

Item: 4

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 27 March 2018.

Inter-Island Ferry Services – Proposed Winter 2018 to 2019 Timetables.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the proposed inter-island ferry services timetables for winter 2018 to 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the inter-island ferry services timetables for winter 2018 to 2019 are scheduled to operate from 24 September 2018 to 4 May 2019.

2.2.

That draft timetables in respect of ferry services to be operated by Orkney Ferries limited during winter 2018 to 2019 were presented to the Ferry Services Consultative Forum for consideration on 14 February 2018, with main comments and representations from transport representatives outlined in section 5 of this report.

2.3.

That, on 15 March 2018, the proposed timetables, together with feedback from the Ferry Services Consultative Forum, were considered by the Board of Orkney Ferries Limited and recommended to the Council for implementation.

2.4.

That the proposed timetables, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, remain consistent with those operated during winter 2017 to 2018, with the exception of accommodating a Tuesday and Thursday return link from Eday to Sanday for education purposes on a trial basis.

2.5.

That, in the event that the trial proposed above does not go ahead, the timetable in respect of the Outer North Isles would revert to the level of service operated during 2017 to 2018, attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

It is recommended:

2.6.

That, subject to the trial of a Tuesday and Thursday return link from Eday to Sanday going ahead, the timetables in respect of ferry services to be operated by Orkney Ferries Limited during winter 2018 to 2019, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

2.7.

That, should the trial referred to at paragraph 2.6 above not go ahead, the timetable in respect of ferry services to be operated to the Outer North Isles during winter 2018 to 2019, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, be approved.

3. Policy Aspects

3.1.

The proposal outlined in this report provides timetables to target 6.2, Orkney's Internal Ferry and Air Services, as outlined in the Council Plan 2013 to 2018.

3.2.

In terms of the Scheme of Administration, the determination of fare structures and timetables in respect of inter-island ferry services is delegated to the Committee.

4. Background

4.1.

In accordance with the Service Level Agreements entered into by Orkney Ferries Limited and the Council, a recommendation from the Board of Orkney Ferries must be made via the Head of Marine Services, Engineering and Transportation in order for the winter and summer timetable periods to be approved by this Committee.

4.2.

The draft timetables for winter 2018 to 2019 were considered by the Ferry Services Consultative Forum on 14 February 2018. The key issues discussed at the Forum are outlined in section 5 below.

4.3.

The draft timetables and feedback from the Forum were considered by the Board of Orkney Ferries Limited on 15 March 2018.

5. Ferry Services Consultative Forum

5.1.

The Graemsay and North Hoy timetable was presented for discussion, noting the proposal to amend the Friday evening sailing to an on-request basis due to limited passenger numbers. Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council confirmed by letter that they were not in support of this proposal and requested that the Friday evening sailing remained as timetabled. Following discussion, it was agreed that there should be no alteration to the scheduled sailing on a Friday. The timetable, outlined at Appendix 1 has therefore retained the scheduled sailing.

5.2.

A further request from Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council was to operate the 11:00 sailing from Lyness to Houton, currently scheduled on a Monday and Friday only, each week day and throughout the year. The service is currently scheduled to operate on a Monday and Friday from 24 September to 31 December 2018 and 18 February to 4 May 2019.

5.3.

The sailing could not be accommodated on a Wednesday, as this time is required for crew drills, maintenance and refuelling. The service currently operates from Lyness to Flotta on a Tuesday and Thursday. A call-in to Houton would result in too long an operating day and therefore cannot be incorporated in the timetable for winter 2018 to 2019.

5.4.

In respect of the request to operate the Monday and Friday 11:00 sailing from Lyness to Houton between 3 January and 17 February 2019, in addition to the dates outlined at section 5.2 above, therefore operating throughout the winter period, this has been incorporated in the timetable, attached as Appendix 1.

5.5.

The Outer North Isles timetables were considered by the Forum, noting that a request from Education Services to provide an all year round link from Eday to Sanday return had been incorporated. At the request of parents, a Tuesday and Thursday return link has been incorporated in the timetable, thereby enabling Eday S1 pupils to attend Sanday Junior High School two days per week on a trial basis from August 2018.

5.6.

The Outer North Isles timetable incorporating the request from Education Services was circulated to the North Isles Community Councils prior to the Forum meeting. Transport Representatives from Eday, Westray and Sanday were unable to attend the Forum due to adverse weather and ferry cancellations.

5.7.

The Eday Transport Representative, via email, thanked officers for accommodating this request and welcomed the proposal. Similarly, the Chair of the Sanday Community Council, via email, was in support of accommodating the request for education purposes.

5.8.

In attendance at the Forum, the Stronsay Transport Representative highlighted that the doctor currently travels between Stronsay and Eday on a Thursday; however the timetable allowed for this to be changed to a Monday, Wednesday or Friday instead. There was no representation from NHS Orkney at the Forum. The minutes of the meeting and timetable options were emailed to NHS Orkney for comment. The Isles Network of Care Practice Manager confirmed that the proposed timetable change has been discussed with the Nurse Practitioner on Eday, the Primary Care Manager and staff in Stronsay. No problems are envisaged with the proposed timetable change, as it would not cause any difficulties to move the GP visiting service on Eday to a Wednesday instead of a Thursday. It was noted that the haulier has also been made aware of the proposal. With no objections at the Forum, it was agreed to incorporate the proposal in the final draft timetable, attached as Appendix 1.

5.9.

As the proposal outlined above has cost implications to be met by Education Services, in the event that the S1 trial was not to take place from August 2018 to July 2019, then the timetables will revert to the status quo level of service and that operated during 2017 to 2018, attached as Appendix 2.

5.10.

The North Ronaldsay Transport Representative raised the issues they have as a community in the event of adverse weather, resulting in a prolonged period with no ferry service. Running out of oil and animal feed was noted. It was discussed whether residents should have better provision for storing goods and materials although the Transport Representative called for an additional sailing in the event of no ferry call-in after a two week period. It was noted that a non-scheduled sailing to North Ronaldsay would result in several cancellations to other islands, therefore disrupting the scheduled timetable. This is a matter for further discussion and consideration at Orkney Local Emergency Coordinating Group.

5.11.

The discounted book of tickets was raised by Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Community Council via memorandum and whether the vehicle books could be changed so that any family/household vehicle could be used rather than books issued per vehicle. It was noted that a Road Equivalent Tariff type tariff is being considered for the inter-island ferry service network, which would in effect remove the existing books of tickets and unfairness associated with only obtaining a discount if bulk purchasing.

6. Financial Implications

6.1.

The timetables proposed in this report, and attached as Appendix 1, represent a continuation of the existing level of service provision, with the exception of the education request to accommodate a link between Eday and Sanday on a Tuesday and Thursday. It is noted that additional costs associated with this request, estimated at £5,630, will be funded by Education Services by way of a budget virement during 2018 to 2019.

6.2.

The cost to the Council of providing a ferry service at a similar level in financial year 2017 to 2018 was £7,196,700, and that relative to budget of £7,196,700, this represents a break even position. To note, Orkney Ferries Limited are currently dealing with additional revenue cost estimated at £600,000 due to ferry refit costs.

6.3.

The approved budget for financial year 2018 to 2019 is £9,515,000. Additional funding of £5,500,000 towards ferry services has been approved by Scottish Government during 2018 to 2019, therefore securing the existing level of service provision for a further year. After allowing for past funding arrangements which saw the Council subsidise the provision of ferry services, this represents a net increase of £2,160,200 in recognition of the additional refit costs, harbour dues and staff costs.

7. Legal Aspects

7.1.

Section 153 (2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 empowers the Council to “acquire, provide, maintain, improve and operate any ferry situated wholly or partly within their area”.

7.2.

Orkney Ferries Limited operates the ferry services on behalf of Orkney Islands Council under Service Level Agreements dated 30 May 2008.

7.3.

The Service Level Agreements state that the timetables for the winter period should be recommended by the Company to the Council’s Development and Infrastructure Committee for approval.

7.4.

The Service Level Agreements state that Orkney Ferries Limited will operate the “Approved Services” in return for funding from the Council. The definition of “Approved Services” covers inter-isles ferry services as approved by the Council.

8. Contact Officers

Gavin Barr, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, extension 2301, e-mail: gavin.barr@orkney.gov.uk

Brian Archibald, Head of Marine Services, Engineering and Transportation, extension 2703, e-mail: brian.archibald@orkney.gov.uk

Laura Cromarty, Transport Manager, extension 2535, e-mail: laura.cromarty@orkney.gov.uk

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Orkney Ferries Limited Winter 2018 to 2019 Timetables, incorporating the Education Services request on the Outer North Isles Timetable(s).

Appendix 2: Orkney Ferries Limited Winter 2018 to 2019 – alternative Outer North Isles timetable in the event the Education Service request is not taken forward.