Developments at North Ronaldsay

Existing sea access to North Ronaldsay is determined by the tide. This tidal operation presents a constraint to the whole of the Outer North Isles operation. These constraints have left North Ronaldsay with just a once-per-week boat service. The situation is improved (including for all the Outer North Isles) by upgrading the North Ronaldsay terminal so that it can operate at all states of the tide.

A new linkspan RO-RO terminal is proposed as an extension to the existing terminal at North Ronaldsay. The new terminal will remove the need for all goods and vehicles to be lifted on and off the vessel. The new terminal will also improve the ability of the vessel to berth, thereby reducing the number of instances during the course of the year when the journey to North Ronaldsay cannot be made.

The proposed new Outer North Isles vessels take account of regulatory requirements for domestic passenger vessels, existing and forecast capacity demands, and a desire to improve the environmental footprint of the network.

New vessels will deliver significant improvements to passenger comfort and the physical accessibility of the vessels; shorter journey times; and a reduction in incidents when people are unable to travel.

Terminals that are currently used for overnight stays of vessels will continue to have this facility, ensuring that full benefit is achieved from having certified crew accommodation.

Before committing to any element of the programme, the terminal and vessel designs will be subject to extensive and detailed development. In the case of the terminals this will include comprehensive site investigations, hydrographic surveys and environmental assessments. In the case of vessels this will include hull design testing and approvals prior to construction.

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 proposal to provide a non-tidal RO-RO terminal at North Ronaldsay?
2. How do you think the air service should be changed to compliment an improvement in the ferry service to North Ronaldsay?
3. What benefits / problems do you envisage with these developments?

You may also be asked to take part in a survey either on board the ferry, at Kirkwall Airport 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).

ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL

STAG Study— North Ronaldsay

This leaflet provides an overview of the recommendations for North Ronaldsay emerging from the Council's STAG study.

The Council is seeking the views of the North Ronaldsay community 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 three Outer North Isles vessels operate in open seas over significant distances, which in Scotland is unique to Orkney for a Local Authority operation. After 1 July 2010 the three vessels will not meet regulatory requirements and will not be able to operate the Outer North Isles network on a permanent basis.

What is STAG?

STAG stands for **S**cottish **T**ransport **A**ppraisal **G**uidance. 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. The 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:

- Facilitate more frequent and faster connections for work and non-work purposes.
- Facilitate more tourist travel to the Isles.
- Reduce business costs and improve business efficiency.
- 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 satisfy achieve the key strategic outcomes were:

- **Do minimum** – no improvements in the network.
- **Enhance inter-isles ferry services** – which could comprise a wide range of variants.
- **Enhance and/or rationalise air services** as part of the transport mix to the isles.
- **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 so people can travel without their own car for example.
- **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 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 developing the updated Orkney Community Plan 2020. Community Engagement sessions facilitated by VAO identified the top three priorities for each of the isles, which in North Ronaldsay were (1) Housing, (2) Transport, (3) Learning and Training.

What is being proposed?

Through an enhancement programme we want to see a daily connection to / from the Orkney Mainland, including providing a minimum of five hours on the mainland or island Monday to Friday. We also want to see an improvement in connectivity in terms of capacity for building and livestock goods, and for perishable and frozen goods.

In order to deliver this and the objectives for the entire Outer North Isles, the study is recommending a programme that comprises:

- New RO-RO terminals at North Ronaldsay, Stronsay, Papa Westray and Pierowall.
- Terminal modifications at Eday, Sanday and Westray.
- Three new Outer North Isles vessels, and a cascaded mv Eynhallow for a Papa Westray to Westray RO-RO link.

The study is also considering a rationalisation of the air service to the Outer North Isles. The rationalisation is yet to be defined, but consideration will include reducing the service to meet only essential links that cannot be accommodated by an enhanced ferry network. In North Ronaldsay's case however this will likely include the retention of, or enhancement to, the services that operate at present, recognising that due to the distances involved a daily service can not be provided by ferry.

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.