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Dear Ms Seator

OIC Harbour Authority Cruise Booking Policy

At the OIC Harbours sub-committee meeting on 21 August, the OIC Convenor said that, from his soundings, the Kirkwall business community are very welcoming to cruise port calls, so no great surprise there.

However, the Kirkwall business community did not elect the council.

The council was elected by the constituents of Orkney to serve the needs of the whole community.

Perhaps it would have been a good idea for members of the Harbours sub-committee to familiarise themselves with the current OIC Harbours Schedule of Charges and other fundamental information when they were appointed, rather than putting themselves in the position of having to ask for an explanation of how vessels are charged for docking. This would have equipped them with some basic knowledge of harbour operations before they made decisions on issues that will undoubtedly affect the whole of Orkney.

When asked about potential maximum daily disembarkation totals, the OIC Harbours Business Development Manager stated that the Kirkwall North Pier berth and Hatston Ro-Ro berth could only handle small vessels capable of carrying small numbers of passengers, and therefore had been excluded from the Category Sum.

The information presently available suggests that Kirkwall North Pier berth can handle vessels up to 125 metres length overall and Hatston Ro-Ro berth can handle vessels up to 140 metres length overall.

Of the seventy-six ships that have made regular port calls this year, twenty-three are under 140 metres length overall. Information originating from Lloyds Register shows their following passenger and crew capacity: eight are over 200; four are over 300; three are over 400; one is over 500; one is over 600; one is over 800; and one is over 1,000.

Perhaps the OIC Harbours Business Development Manager should revisit his definition of small?

For the benefit of those who are fond of repeating the erroneous claim that cruise ships bring in millions of pounds to OIC every year, OIC's own figures show that revenues from cruise business in the 2022 – 23 season amounted to £2,947,007; OIC operating costs attributed to cruise business amounted to a total of £1,374,121; OIC expenditure on other discretionary services amounted to £914,438; giving a net income to OIC from cruise ship business of £658,448 in the 2022 – 23 season.

This net income does not reflect expenditure on the maintenance work required on roads that have suffered deterioration due to cruise related traffic; nor the increased costs of street cleaning required following cruise ship port calls; nor the various displacement costs imposed on the community by cruise ship port calls.

Hardly the fabled millions.

The meeting agreed that further development work on this issue would be carried out, along with work on a tourism strategy. Prior to that, perhaps it would be beneficial for OIC to engage experienced practitioners to provide rigorous research and analysis on both these issues to replace the uninformed and frequently ridiculous anecdotes that are promulgated at present, including within council meetings.

Yours sincerely

Leslie Sinclair

