

Minute of the Special Meeting of Papa Westray Community Council held in St Ann’s Community Room, Papa Westray, on Tuesday, 16 October 2018 at 19:30

Present:

I Cursiter (Chair), A Hourston, B Hourston, F McNab and N Rendall.

In Attendance:

- L Sharp, Clerk and Papay Island Link Officer (ILO).
- 9 members of the public.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies had been received from I Hourston and S Thompson.

2. Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone. He explained that OIC had called a workshop on 24 October with representatives from each of the North Isles Community Councils, to discuss options for future pier developments and the next fleet of boats. This special meeting had therefore been called to agree what should be input to that workshop on behalf of Papay. To help inform the discussions a short note about the options, as described to PWCC by OIC's Head of Marine Services, Engineering and Transportation had been circulated to all households and the opportunity given for Papay residents to submit written views or comments. A number of responses had been received and collated by the Clerk, and members confirmed that they had all received and read the collated document.

3. Discussion

The Chair opened the discussion. He reminded members that OIC had stated that the new fleet would not include cranes. He had since spoken with OIC's Deputy Harbour Master who had further explained that craning operations would not be possible in any new boat. As well as safety concerns, he had explained that it was due to the new boats needing to be double-decked to meet regulations requiring that all accommodation must be above the water line. Thus the options being considered by OIC for Papay are:

- Either a passenger only or a landing-craft vessel to replace the Golden Mariana on the Westray-Papay route. The landing craft option would require a hard ramp.
- A wavescreen and linkspan bridge at the New Pier to facilitate a Ro-Ro from Kirkwall 2-to-3 times a week, depending on the option chosen for the Westray-Papay route.

The Chair noted that the inputs received highlighted that there were complex pros and cons to the options. A Hourston expressed his view that these were big decisions to be made as they would significantly impact life on Papay for the next 50 years.

The following discussion points arose during the meeting.

A. Haulage

A Hourston explained that, as OIC had stated that Orkney Ferries would no longer handle goods to and from Papay, a haulier would need to be used (as is already the case on the isles with Ro-Ro services), and that this is a major factor in deciding which option was most realistic. He stated his preference for a landing-craft Ro-Ro between Westray and Papay, which would enable deliveries every day. He referred to an article in The Herald on a concept of using smaller ferries, more frequently, using islands as bridges. As an example of the benefit of this approach, he cited the current petrol shortage, and that a petrol delivery truck could have come to Papay and back to Kirkwall in a day, whereas this would still not be possible with the

linkspan Ro-Ro as it's frequency of service (2-3 times a week) would not allow a delivery truck to return the same day. F McNab noted that she held the opposite view, feeling that a linkspan Ro-Ro direct from Kirkwall would be the better option, with a passenger service to Westray. She explained that she felt that it was more economically viable for a haulier to operate a service directly, using 2 trucks, and this would also offer a business opportunity for someone on Papay.

The Chair had obtained the current costs for delivery of various items to Papay compared to Westray and Sanday, and these showed that costs were around twice as much to the isles with Ro-Ros. For example, a cow is £14.25 from Papay compared to £26 from Westray, and the cheapest parcel rate is £1.90 to Papay compared to £2.70 to Westray and £5.15 to Sanday. As OIC is removing craning operations and would no longer handle a 'Blue Box' system, all members agreed that it is inevitable that prices will rise. The prices would depend on the rates charged by whichever haulier Papay chose to provide the service, however, members felt that they should seek a pricing structure from OIC that did not penalise hauliers if the option chosen meant that goods to Papay had to go on two boats via Westray rather than one direct from Kirkwall.

N Rendall reported that the Papay Community Co-op board had discussed the options and due to the poor reports that were received regarding the haulier through Westray, the Co-op's preference would be for a Ro-Ro service direct from Kirkwall. On a personal level, he felt that the logistics of haulage could be very expensive that way, as he thought that four vehicles might be needed to make the system work. Whilst he didn't like the idea of being dependent on a non-Papay based haulier, as we would lose control over when cargo was delivered, he felt that a Papay-based haulier would not be economically feasible due to the capital and running costs compared to the volume of goods to be hauled. Weighing everything up, he felt that the least worst of the options might be a landing-craft Ro-Ro via Papay-Westray with a hard ramp. If this was the solution, then he felt that a daily delivery was still not viable as there would need to be sufficient volume to keep delivery charges affordable. The Chair noted that Eday had tried to run a haulier service but that they couldn't make it work as not enough income was generated. He also mentioned that there may be grants that could be applied for to start up a local haulier service.

B. Papay - Westray Service

It was noted that many of the public inputs expressed the need to ensure that the Papay-Westray boat services for the school, doctor and minister were protected, and that there should be an all year-round service. A Hourston expressed his opinion that a Ro-Ro via Westray would not adversely impact these services, nor would it affect the current exemption for MOTs as the exemption applied to the North Isles who already had Ro-Ro services.

The Chair and F McNab noted that going via Westray would add to the congestion problem on the Westray-Kirkwall ferry, with Orkney Ferries unable to cope with the current demand. Although the STAG2 Study was looking at bigger boats and possibly more frequent services, members were concerned that this would only cope with the extra Westray needs and not take account of increased traffic from Papay.

C. Reliance of Service

B Hourston noted that since the winter timetable had been introduced last month, that 4 of the 7 boats due from Kirkwall had been cancelled, whilst the Golden Mariana had been cancelled twice. Currently, he felt that there was an unwillingness to come to Papay with the steamer and that this would remain a problem even with a Ro-Ro service direct from Kirkwall. The Chair expressed his view that a sheltered harbour would reduce the cancellation rate, and members were agreed that a sheltered harbour was an important requirement, whatever boat option was implemented.

D. Basing New Westray-Papay Boat in Papay

A Hourston explained that he would like to see the new Papay-Westray boat based in Papay as it would offer decent job opportunities to help attract and keep families in the island. There was support amongst members for this but also recognition of the challenges. The Chair had spoken with the OIC Deputy Harbour Master who felt that a minimum crew of 3 would be needed, and more in place to cover leave and sickness. The Chair and F McNab noted that the crew would need to be either local folk undergoing a significant period of training and gaining at least one master's certificate, or to attract already experienced crew to move here. F McNab emphasised that the latter approach would require there being somewhere for them to live and this would not be straightforward due to the current shortage of housing stock.

All members agreed that a sheltered harbour would be needed, and that this would bring other potential economic benefits such as enabling more fishing boats and more visiting yachts.

E. Plane Service

A majority of the inputs from the public had noted the importance people placed on retaining an affordable and regular air service. A Hourston noted that the plane charges to other islands were £5 more than Papay.

F. Questions from Members of Public Following Discussion

In the light of PWCC's discussions, the Chair invited questions from the members of the public present at the meeting:

- S Curtis asked how many inputs from the public had been received and whether these had shown any particular preference. The Clerk advised that 16 responses had been received and submitted to members, plus written inputs from two PWCC members. The public inputs had a variety of opinion and also posed many questions around the options. N Rendall highlighted that a majority of the inputs had stressed the importance to people of maintaining an affordable and frequent air service as the island's lifeline service.
- C Chattington asked how the options would impact the movement of beasts. N Rendall advised that there would be significant cost impacts but that duration of travel should not be a problem. Orkney Ferries will currently handle one trailer per boat at the Kirkwall end, for all isles services, and so this should not be adversely affected. C Chattington also referred members to the example of Colonsay, where

the community owns a van that picks up all goods and parcels. She asked whether the Road Equivalent Tariff would apply and members advised that it didn't yet, but may do in the future.

- A Sharp felt from the discussions that Papay was not in a position to go to OIC workshop with one clear choice of option, as all of the arguments put forward were valid. He thought that OIC needs to produce thorough impact assessments and cost-benefit analyses for each option, engaging with the community to do so, and then make a recommendation to Papay. He also felt that it was probably easier for OIC to raise capital funds, such as new boats and pier developments, than it was to fund revenue costs such as crew.
- J Branscombe said that the discussions had brought home to him how complex the issues around haulage were and their impact on the choices. This had made him realise that his written input had not been fully informed, and that PWCC should therefore perhaps treat public inputs with caution as there are still many unknowns to the choices.

4. Decision

It was resolved that I Cursiter and N Rendall would put the following points forward at OIC's Future Transport workshop on 24 October:

- More still needs to be known about the knock-on effects of the options being considered by OIC before a decision can be made on the best choice for Papay. All options should remain on the table at this stage until further work on costs and impact assessments has been undertaken by OIC, engaging with the community to do so, and OIC can then make a recommendation to the PWCC on a preferred option.
- Papay requires a boat service that will retain the provision of an affordable and regular air service as its lifeline service.
- Should the option implemented by OIC mean that all haulage had to go via Westray then a pricing structure was needed that does not penalise hauliers for having to use two boats rather than a direct service. Assurances will also be needed that the size and frequency of the Westray-Kirkwall service will take account of increased traffic from Papay.
- All options will require a sheltered harbour. This will not only offer improved economic conditions for the future but will also ensure that a reasonable level of service can be provided. The experience since the start of the winter timetable with 4 of the 7 steamers due having been cancelled highlighted that a sheltered harbour was a clear requirement.
- Papay would like to explore having the new Papay-Westray boat based and crewed from Papay.

5. Close

The Chair thanked everyone for their inputs and closed the meeting at 21:00.