

Future Fares Principles

Transport Scotland supports a wide range of ferry services across Scotland – when considering future fares in the context of NIFS, it is important to Transport Scotland to ensure that:

Transport Scotland:	Fair Ferry Fares Response:
<p>The fares set balance community needs against affordability to the public purse.</p>	<p>The problem as it stands is the current fares are not balanced whatsoever towards affordability.</p> <p>The ‘community need’ is surely the ability to travel between Lerwick/Kirkwall and Aberdeen affordably. This is currently not the case, it hasn’t been for many years while our prices increased year on year until recent freezes which do not nearly go far enough to solving the problem for the vast majority of those in Shetland and Orkney.</p> <p>Alan Morrissey from Aberdeen said in his comment on the petition: “I don’t think it should be cheaper to take my family on holiday to Spain or Portugal than it would be to get to Shetland. The cost of the ferry is prohibitive and will likely prevent me from taking my family there.”</p> <p>Sentiment echoed by Fran Watt, Montrose, “I find it hard to see my family in Shetland because of high fares. I went to Madrid last year for £90 return. I’m just back from Shetland, over £500 return.”</p> <p>At what point do you say £500 for a journey from one part of Scotland to another is just not fair?</p>
<p>The fares system adopted supports the economic and social development of both Orkney and Shetland. This can be thought of in terms of:</p>	
<p>Freight Need: Ensuring that Orkney and Shetland businesses are not facing an excessive import/export cost premium (a freight fares issue)</p>	<p>Tagon Stores have been quoted at £119 + VAT per pallet to get a delivery from Aberdeen to Voe. We already are facing excessive import/export costs. To suggest that we currently are not experiencing excessive freight charges shows in its entirety how much we are being paid</p>

	attention to and how much we have been and currently are being ignored by the Scottish government.
Tourism need: Supporting the current tourism need / product and future aspirations of both island groups	Tourism for local businesses is of massive importance particularly during the Summer months. People continually speak of wanting to visit Shetland and Orkney but are put off by the cost of getting here. <u>Nowhere else in Scotland has this problem.</u>
Social need: Fares not acting as a barrier to essential personal travel The cost of travel not acting as a barrier to immigration or acting as a 'push' factor in out-migration.	Fares ARE already acting as a barrier, the main significant barrier to essential personal travel. How can £621.30 return trip from Lerwick to Aberdeen <u>including islander discount</u> for a family of 5 not act as a barrier? This also takes into consideration the fact one of those 5 need to sleep rough overnight, or fork out for another cabin at £216 return. The problem is taking into consideration the cost of a cabin for overnight travel. Accommodation on an overnight journey is seen as essential in the vast majority of commuters, and is absolutely essential for those with small children.
There is , as far as possible, a degree of consistency across Scotland in how fares are set and the cost per mile of travel	Cost per mile doesn't take into consideration the cost of cabins.
Fares are considered in the wider context of the ferry operation (in the short term at least) so as to ensure a reduction in fares does not generate other problems, a lack of capacity for example.	A combination of fare with cabin and an overall reduction in this regard to make transport between Shetland/Orkney and Aberdeen affordable for all, and not just the well off.
Consequences of Fares Reductions	
The additional demand brought about by a significant reduction in fares could cause significant capacity problems on the current services, particularly in summer – you may therefore find it much more difficult to travel at the times you wish after fares have been reduced.	Scaremongering at its very worst and absolutely irrelevant to the fact it is financially impossible for some people to get to Mainland Scotland. The suggestion that although the fares are high the service in the Summer is being run to full capacity so therefore there is nothing wrong with

	the service is, as a Shetland resident, appalling to read and hear considering this is meant to be a lifeline service for all residents, not just the privileged few who can afford the disgraceful costs of essential travel.
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The 'Fair Ferry Fares' campaign has resulted in a petition signed so far by 3,338 people who believe we are currently being treated unfairly in terms of the prices we have to pay for our lifeline link to Mainland Scotland. **Getting a family from Lerwick to Aberdeen should not cost the same as getting a family from Glasgow to America.**

The SNP made a promise to cut our ferry fares, whether or not they won the Shetland and Orkney seats, and the FFF campaign was started to make sure that promise was kept. The decision then to freeze fares for another year and not reduce them, despite other island groups having already seen reductions in their fares came as a blow, but no surprise.

I have contacted Mr Yousaf, the Islands and Transport Minister asking for a timeframe for when he believes North Isles residents will see a fare reduction however at the time of print I have yet to receive a response (a response was promised within 20 days and we are currently within that time period).

All Shetland and Orkney should receive is fairness and parity with other island groups. The Western Isles fares have seen cuts of up to half and their subsidy increase 41% since 2013. Shetland and Orkney have seen fares increase 31% and our subsidy decreased 14% in the same timeframe.

I have met Mr Yousaf personally on the matter and I have gone on record as saying I believe he is determined to reach a successful conclusion for Shetland and Orkney and I still believe this to be the case. Shetland and Orkney are different in terms of other island groups as our lifeline service currently operates overnight therefore accommodation must be taken into consideration along with fares which makes a long term solution more complex. This does not take away the fact a short term solution, which Mr Yousaf has previously talked about, cannot be implemented in the meantime.

This has been talked about long enough, it is about time that something is done.

The petition and the campaign goes on until Shetland and Orkney receive parity and fairness. Make your voice heard by signing it here: <https://www.change.org/p/scottish-government-a-fair-deal-for-shetlands-lifeline-ferry-service>

- Ryan Thomson.

Fair Ferry Fares Campaigner.