

Decision Notice

Issued in accordance with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and The Participation Request (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Orkney Islands Council received a Participation Request from North Ronaldsay Community Council on 13 October 2018. The request was found to comply with the Participation Request Regulations and given a Validation Date of 15 October 2018.

The Participation Request related to the establishment of a sheltered reliable berth to enable a higher frequency and reliability of ferry services to the island. The Community Council sought “participation in the proceedings of the Outline Business Case following the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance 2 options appraisal to ensure that at the third time of asking in thirty years it can establish the justification for the major investment in its infrastructure afforded almost universally elsewhere”.

Background

The Council has undertaken numerous studies investigating the future transportation services for the isles, but has yet to determine the specific detail or secure the necessary funding to deliver improvements.

Since November 2014, Transport Scotland, Orkney Islands Council, HI TRANS, Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans have been working together to progress the Scottish Government's commitment to reach a fair funding position for Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council in relation to Inter Island transportation services.

Following on from the Orkney Inter Island Transport Study Strategic Business Case (SBC), completed during 2016, Orkney Islands Council has appointed consultants Peter Brett Associates (PBA) to undertake the next phase of study work in the form of an Outline Business Case (OBC). The OBC work will be carried out during 2018 and 2019, following Transport Scotland's Guidance on the Development of Business Cases. Details of the community participation opportunities are detailed below.

The SBC considered the potential of converting both North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray to full Ro-Ro harbours. This option was evaluated and ruled out in both locations for a number of cost and feasibility reasons, with the air service having been identified as the 'lifeline' mode for both islands. Whilst the full Ro-Ro option was ruled out, the potential for developing a more sheltered Lo-Lo berth with improved berthing capability at both locations was retained as a possibility in order to improve the reliability of the service. In the event that a significant investment was made in the Lo-Lo operations, it is anticipated that there would be an increase in the number of timetabled weekly calls at both islands.

The SBC also identified the addition of a third aircraft as desirable in the context of the long-term sustainability and development of the Outer North Isle air network. The OBC work going forward will therefore involve further exploration of this issue, particularly in terms of cost, deliverability and connectivity, and the benefits associated with this increased level of air services.

In this ongoing phase of the work, an initial part of the community engagement process was sessions with the Chair and Transport Representative of each island Community Council held on 24 and 25 October 2018. Due to flight cancellations on 24 October, the North Ronaldsay Community Council Chair and Transport Representative participated through a dedicated session with the Consultants and Officers on 25 October.

There will be subsequent dedicated engagement opportunities for North Ronaldsay, including an engineer's visit to North Ronaldsay to scope berth improvement options, and including through liaison with stakeholders in North Ronaldsay. There will later be ongoing engagement with the Community Council and community stakeholders, through further dialogue, a residents' survey and public engagement as was previously undertaken through the SBC process, with a public drop-in session / exhibition / public meeting in each island, supported by an exit questionnaire, and with all material also available on line. The aim of this engagement being to shape the outcomes and recommendations through the OBC piece of work.

Decision

The Participation Request was referred to the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, who, having considered the matter fully, has decided to refuse the request on the following grounds:

The guidance provided by the Scottish Government on Participation Requests states at 2.3 that such Requests “are not intended to replace good quality existing community engagement or participation processes but are rather designed to complement and enhance them. Similarly, Participation Requests are not intended to be an extension of complaints procedures but should rather be viewed as an opportunity for communities to establish formal dialogue with public service authorities”.

Orkney Islands Council considers North Ronaldsay Community Council's involvement in the processes of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, Strategic Business Case and ongoing Outline Business Case as being ample opportunity for North Ronaldsay Community Council to be involved in the shaping and decision making around the Inter Island transportation services.

Based on the evidence above, Orkney Islands Council has made the decision to refuse North Ronaldsay Community Council's Participation Request. However, Orkney Islands Council welcomes and looks forward to North Ronaldsay Community Council's ongoing contribution to the Outline Business Case development process.

Orkney Islands Council
6 November 2018