

The initial cascade of existing vessels around the network (one of the Outer North Isles vessels in the case of Flotta and Hoy) is intended to address the specific issues that have been identified for Flotta and Hoy. There is then an opportunity to plan for the long-term future (in other words for beyond the life of the vessel) the most appropriate way to provide the link to the Orkney mainland.

The STAG programme introduces a number of 'hold-points' in the programme, which will be the time at which for each Isle (or group of Isles) decisions will need to be taken as to the future of that link.

The long term options for these links in the network can be all encompassing, and therefore assessment could be undertaken on replacement vessels, or alternative options such as use of catamarans, trimarans, fixed links (including in association with renewable energy capture) or alternative routings to the mainland.

The 'hold point' for Flotta and Hoy is in the build up to a required replacement of the cascaded vessel in approximately 2013-2014. Although this is around 6 years away, early planning and research is required, especially if this is for a significant change.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken in parallel with the STAG study, and has enabled the prediction and assessment of significant environmental effects of individual elements emerging from the study. In this way it has contributed to the sifting of options, and the development and refinement of option variants.

Help shape the future of inter-isles services

During the course of summer 2007 a consultation exercise on the programme is being undertaken. Information on the consultation and on the programme itself can be found at the ferry terminals, on board the vessels and at the airport.

We want to hear your views on the programme that is being put forward:

1. Do you support the proposals for the Flotta and Hoy links to the mainland?
2. What benefits / problems do you envisage with these proposals?
3. What should we be considering and researching as options for the future replacement of the cascaded vessel?
4. Would you support a catamaran/trimaran service for the future of the link?

You may also be asked to take part in a survey either on board the ferry or over the telephone. Your contribution to the survey will be appreciated, and this will assist in assessing the value of the network and development plans both in terms of economic and social value.

Further information

Further information on the STAG study and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) can be found at www.orkney.gov.uk. Copies of a document detailing the STAG study and copies of the SEA Report can also be viewed at Customer Services, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY (opening hours are Monday-Friday 9AM to 5PM).



STAG Study— Flotta & Hoy

This leaflet provides an overview of the recommendations for Flotta and Hoy emerging from the Council's STAG study.

The Council is seeking the views of the Flotta and Hoy communities and other stakeholders to inform the finalisation of the study.

If you would like to provide comments on the recommendations or any other aspect of the study please provide them in writing to the Transportation Service, Orkney Islands Council or email stag@orkney.gov.uk by **22nd August 2007**.

Why are we doing this study?

A variety of problems exist on all the services, which in some instances are becoming particularly acute. The service to Flotta and Hoy suffers severe capacity constraints, particularly in the summer months.

What is STAG?

STAG stands for **Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance**. It is a requirement of the Scottish Executive that all projects for which it provides support or approval should be appraised in accordance with the guidance. This study has the aim of establishing what option or options will be best placed to overcome the problems, constraints and opportunities that present themselves in the inter-isles network.

What are we trying to achieve?

The key strategic outcomes resulting from this study are to:

- α Facilitate more frequent and faster connections for work and non-work purposes.
- α Facilitate more tourist travel to the Isles.
- α Reduce business costs and improve business efficiency.
- α Increase connectivity to the Orkney Mainland.

We need to achieve these things and develop and deliver the network in a financially sustainable way for the Council.

What options have been considered?

A number of strategic options were generated by drawing upon consultation with key stakeholders, a review of existing transport proposals and the work of previous studies, and an option development exercise.

The strategic options which were tested for their ability to achieve the key strategic outcomes were:

- α **Do minimum** – no improvements in the network.
- α **Enhance inter-isles ferry services** – which could comprise a wide range of variants.
- α **Enhance and/or rationalise air services** as part of the transport mix to the isles.
- α **Reduce the need to travel between the mainland and the isles** – providing additional services on the isles, enhancing broadband and teleworking opportunities and/or introducing car clubs to assist people to travel without their own car onboard the ferry for example.
- α **Fixed links** – connecting some of the isles by fixed links, which could be tunnels, causeways or bridges.

Following consideration of all the available information, it was recommended that the **enhancing inter-isles ferry services option** should be taken forward in the study, together with an assessment of the **enhance and/or rationalise air services option**, to assess how the two could best be developed to deliver the study outcomes and to complement one another.

A number of inputs have then helped shape exactly what we should be aiming for each of the Isles. We have drawn from meetings of the Transport Representatives of each of the isles Community Councils, and from the work undertaken by Voluntary Action Orkney as part of work to update the Orkney Community Plan 2020. Community Engagement sessions facilitated by VAO identified the top three priorities for each of the isles, which in Flotta were (1) Health, (2) Transport, (3) Tourism, and in Hoy were (1) Employment, (2) Transport, (3) Housing.

What is being proposed?

Through an enhancement programme we want to see improved connectivity to the mainland, especially in terms of connection capacity, and both in relation to space and the ability to carry of heavy and dangerous goods.

In order to deliver this the study is recommending a programme that comprises:

Relocation of the mainland base for the route to Stromness, and the cascade of one of the existing Outer North Isles vessels to the route.

Relocating the terminal to Stromness will provide an integrated travel opportunity for internal journeys, and connections to and from mainland Scotland. Sea access to Houton is via a buoyed channel, which in addition to the terminal itself would require major modification and dredging in order to accommodate a larger vessel. Relocation to Stromness would take advantage of the recent investment in terminal facilities. The cascaded vessel will double the carrying capacity for vehicles on the route, with only a minor increase (10mins each way) in the time at sea.

The process of identifying the proposals has taken into account the key factors that are critical to any development - costs, impacts on the environment, and overcoming existing problems for example. The cost of operating the network is a key issue, and the programme has been designed with financial sustainability in mind.

The proposal makes it possible to utilise the full working life of many of the present vessels, by relocating some of them around the network following the introduction of some new vessels, and after modifications and enhancements as is required. This enables the Council to achieve the best value from the existing vessel asset, while also providing benefits to all of the Isles relatively quickly.