

# Public Consultation for Islands Connectivity Plan - Strategic Approach Paper and Vessels and Ports Plan

## Consultation Identifier Questions

**Q1. Are you completing this on behalf of yourself or an organisation?**

- Individual
- Organisation

**Q2. If an organisation, please list below.**

**Q3. What statement best describes your living situation?**

- I live on the mainland the majority of the time
- I live on a Scottish island or peninsula the majority of the time

**Q4. If you live on a Scottish island or peninsula, please comment below which one.**

**Q5. What age category are you in?**

- Under 16s
- 16 to 18
- 19 to 21

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- 22 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 59
- 60 and over

### Q6. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes, limited a lot
- Yes, limited a little
- No

### Q7. What do you mainly use the ferry services for?

- For Business
- For Employment/Education
- For Personal/Leisure
- All of the above

### Q8. How frequently do you use the ferry services?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seasonally (Summer period)

## Main Consultation Questions

### Themes, Vision and Priorities

Transport Scotland has gathered feedback from previous workshops and consultations to identify priorities for the future of Island transport connectivity: ferry networks, supported by the integration with other transport services. This information has contributed to the development of themes, which are the focus for the Islands Connectivity Plan.

The following key themes emerged:

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- Community voice and transparency
- Reliability and resilience
- Accessibility
- Timetables, unplanned and essential travel
- Integration of services
- Capacity and demand
- Freight
- Vessels and ports
- Low carbon and environmental impact
- Ferry fares
- Local authority services

### Q9. Do you think these key themes capture the main aspects of transport connectivity for island and peninsula communities?

- Yes  
 No

Please explain your answer.

Based on feedback and discussions with key stakeholders and drawing on Scotland's National Transport Strategy 2 and the National Islands Plan, we have developed a draft vision and associated priorities for ferry services, supported by other transport services.

## Draft Vision

Scotland's ferry services, supported by other transport services, will be safe, reliable, affordable and inclusive for residents, businesses and visitors enabling transport connectivity, sustainability and growth of island and peninsula communities and populations.

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**Draft Priorities**

**Priority 1: Reliable and Resilient**

Reliable and resilient ferry services that meet the needs of communities and businesses and support the transition to a well-being economy which is fair, green and growing.

**Priority 2: Accessible**

Ferry services that are accessible and provide easy to use and affordable transport connectivity for all users.

**Priority 3: Integrated**

Ferry services that enable sustainable and active travel choices which support our health and well-being and make our Island and other ferry dependent communities great places to live, work and visit.

**Priority 4: Low Carbon**

Ferry services that take actions to reduce the negative environmental impact of their operations and help to achieve Scotland's net-zero targets.

**Q10. Do you believe the draft vision captures the aspirations of island and peninsula communities for their future ferry services?**

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

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**Q11. Do you think the 4 draft priorities reflect what island and peninsula communities see for their future ferry services?**

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

## **Community Voice and Transparency**

We acknowledge the importance of empowering community voice and transparency in communications. The current methods of engagement that are used by operators to inform communities are through email and webpage updates, with further communications shared through relevant Ferry Committees and Transport Forums.

Local authorities and Scottish Government/Transport Scotland use engagement methods such as through project reference groups, stakeholder groups and webpage updates.

However, we have heard from communities that more can be done to take account of their views when it comes to decisions on ferry services and that there is a lack of clarity on how decisions are made.

**Q12. Are there other ways of engaging with communities and stakeholders that would benefit decision making on ferry services, including vessels and ports projects?**

- Yes
- No

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Please explain your answer.

## Accessibility

We propose introducing an Accessibility Standard that would be in addition to the legal requirements and could act as guidance for all ferry services. This is to ensure that our ferry services, vessels and ports are easy to use for all, while recognising that people have different needs and capabilities.

The Standard could include standards such as inclusive and disability training to be carried out frequently and an accessibility review carried out periodically on ferry services, ports and vessels.

### Q13. Do you think an Accessibility Standard is a good idea?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

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**Q14. What do you think should be included in this standard?**

Please explain your answer.

**Reliability and Resilience**

Community feedback highlighted that the reliability and resilience of ferry services needs to be seen as a priority due to the impact on communities, businesses and visitors when ferry services are disrupted.

**Q15. Do you agree or disagree that the first priority of the Islands Connectivity Plan should be to improve reliability and increase resilience of ferry services?**

- Agree
- Disagree

Please explain your answer.

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### Timetable, Essential and Urgent Travel

We are aware that as ferry travel has become more popular, some services have become more difficult to accommodate short-notice spaces for essential vehicle travel by island residents and key workers.

#### **Q16. Do you have any suggestions as to how the booking process could release vehicle space on services when island travel with a vehicle is essential?**

Please explain your answer.

### Integration of Services

Journeys on our ferry networks are often only part of a longer journey between the traveller's ultimate origin and destination. The end-to-end journey can combine the use of several transport modes which can include public transport and/or active travel (walking, wheeling, and cycling) or a private vehicle. An integrated transport network that allows easier transition between the ferry and public transport or active travel is a key enabler to encourage the use of our ferry networks without the need for a private vehicle. This has benefits to the user such as making the transport system more accessible, making better use of capacity on ferries and contributing to net zero.

#### **Q17. What would encourage you to use public transport or active travel as part of your overall journey when using the ferry services?**



## Capacity and Demand

We have heard that the space for vehicles on busy ferry routes fills up quickly at popular times, especially in summer. This makes it difficult for residents of those islands, and visiting key workers, to travel with a vehicle at short notice.

We propose to address ferry capacity issues by:

- Using refreshed community needs assessments to identify different options for service frequencies and vessel size
- Collaborate with operators and communities to identify ways of using existing and planned capacity better
- Identify the key “pinch points” on the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service and Northern Isles Ferry Service networks and consider options for additional vehicle capacity where this is practical, beneficial, and affordable.

### **Q18. Do you agree or disagree with this approach to dealing with ferry capacity due to increased demand?**

- Agree  
 Disagree

Please explain your answer.

## Freight

The Scottish Parliament’s Net Zero Emission Transport (NZET) Committee recommended reconsideration of wider policy on the provision of freight capacity on

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our ferry routes; and the point at which profitable businesses should no longer be reliant on public subsidy of their freight costs.

## Q19. In what way do you think the costs of island freight transport could be shared differently between users and public funding?

## Vessels and Ports

To renew the vessel and port assets, required for the long-term sustainability of our current networks, prioritising where to invest is required due to budget constraints in the current financial environment. We are proposing that the following factors are taken into consideration when making decisions on prioritisation:

- The sustainability of ferry services by maintaining and increasing reliability and resilience.
- Ferry routes and services providing the primary transport connection for people, goods and services required for the sustainability of each community.
- Those communities identified as at greater risk of depopulation and economic decline.

## Q20. Do you agree or disagree that these are the right factors to consider when making decisions on prioritisation?

- Agree  
 Disagree

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Please explain your answer.

**Q21. Currently the factors above are not ranked. Do you think they should be?**

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

## Low Carbon and Environmental Impact

A Strategic Environmental Assessment will be carried out on the of the Islands Connectivity Plan. This process aims to ensure environmental and sustainability aspects of the Plan are captured and considered in the development of policies and plans detailed in the draft Islands Connectivity Plan.

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**Q22. What environmental issues do you believe should be captured in the Strategic Environmental Assessment in relation to this plan?**

Please explain your answer.

The Scottish Government committed in the Climate Change Plan to 30% of the ferry fleet, owned by Scottish Government, to be low emission by 2032. The Scottish Government is committed to looking at how we can use hybrid and low carbon energy resources for the fleet, which is currently taking place through the small vessels replacement programme.

**Q23. Do you have any other suggestions in how ferry services can contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions?**

Please share your views.

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### Ferry Fares

The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) system of fares is in place across the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service (CHFS) network for passengers, cars, coaches and small (under 6 metres long) commercial vehicles. A different fares structure remains in place for the Northern Isles.

A key aim of RET was to allow ferry users to pay a fixed element plus a rate per mile travelled, which is linked to the cost of the equivalent journey length by road in a private vehicle. RET also resolved many previous issues of complexity in the fares offering and fare-inconsistency across routes, within the CHFS network.

The 3 key principles of RET are:

- **Simplicity and Transparency** - the basis for fares must have an established rationale and simple for a user to understand.
- **Comparability and Consistency** - the basis for fares should be the same for each community.
- **Public Sector Affordability versus Community Sustainability** - fare-setting needs to balance the different requirements of public sector affordability with sustaining communities.

### Q24. Do you agree or disagree with retaining the current RET principles set out above, as the basis of a ferry fares structure?

- Agree  
 Disagree

Please explain your answer.

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Introducing different levels of fares such as “islander fares” on Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service routes, could increase overall fare revenue and keep services more affordable for islanders. It could also allow use of different fare types to tackle overcrowding of vehicle-deck capacity, on busier sailings through the year.

## Q25. Do you agree or disagree with the option to create different levels of fares for different types of users, e.g. islander and non-island residents.

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

## Q26. Which of these groups do you believe should be eligible for islander fares?

- Permanent residents
- Second homeowners
- People who work, but do not live, on islands
- Island residents who are currently students and living at mainland addresses during term-time
- Service providers
- Nominated friends & family
- None

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**Q27. Do you agree or disagree with a fares structure that both encourages passengers to travel without a private vehicle and incentivises travel at quieter periods?**

- Agree
- Disagree

Please explain your answer. If other, please add further information.