

# The Next Northern Isles Ferry Services Contract 4 (NIFS4)

## Consultation

Easy Read version



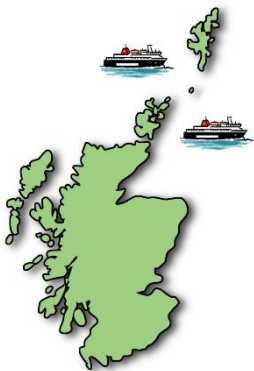
# Introduction



When the Government wants make an important change, they must ask the people for their views first. This is called a consultation.



This consultation is about the new Northern Isles Ferry Services Contract (NIFS4).

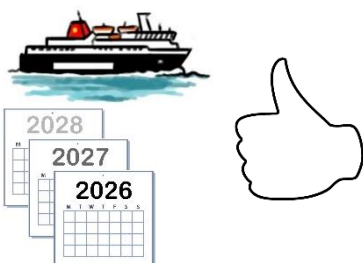


The Orkney and Shetland ferry routes are essential for local communities. They support economic, cultural and social wellbeing.

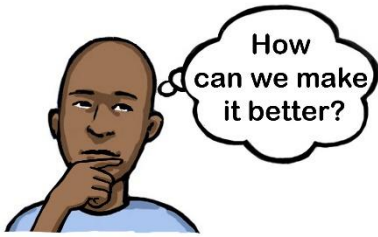


These services must be reliable. They must meet the needs of islanders, businesses and visitors.

As we make the next NIFS contract. We must listen to those who use and depend on these services.



This will help to make sure future services stay reliable.



Last year's Islands Connectivity Plan public consultation helped us come up with these consultation questions. We want views on how the next contract can be used to make services better.



We want a service that meets current needs. But is also good for the future. It must be able to deal with changes in the climate and the needs of the Northern Isles.



We want everyone with an interest in these services to give their views. Feedback to this consultation will help make a contract that works.



For more information, please visit our website –  
**PENDING WEB ADDRESS**



Jim Fairlie MSP  
Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

# Consultation Questions

## Capacity and demand



There are different options for overnight accommodation on ferry services. There are cabins, pods and reclining seats.

**Question 1.** If you have used overnight accommodation on a service, please give your views on them in the box below:



Some ferries can show as fully booked sail but they empty spaces. This is because some booked cars, lorries and/or cabin users do not show up or do not cancel.



We are thinking about a late cancellation fee for pre-booked tickets. This would encourage customers to cancel bookings. There would be enough time so that spaces can be made given to others.

**Question 2.** Do you agree with this idea?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:

## Unplanned and essential travel



Most journeys on Northern Isle ferry services are booked in advance. But sometimes pre-booking a ticket is not an option. People may need to buy a ticket at the last minute.

**Question 3.** What do you think could help those who need to travel urgently?  
Please tell us in the box below:

## Fares



Currently there are seasonal and islander fares.

Islanders get a discount of 30% all year round. But we know that travel can be expensive for some.

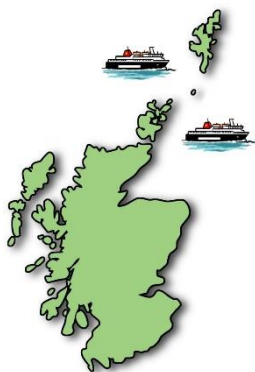
**Question 4.** Would you like to see fares depending on the distance travelled?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:



We will think about using RET fares on longer routes, like Aberdeen - Kirkwall - Lerwick. This could include reducing the mileage rate or capping at the current mid season fare.

**Question 5.** Do you have comments on these ideas or any other suggestions about fares?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:

**Question 6.** Would you like to see higher prices for visitors?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:



## Community voice, transparency and accountability



We would like to make sure that the community has a proper say in how Norther Isles ferry services are run. This could mean changing the way the ferry companies communicate with the community.

**Question 7.** Would you like to see any changes in how the ferry company communicates?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:



The NIFS Operator and Transport Scotland regularly communicate with the Orkney External Transport Forum and Shetland External Transport Forum.



The Transport Forums are groups that represent the communities and businesses in Orkney and Shetland. They give feedback to the service provider and Transport Scotland.

**Question 8.** Do you think these transport forums are good at reflecting the views of the communities?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Please explain your answer in the box below:

## Connected travel



We want to look at ways to connect ferry travel with other travel like trains and buses. We want to include more options for environmentally friendly travel.

**Question 9.** Please tell us about transport options to or from the ferry service terminals. Please tell us which terminals you use.

**Question 10.** How could the options for travel to and from the service terminals be made better?

## Accessibility



Some groups face extra challenges when traveling on Northern Isle ferry services. This can be because of age, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, race religion, sex or sexual orientation.

**Question 11.** How do you think services could be made more accessible contract?

## Impact on the environment



We must think about the how ferries affect the environment. This includes air quality, water quality, noise, wildlife, and culture.

**Question 12.** Do you have any other suggestions on how the service can reduce their environmental impact.

Please tell us in the box below:

## Lorries and vans



Community feedback told us that bookings for lorries and vans can mean there is less space for other vehicles on ferries.

**Question 13.** Are there ways to improve how Services work with lorries and vans?

## General

**Question 15.** Do you have any other suggestions on how services could be better? Please tell us in the box below:

## Responding to this consultation



This consultation will be open for 12 weeks from **22 July 2025** and until **13 October 2025**.

## Respond online



You can respond to this consultation online using our consultation hub, Citizen Space.



This is a public consultation and all responses will be made publicly available, although personal details will be kept private. If you want your comments to be kept private, tick the box at the end of the consultation.

## Other ways to respond



If you are unable to respond using the Citizen Space hub, you can send your response by email or post:

### By email

Please download and complete the Survey Questions and the Respondent Information Form below and email them to [FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot](mailto:FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot).

### By post

Please download and complete the Survey Questions and the Respondent Information Form below and post your completed forms to:

NIFS4 Consultation  
Transport Scotland  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
177 Bothwell Street  
Glasgow G2 7ER



# Impact assessment



We have to look at any affects the new ferry service might have for better or worse. This is called an impact assessment. We will look at how the service might affect businesses, children's rights, equality, and the island communities.



We will publish these impact assessments on our website. We would like your views on these. Views can be provided to us by email:

[FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot](mailto:FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot).

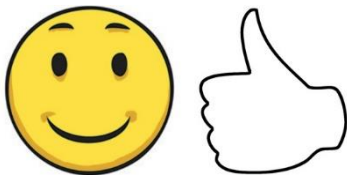
## Next Steps



Once the consultation period has ended, we will look at people's views and give a report to Transport Scotland. They will look at this when making the new ferry contract.



All consultation responses will be made public, although personal details will be kept private. If you do not want your comments to be made publicly available, please tick the box at the end of the consultation.



Thank you for taking part in this important process.

## Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation was done please send them directly to:

[FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot](mailto:FerriesNIFS4Team@transport.gov.scot).

# Respondent information form

**This form must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out what we do with your personal data, please see our [Privacy Policy](#)

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?



- ☐ Individual  
☐ Organisation

Full name or organisation's name:

Phone number:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Are you responding as a:



- ☐ NIFS network resident – Orkney  
☐ NIFS network resident – Shetland  
☐ NIFS network user – Scottish Mainland  
☐ NIFS network business – Orkney  
☐ NIFS network business – Shetland  
☐ NIFS network visitor or tourist  
☐ Other (i.e. responding on behalf of a group)

If you are a business, please tell us what kind of business in the box below:

If you selected other, please give details in the box provided below:

What route in the network do you use most frequently?



- ☐ Aberdeen to Lerwick
- ☐ Aberdeen to Kirkwall
- ☐ Kirkwall to Lerwick
- ☐ Scrabster to Stromness

Why do you mainly use ferry network services?



- ☐ For Business
- ☐ For Work/Education
- ☐ For Personal/Leisure
- ☐ For freight
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other

How often do you use ferry services?



- ☐ 5-7 times a week
- ☐ 2-4 times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once every other week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Seasonal (Summer Period)
- ☐ Other

Are you:



- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16 to 18
- ☐ 19 to 21
- ☐ 22 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 or over
- ☐ Other

Do you have a disability?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

The Scottish Government would like to publish your consultation response.

Please tell us what you want us to do:



- ☐ Publish response with name
- ☐ Publish response only (without name)
- ☐ Do not publish response

We will share your response with other Scottish Government departments who are working on these issues. They may want to contact you in the future but we need your permission for this. Are you happy for Scottish Government to contact you again about this consultation?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is for individuals only. If this option is selected, your organisation name will still be published.



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**

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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at [info@transport.gov.scot](mailto:info@transport.gov.scot)

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