as a constraint. The ferry service is considered a barrier to developing / renovating properties, with the NTS having to accept the financial risk of disruption and 'false mobilisation'. It was noted that an improved service with at least an occasional Ro-Ro facility would reduce delays and costs in the supply-chain, making building and renovation more affordable.
- 4.3.39 A survey of the Fair Isle diaspora undertaken as a part of the FIDP confirmed the above point, suggesting that there is interest in moving back to the island but that the availability of housing is a frequently cited challenge in this respect. Whilst new ferry infrastructure would not address this problem in its entirety, it would make it easier, more reliable and less expensive to move goods on and off the island.

## Biodiversity

- 4.3.40 The National Islands Plan notes that many of Scotland's islands have a strong traditional dependence on marine and coastal biodiversity for their food industry, and transport.
- 4.3.41 Specifically, it describes itself as a *green plan* - harnessing the opportunities of a greener, fairer economy while working towards ending Scotland's contribution to climate change. The Plan highlights

<sup>13</sup> Securing Fair Isle's Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Securing Fair Isle's Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Securing Fair Isle's Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Securing Fair Isle's Future: A Plan for Action (Fair Isle Community Association, 2015), p. 25.

that this is not just about protecting Scotland's beautiful islands, their biodiversity and dealing efficiently with biosecurity, but also about focussing on the opportunities that Scotland's islands have because of their environment and natural resources and assets. This is considered to provide an opportunity to harness the potential of a green and blue economy in the context of the wider climate emergency

#### 4.4 Overview and Summary of Issues

- 4.4.1 This review has highlighted issues of an ageing population, under-employment, low wages and a seasonal economy, high costs of living, fuel poverty, limited affordable housing, limited transport and digital connectivity, as well as constrained access to essential services for Fair Isle residents.
- 4.4.2 There are other challenges affecting the Fair Isle economy brought about by its geographic location – the cost and / or time associated with external transport connectivity to the Central Belt of Scotland and other key centres, distance to and from markets and suppliers and government centres. The issues and impacts felt at the periphery are often significantly underestimated and poorly understood by the national government.
- 4.4.3 The remainder of this section summarises the key issues for Fair Isle in the context of the above noted aspects. This summary is structured to mirror the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI) Working Group on Population, which was established in April 2021. The initial aims of the Group included to:
- Better understand the conditions that are combining to cause depopulation or restrict population growth
  - Identify and develop a set of short, medium and long-term actions to support the addressing of population growth challenges in our remote, rural and island communities
- 4.4.4 The group identified **five key thematic focuses** central to the challenge of ensuring sustainable populations in communities. These are used in the remainder of this section to explore and capture the key issues for Fair Isle and to support the emerging Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project, and the deployment of the ICIA duty as part of that.

##### Availability and suitability of housing

- 4.4.5 Population: this is currently constrained by available and affordable housing, frustrating the aspiration to increase the population of the island. Furthermore, the cost and cost risk of building and renovating houses on the island is significant due to the transport-based constraints of getting supplies onto the island. The ferry-based constraints, as described elsewhere in the report, include the Lo-Lo operation, constrained space / capacity on board the ferry, the limited timetable and poor service reliability.

##### Availability of jobs (including public sector)

- 4.4.6 The FIDP set out aspirations to up-skill the island population and create well-paid and secure jobs which could assist in retaining population or attracting new families to the island. The retention of the ferry on-island is essential to this, as these are 'anchor' posts, providing secure salaried employment for a crew who also then fulfil multiple other roles in Fair Isle. It also means that their families remain in the island – without these essential island-based posts, the future sustainability of the community would be under question.

##### Critical infrastructure (including transport and broadband)

- 4.4.7 Travel: cost is an issue and there are uncertainties of travel throughout the year. Day trip by plane is £40 return for an islander, compared to £12.40 return for the ferry journey for an islander. For longer distance journeys to the Scottish mainland, these costs are additive to the significant costs of onward

travel, which will generally include the cost of at least one night's overnight accommodation in mainland mainland Shetland at either end of the journey.

- 4.4.8 Weather related disruption can mean spending several days in mainland Shetland if a person is stuck e.g., if a return journey is cancelled, a person can spend a significant number of unpaid time off-island, which comes at a significant cost in time and money, and also impacts island productivity. The reverse is also true for contractors visiting Fair Isle, and feeds into the high cost of doing business on the island.
- 4.4.9 Broadband: currently very slow, restricting downloads. Seen as crucial to future sustainability, on the island, and influencing people's decisions to locate there. Plans for improvement are in place and imminent through the R100 project.

### **The provision of and accessibility to public services**

- 4.4.10 Day trips can be necessary for some medical appointments, such as visiting the dentist or optician, which cannot be claimed back through the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme.
- 4.4.11 Some elderly people cannot travel or travel easily, because of the issues of accessing the ferry and / or aircraft. For example, some elderly residents will not attend dental check-ups on the island, as they know that they will not latterly be able to travel to the mainland for the required treatment.

### **Attracting and retaining young people**

- 4.4.12 As part of the Fair Isle OBC work, it was suggested that, whilst parents would perhaps prefer for their children to return to the island more frequently, there is a degree of acceptance that it is part of the way of life in Fair Isle. However, whilst this may be the case, a survey of the Fair Isle diaspora undertaken as part of the FIDP found that the need for children to leave the island at the age of 12 for extended periods (and with planned return travel also often heavily disrupted) is unattractive and acts as a deterrent to people returning to the island. This is an important finding as it highlights that, what may be acceptable to those living on the island now, can be a major barrier to those minded towards moving there.
- 4.4.13 Moving to the island can also be isolating if people do not have family there, and it can take time to fit in despite Fair Isle being a highly welcoming and cohesive community. However, such in-migration is essential in bringing new ideas, skills and experience to the island.

## 5 Island Community Impact Assessment Framework

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The objectives of this ICIA are to integrate the consideration of relevant island issues and impacts into the development of the project and to demonstrate compliance with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. This section provides a set of criteria which have been developed and used to assess all substantive components of the project.
- 5.1.2 Identified key island issues have informed the development of a bespoke Islands Assessment Framework, as set out below, comprising a suite of aspects linked to relevant duties against which all substantive components of the project have been tested. This framework aims to provide holistic coverage of all key issues.
- 5.1.3 This section sets out the background and approach to the development of this assessment framework.

### 5.2 Island Communities Impact Assessment

#### Overview

- 5.2.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 provides the legal basis for greater decision making at a local level within Scottish islands and seeks to increase economic prosperity for island communities.
- 5.2.2 This is to be achieved through '*island proofing*' legislation, policy and strategic decisions by taking account of the special circumstances of island communities and ensuring no disadvantage to people living and working on islands (as defined by Section 1 of the Act).
- 5.2.3 Further relevant aspects of the Act are set out in Section 1.2.

#### Assessment methodology

- 5.2.4 The Scottish Government (2020) published guidance and an associated toolkit for completing Island Communities Impacts Assessments. This sets out a process and an indicative structure within which the impact assessment can be carried out. The seven steps include:
- **Step One – Define the issue:** develop a clear understanding of objectives, intended policy outcomes, and identify aspects explicit to island needs or potential direct / indirect impacts for island communities
  - **Step Two – Understand the situation:** use island data and statistics to identify differences that occur in island communities, and between island groups, in contrast to mainland Scotland
  - **Step Three – Consultation:** consult with island communities and relevant authorities
  - **Step Four – Determine whether an ICIA is required:** assessment and analysis of results / outcomes, the needs of island communities and the potential impacts of the proposal. Consideration of potential barriers / wider impacts, differences between island communities, the Scottish mainland, or other islands
  - **Step Five – Prepare the ICIA:** describe likely significant different effect of the proposal and assess the extent to which it is considered the policy can be delivered to improve or mitigate for island communities the outcomes resulting from it
  - **Step Six – Amend and adjust the strategy:** adjust the proposal to account for different delivery mechanisms across different island communities and consider potential mitigation for adverse effects

- **Step Seven – Publish the ICIA:** Section 12 of the Act requires the relevant authority to publish information about the steps it has taken to comply with the Section 7 duty during a reporting period

5.2.5 From a headline perspective, the Fair Isle ferry project should be assessed against whether:

- There are potential island impacts that differ from mainland impacts
- The proposal effectively addresses the unique transport challenges faced by the Fair Isle community
- The project protects and increases the economic prosperity of the Fair Isle community
- The project addresses the unique social challenges faced by the Fair Isle community
- The project impacts on the island infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity
- The project can be developed or delivered to improve or mitigate, for Fair Isle, the outcomes arising from it

### 5.3 Assessment Framework: Island Communities Duties

5.3.1 The following criteria have therefore been developed to test the performance of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project in relation to implementing the duties under the Act. This provides a transparent framework to assess the extent to which the project components will ensure no disadvantage to people living and working in Fair Isle, and further is focused on addressing island-specific challenges and opportunities.

- **Will the Fair Isle ferry project:**
  - Lead to island impacts that differ from mainland impacts?
  - Lead to island impacts that differ from one island to another or any other?
- **Will the Fair Isle ferry project:**
  - Effectively address identified island issues, and in particular the unique challenges that face Fair Isle?
  - Adequately protect and increase the economic prosperity of Fair Isle?
  - Address the unique social and health and care challenges faced by Fair Isle?
  - Have a positive impact in terms of the island's infrastructure and / or natural environment and biodiversity?
- **How will the Fair Isle ferry project:**
  - Be developed to manage, mitigate or capitalise upon, the outcomes arising from it?
  - Be delivered to maximise and capture the benefits for Fair Isle arising from it?

## 6 Assessment of Impacts

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section provides an assessment of the island community impacts of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project. This is based on information, appraisal and community involvement carried out through the SOC, OBC and FBC processes, whilst also considering baseline data and evidence relating to island communities more broadly.
- 6.1.2 This section is grouped under each of the key themes and issues that have been identified through earlier stages of the ICIA process, which are used to assemble the ICIA assessments, summarising any relevant impacts, mitigations and recommendations.

### 6.2 Island Specific Challenges and Opportunities – Assessment and Actions and Mitigations Identified

**The current vessel is life expired and falls well-below current accessibility standards. It also has circa two years remaining service life (with some expenditure)**

- 6.2.1 Island residents and businesses **all** in some way or another have a reliance on the ferry service, including through direct travel for all manner of purposes, in terms of incoming goods and services, and for the distribution of produce etc., and including as a safety-net back up for when the plane is unable to fly and / or when there are no seats available.
- 6.2.2 This reliance on the ferry service (and air service) is in most cases not an issue at all for those living / based on the mainland, either Shetland or Scottish, except for Council service delivery.
- 6.2.3 The evidence compiled as part of the continuing work with the community of Fair Isle through the business case process has flagged the particular challenges in relation to the current vessel, as follows:



Figure 6.1: The MV Good Shepherd IV

- MV *Good Shepherd IV* is **very limited in terms of vehicle and indeed passenger capacity**. The vessel can only take one or two small cars and 12 passengers, whilst she cannot accommodate any heavy freight or plant
  - MV *Good Shepherd IV* is a **relatively uncomfortable** vessel given the sea states in which she operates. Indeed, the vessel is fitted with seatbelts. The consultation suggested that these issues combine to deter tourists travelling by ferry (putting pressure on the low-capacity air services) and limiting the willingness of island residents to use the vessel
  - As an older vessel operating out of non Ro-Ro ports, MV *Good Shepherd IV* can present **physical accessibility issues for older and disabled passengers**, a key issue on Fair Isle where the population is ageing
- 6.2.4 The preferred option for Fair Isle will address several of the unique seaborne transport challenges faced by the community. The project in its current form also constitutes the preferred option of the Fair Isle community within the resources available, particularly in terms of providing a new and fit-for-purpose vessel and an island-based crew.

**Aspects of the ferry service prevent more frequent travel to mainland Shetland**

6.2.5 More than half of the households which responded to the 2019 Fair Isle household survey cited comfort, crossing time and poor physical accessibility to MV *Good Shepherd IV* as key barriers to them travelling more by ferry. Specifically:

- The ferry crossing is long as the vessel is very slow
- Fair Isle has a significant weekend connectivity gap. During the summer, there is a Saturday ferry return and one air rotation, although there are no services on a Sunday. There are no weekend services at all during the winter, which effectively cuts the island off on winter weekends. This suppresses both the key tourist market and the ability of island residents to take an overnight off-island trip at the weekend



Figure 6.2: MV *Good Shepherd IV*

6.2.6 The proposal as described in Section 2 and evidenced from review of the OBC and FBC work, will reduce the unique transport challenges that face this island community, including facilitating increased connectivity through a more reliable service to mainland Shetland, as well as a quicker journey through use of a new faster vessel and improved accessible boarding for Persons of Reduced Mobility at Fair Isle and Grutness.

**Depopulation and Economic Development – including availability of suitable housing and jobs and attracting and retaining young people**

6.2.7 Issues around depopulation and the need for the continued economic development for Fair Isle have been identified throughout the business case process, as well as being a key focus of the Fair Isle Development Plan.

6.2.8 With respect to the island supply-chain, MV *Good Shepherd IV* has little in the way of onboard facilities. Of particular importance is the absence of a chilled compartment, which presents a challenge when moving perishable goods given the length of the crossing (even from Grutness). This is a problem both in terms of supplying the island and for any island business (current or prospective) moving either large or chilled goods.

6.2.9 Furthermore, as described elsewhere, the ferry berth at Fair Isle is constrained and exposed, with the vessel having to be hauled out of the water overnight. The ferry crossing to Fair Isle traverses the 'Roost', one of the roughest and most challenging stretches of water in Europe. This, combined with the small vessel presents reliability challenges on the route, particularly during winter. In all cases, the ferry can only travel when there is a weather window, even if this is off timetable. Reliability issues can lead to both island residents and visitors incurring costly overnight stays, whilst a sustained period of cancellations can have significant impacts on the inbound and outbound supply-chain, including the requirement to maintain large inventories on island, which comes at a cost.

6.2.10 Without the replacement of the ferry, it is evident that there are negative island impacts for Fair Isle that differ from mainland impacts, insofar as mainland residents do not have to consider the journey time, cost, time away from home, unreliability (and hence possible need for multiple nights away) etc. aspects associated with travel for basic necessities, such as medical appointments, personal business requirements, travel to secondary school etc.

6.2.11 The replacement of the ferry in accordance with the preferred option will support Fair Isle in addressing the unique transport challenges that the island faces, and in doing so will support the island in terms of

protecting and increasing its economic prosperity and in addressing gaps that at present create social challenges for community members. The preferred option achieves this while maintaining the unique aspects that make Fair Isle special, including limited car access and retaining an island-based ferry crew.

6.2.12 Specifically, the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project will provide sustained or improved outcomes for the island arising directly from it. One such element of the project is around the basing and therefore crewing of the vessel from the island. The preferred option progresses a bespoke solution with the retention of an island-based vessel and crew. In order to mitigate future challenges in maintaining the necessary crew on the island, and to de-risk this island-based approach, contingency and long-term crewing arrangements must be developed between the Council and the Fair Isle community to ensure a clear succession plan for crewing the vessel. This approach and co-working with the community through the project will see the retention of seven crew jobs on Fair Isle. With six of the seven present crew expected to retire by 2032, this approach aligns well with the aspirations of the Fair Isle Development Plan to up-skill the island population and create well-paid and secure jobs which could assist in retaining population or attracting new families to the island.

6.2.13 A larger replacement vessel – up 24 metres compared to the existing 18 metres, and wider in the beam – will also offer for the community:

- Modern and legislatively compliant design standards, particularly in terms of facilitating **step free access** from the quayside to the passenger lounge(s)
- Slightly **faster**, allowing the vessel to take greater advantage of weather windows (albeit acknowledging that the maximum speed will not be deliverable in all sea states)
- Offer **greater flexibility in the sizing and handling of cargo** due to the larger single hold

6.2.14 These aspects will specifically impact:

- **Economic development and job creation:** transport connectivity is explicitly connected to economic productivity, which is as true for remote and island communities as it is for more urban contexts. Easier access; faster and more reliable journeys; a more accessible vessel to better enable a wide range of visitors; and better supply-chain connections for inbound goods and outbound produce will all support economic development and job creation on the island. This will particularly be the case once the replacement Fair Isle Bird Observatory opens, restoring the major source of accommodation provision on the island
- **Housing development, refurbishment, and building:** The project will support the ease of moving materials to the island. This will support the National Trust for Scotland FIDP aim to create and improve properties on the island, in-turn providing the basis for attracting up to ten new people to move to Fair Isle, as stated in the Development Plan. This aspect will work in parallel with improved access generally in terms of supporting population growth
- **Attraction and retention of young people on the island:** The project, through improved connectivity, will increase the attractiveness of Fair Isle as a place to live and work and to bring up a family

### **Health and wellbeing and access to public services**

6.2.15 Issues around access to health services and the provision of social care, and the accessibility of public services generally, and knock-on impacts in respect to wider health and wellbeing, are well recognised in remote, rural and island places. Specifically, the provision of education, and the quality and resilience of that provision in remote settings, together with the accessibility and acceptability of provision beyond what is provided locally (on island), has vital impacts in terms of experiences growing up in an island setting, and on the attractiveness of an island for families to remain on and / or move to.

- 6.2.16 The project will offer benefits to the island in terms of improving access to health, social and leisure activities by ferry on mainland Shetland and beyond. A new vessel will offer a more comfortable and quicker journey and will enable all members of the community to safely access and egress the vessel. These aspects will be of particular importance to members of the community that have reduced mobility, including those that do not currently travel, or avoid travelling as much as possible due to the poor physical accessibility of the current services.
- 6.2.17 A more reliable vessel will also support public service delivery in Fair Isle, with staff from across the public sector more able to travel regularly to Fair Isle to support the provision of services on the island.

### 6.3 ICIA Overview

#### ICIA Island Specific Challenges and Opportunities Assessment

- 6.3.1 A framework-based approach has been used to summarise the specific ways in which the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement project addresses island-specific challenges and opportunities for Fair Isle and to capture the differential impacts associated with the alternative options that have been considered through the business case process.
- 6.3.2 This takes the evidence that has been described in detail above in this section and earlier in this report and in the context of the alternative project options that have been considered, to evidence, from an ICIA perspective, the decision chain to arrive at the preferred project for Fair Isle.
- 6.3.3 Assessment is on the basis of a seven-point scale, as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Assessment Criteria Matrix

Impact Score	Description	Symbol
Significant Positive Effect	The proposed option has the potential to significantly support the economic prosperity of and / or address the unique challenges faced by island communities.	++
Minor Positive Effect	The proposed option has the potential to support the economic prosperity of and / or address the unique challenges faced by island communities, but not significantly.	+
Neutral Effect	The proposed option is related to but does not have any effect in improving the economic prosperity of and/or address the unique challenges faced by island communities.	0
Minor Negative Effect	The proposed option may impede or actually reverse the economic prosperity of and/or exacerbate the unique challenges faced by island communities, requiring mitigation.	-
Significant Negative Effect	The proposed option significantly impedes economic prosperity of and/or exacerbates the unique challenges faced by island communities. Mitigation is therefore required.	--
Uncertain Effect	The proposed option has an uncertain relationship to the requirements of the duty or insufficient detail, or information may be available to enable an assessment to be made.	?
No or Negligible Relationship	There is no clear relationship between the proposed option and island communities or their wellbeing, or the relationship is negligible.	~

Table 6.2: ICIA Framework Criteria assessment

ICIA Framework Criteria		
Will the Fair Isle Ferry preferred option...	Commentary	Impact
Have potential island impacts that differ from mainland impacts?	<p>The enhancements described as part of the preferred option will have a <b>significant positive impact</b> on the island community of Fair Isle based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Island's fundamental reliance on the ferry service to move goods and people (in combination with the air service)</li> <li>• The ability to provide a flexible lifeline service in times when the plane is unable to travel</li> <li>• Continued operation of the service by an island-based crew will maintain several high quality and well-paid jobs on the island</li> </ul>	++
Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities?	<p>The preferred option has been developed in partnership with stakeholders and the local community in order to address the unique transport (and other) challenges that are faced by the community. This has derived a solution specific to Fair Isle (within the budget available) to maximise the range of impacts that the project can deliver or support to deliver. The solution, including aspects such as maintaining an island-based crewing arrangement and ensuring a fully accessible, faster and larger vessel, will all support the project in delivering a <b>significant positive impact</b> with respect to addressing the transport challenges unique to Fair Isle.</p>	++
Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities?	<p>The preferred option will support the optimum movement of both goods and people – residents and visitors – which in-turn will support the continued economic growth of the island, including through the aspects set out in the FBC. The project is essential to secure the supply-chain. This will underpin service provision and will enable more reliable personal travel (minimising missed appointments and maximising opportunities when required for travel to mainland Shetland and beyond). The project will also support the efficient movement of visitors and tourists, and will support the choice to visit the island, and will minimise travel disruption en-route or on the return journey. This is assessed as a <b>significant positive impact</b>.</p>	++
Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities?	<p>There is a local desire for improvements as contained within the preferred option. This is evidenced in the household survey with 85% of respondents noting that they did not think that the current air and ferry connections to the mainland are sufficient for their family's day-to-day needs, now and in future; two-thirds (66%) thought that connections were not sufficient for tourism; three-quarters (75%) of respondents wanted to see tourism develop further; one-quarter (25%) felt current connections were not sufficient to ensure the long-term sustainability of Fair Isle; and 80% felt that better connections would make Fair Isle more attractive for in-migrants. The preferred option positively supports the needs of Fair Isle residents in accessing goods and services and sustaining the existing community through the provision of economic opportunities linked to tourism, education and employment-based opportunities on mainland Shetland and beyond. This is assessed as a <b>minor positive impact</b>.</p>	+
Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity?	<p>The current crane-based operation poses a potential medium-term regulatory risk to the continuation of the service; places limits on the weight / type of goods that can be carried on the present ferry; and affects vessel turnaround times. The preferred option will address these significant issues to some degree through providing a higher crane capacity and the ability to operate occasional Ro-Ro at North Haven in Fair Isle. The ferry is a critical element of island infrastructure – the project will support the ease of movement of materials and passengers to and from Fair Isle. As such, it is judged to have <b>significant positive impact</b>.</p>	++

ICIA Framework Criteria		
Will the Fair Isle Ferry preferred option...	Commentary	Impact
Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities?	<p>Improved connectivity supports more equitable access to health and allied health services that are provided on mainland Shetland and makes it more reliable to provide visiting services to Fair Isle; in turn reducing health inequalities, for those with particular needs and the island as a whole compared to other localities.</p> <p>The new ferry will off legislatively compliant physical access that expands travel opportunities to mainland Shetland for all those who require it, including people with limited mobility; thus, reducing barriers to health and care and creating opportunities to access leisure activities. This is assessed as a <b>significant positive effect</b>.</p>	++

## 7 Concluding Remarks

- 7.1.1 The ICIA reported here has been undertaken as part of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement Project. The assessment indicates that the business case programmes undertaken in partnership with the Fair Isle community have ensured that the resulting preferred option for the ferry service best meets the needs, challenges and opportunities of the Fair Isle community. It also satisfies, in terms of process, the duty with respect to the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.
- 7.1.2 To fully satisfy the requirements, duty and spirit of these aspects of the Fair Isle Ferry Replacement project as it develops through to the delivery phase of activity, it will be essential that the community continues to be involved and that the aspects considered and documented in this section are fully progressed with the community, ensuring optimum refinement of delivery parameters to achieve the most and best outcomes for the Fair Isle community.

## 8 References

National Records of Scotland (2022) Shetland Islands Council Area Profile: [Shetland Islands Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

Scottish Government (2017). [Sexual orientation in Scotland 2017: summary of evidence base - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2022) [Stage 1: Framing - Data collection - protected characteristics: guidance - equality impact assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Shetland Islands Council (2011) Shetland South Community Profile, p. 29.

Shetland Islands Council (2021) Shetland Islands Council Schools Service Annual Return 2021/22: [annual-return-2021-22 \(shetland.gov.uk\)](https://www.shetland.gov.uk)

## Appendix A Baseline Data

Table A.1: Age Profile

Protected Characteristic: Age	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Aged 0 to 15	17%	18%	17%
Aged 16 to 64	60%	62%	65%
Aged 65+	23%	20%	18%

Source: National Records Scotland: Mid-Year Population Estimates 2021. All figures have been individually rounded and may not sum.

Table A.2: Disability Profile

Protected Characteristic: Disability	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Very good health	60.3%	54.6%	52.5%
Good health	29.4%	31.0%	29.7%
Fair health	4.4%	10.9%	12.2%
Bad health	4.4%	2.6%	4.3%
Very bad health	1.5%	0.8%	1.3%

Source: Scottish Census 2011: [Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)

Table A.3: Gender Reassignment Profile

Protected Characteristic: Gender Reassignment	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
There is no data available at an Island or Council level for Scotland for this protected characteristic. The Scottish Public Health Network estimates that 0.5% of the Scottish population is transgender (approximately 24,000 adults).			

Source: Public Health Scotland » [Introduction \(scotphn.net\)](#)

Table A.4: Pregnancy and Maternity Profile

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and Maternity	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Healthy birth weight (%)	Not available	79.13	84.57
Live birth rate (per 1,000 population)	Not available	8.72	8.72
Teenage pregnancies (crude rate per 1,000 females aged 15-19)	Not available	18.34	24.95

Source: [ScotPHO profiles \(shinyapps.io\)](#)

Table A.5: Race and Ethnicity Profile

Protected Characteristic: Race and Ethnicity	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
White	100%	98.5%	96.0%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	0.0%	1.0%	2.7%

Protected Characteristic: Race and Ethnicity	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
African	0.0%	0.1%	0.6%
Caribbean or Black	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Other ethnic groups	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%

Source: Scottish Census 2011: [Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)

Table A.6: Religion or Belief Profile

Protected Characteristic: Religion or Belief	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Church of Scotland	17.6%	29.9%	32.5%
Roman Catholic	4.4%	4.1%	15.9%
Other Christian	23.5%	10.6%	5.5%
Muslim	0.0%	0.4%	1.4%
Other religions	1.5%	0.7%	0.3%
No religion	38.2%	45.4%	36.7%
Not stated	14.7%	8.5%	7.0%

Source: Scottish Census 2011: [Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)

Table A.7: Sex Profile

Protected Characteristic: Sex	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Male	48.5%	50.8%	48.5%
Female	51.5%	49.2%	51.5%

Source: Scottish Census 2011: [Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)

Table A.8: Sexual Orientation Profile

Protected Characteristic: Sexual Orientation	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
<p>Limited information is available about sexual orientation for Scotland. Data from 2019 suggested that 95% of Scottish adults identified as heterosexual with around 3% of adults self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other. Younger people are more likely to identify as being lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), with 50% of those identifying as LGB and other aged 35 years and under (Equality Evidence Finder, 2023).</p>			

Source: [equalityevidence.scot](#)

Table A.9: Marriage and Civil Partnership Profile

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and Civil Partnership	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Single (never married or never registered a same-sex civil partnership)	20.8%	32.8%	35.4%
Married	71.7%	49.5%	45.2%
In a registered same-sex civil partnership	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Separated (but still legally married)	0.0%	2.7%	3.2%
Divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	5.7%	8.0%	8.2%

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and Civil Partnership	Fair Isle	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Widowed or surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership	1.9%	6.8%	7.8%

Source: Scottish Census 2011: [Search | Scotland's Census - Search by location \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)