HI TRANS
THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Report to Partnership Meeting 8 February 2019

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Ferry Timetable Study

Purpose of Report
To introduce the executive summary of the 2018 -2019 Draft Ferry Timetable Study and to request approval of further research and work to develop the Tool.

Background

Over the October to December 2018 period the KTP Associate carried out a study of published timetables to establish the maximum visit time made available via ferry to the nearest key local centre from the Isles and visa-versa. The purpose of this research was to compare the variability in opportunity offered by ferry timetabling across different islands.

It is envisaged that this study could be expanded to include the necessary journeys to and from the ferry terminals giving a clearer picture of potential day travel, to and from the Islands.

The report is motivated by HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) vision and high-level objectives, consistent with the National Transport Strategy, to support sustainable economic growth across the Highlands and Islands, and reduce barriers to participation in employment, learning, social, leisure, health and cultural activities. The information produced by the research is helpful to improving understanding and awareness of those barriers.

As part of the study, the KTP associate has undertaken to provide a MS Excel tool which will allow the future updating and analysis of routes and the automated production of graphic representations without expert knowledge or time-consuming procedures.

A copy of the full report is included for information with the Board papers and will be made available on the HITRANS website following approval by the Partnership Board.

Policy Context

The 2013-2022 Ferries Plan that emerged from the Ferries Review (2010) aims to maximise economic and social potential of remote rural and island communities. The Plan set out a range of proposals to improve the ferry services for communities based on an assessment of the current service provision.

Audit Scotland 2017 report, Transport Scotland's Ferry Services[1], which assesses the progress to date of the Ferries Plan, states that the plan, and underpinning investment plans for vessels and harbours, is focused on the Clyde and Hebrides network, that the full extent of future spending requirements on services and assets is unknown and that providing ferry services that meet the needs of users within the allocated budget could be challenging in the context of limited public finances.

The report recommends developing a Scotland-wide, long term strategy that would take into account the progress made against the proposals in the Ferries Plan. It also recommends the strategy should set out its intended benefits of subsidised ferry services, how these contribute to National Outcomes and how these will be measured, monitored and reported.

The report states that ferry users "are generally happy with services but there is variation across routes and some frustrations exist". The report recommends that processes to involve and consult ferry users could be improved given the complicated nature of ferry operations where responsibilities and accountabilities are unclear to ferry users.

Work has begun in Scottish Government to produce a new National Transport Strategy which will set out a vision and strategic direction for transport over the next 20 years. The new strategy will focus on areas such as better integration of transport, reducing inequality, increasing accessibility, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and public health and wellbeing[2], all of which have serious implications for island communities. This report can act as a first step in directing evidence to the issues and good practice that exist for island communities in relation to transport. The formal consultation will take place in 2019.

Other policy issues to consider are the Fairer Scotland Plan and the Loneliness and Social Isolation strategy 'A Connected Scotland'.

According to the Fairer Scotland Plan[3] the Scottish Government have a commitment to create inclusive growth which underpins their dual ambition to tackle inequality and boost competitiveness and develop an economy where everyone can contribute and where the benefits of growth and are shared by all.

For our island communities this means equal opportunities to actively participate in a range of economic and social activities and having affordable, reliable and integrated transport as a means of accessing these. It should also mean having equity of access to information and choice about the transport options that are available and ensuring these are co-produced with the Island communities in order that they meet their needs.

The analysis of consultation responses[4] to the Scottish Government Strategy for tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation, A Connected Scotland[5], showed that transport was a factor contributing to the issue. It especially noted that "In rural communities and the islands, poor transportation connections to public spaces and amenities and lack of coordination between modes of transport were cited as barriers to social connection." The recently published strategy

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[1] http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/transport-scotlands-ferry-services

[2] https://beta.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/minutes/2018/02/convention-of-the-highlands-and-islands-meeting-papers-october-2017/documents/8a8d0785-5595-4d86-96ec-1b90363ce87a/8a8d0785-5595-4d86-96ec-1b90363ce87a/govscot%3Adocument

[3] https://www2.gov.scot/fairerscotland

[4] https://www.gov.scot/publications/analysing-responses-connected-scotland-scottish-governments-draft-strategy-tackle-social-isolation-loneliness/

[5] https://consult.gov.scot/equality-unit/connected-scotland/

'A Connected Scotland'[6] sees the transport network as "the physical thread that binds communities together" and states that "Accessible transport is vital to people being able to meet face-to-face and stay socially active, particularly for those in rural areas".

In summary, the various relevant policies compel action to better understand the needs of Island communities, involve communities in addressing those needs, generate more, more sustainable, and more inclusive growth, create greater equity of opportunity, and strive to overcome obstacles to participation, whether they be economic, social or geographic.

The Ferry's Timetable Report is a step toward better understanding the way in which ferry services can participate in the endeavour to achieve these goals.

Ferry Timetable Study 2018 - Executive Summary

A review of ferry timetables for summer 2018 and winter 2018-2019 across Scotland was conducted. Earliest arrival and latest departure times at the mainland and Island port of every route were recorded and the maximum possible duration of a day trip was derived. An eight-hour benchmark was used to highlight routes where there may be an opportunity for improvement. Special attention is given in the report to those Islands where it is not possible to make a return journey by Ferry, to the to the nearest key local centre or to the Island, of any duration, on any day, in one or more seasons. After filtering out routes and services that were not within the remit of the study, 45 Islands or remote peninsulas were included. These 45 destinations comprised 56 routes summer and winter. In total, 224 timetables were studied to derive the maximum possible day visit duration to and from the Island.

Introduction

In addition to getting an idea of the number of Islands that meet this (or any) criteria, the spreadsheet makes it easy to visualise the day trip opportunity for each island, by duration and time of day.
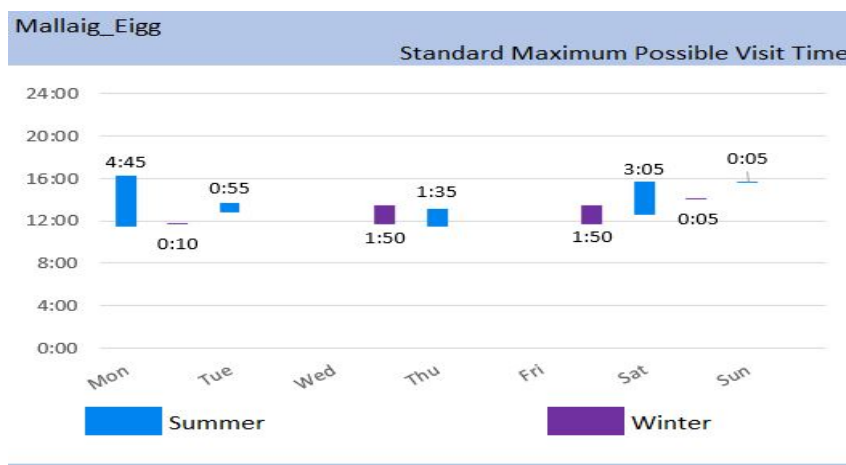

It is possible to visit Eigg from Mallaig for 4 hours 45 minutes on a Monday, during summer.

But only 1 hour 50 on a Friday during winter.

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[6] https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-strategy-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-social-connections/

One graph is produced for each route, and where there are shoulder services, these are also displayed:

Oban_Coll
Standard Maximum Possible Visit Time
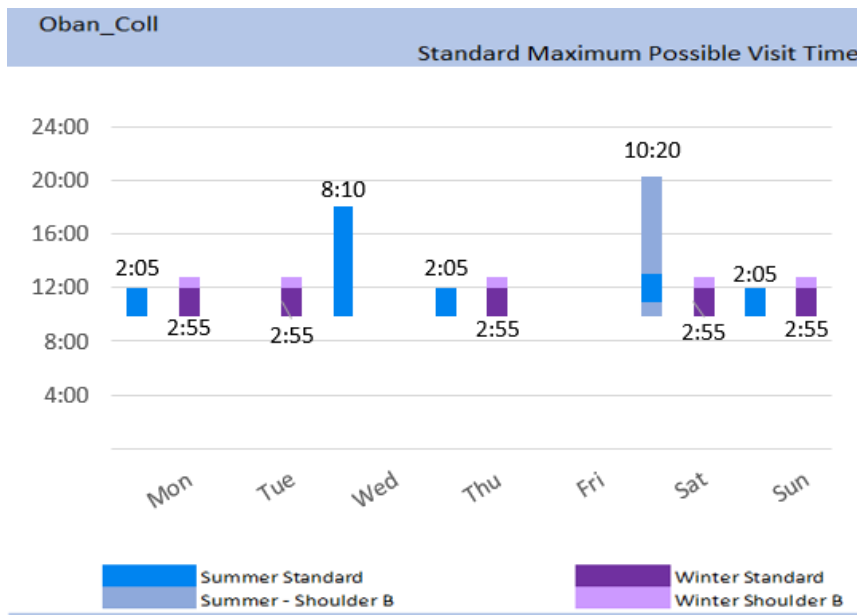
This graph shows both standard and shoulder services available in summer and winter.

These graphs are produced automatically. The user only has to enter the information from the timetable.

This should save on future labour costs.

Results

A little under half (55 from 112) of these routes offer a regular weekday service of length greater than eight hours. There are 16 routes over which no day return journey is possible on any day, in one or more seasons.

There are 9 islands from where it is not possible to make a day return trip to the nearest key local centre on any day, summer or winter.

In the opposite direction, there are 7 Islands that cannot be visited by ferry for a day trip of any duration, in one or more seasons.
Further to this, 41 Routes offer a service that facilitates return journeys of some kind, but of duration less than the benchmark of 8 hours and/or not on a daily basis (weekends excepted). These vary in extremity, from the example of Barra, where a meaningless visit of only a few minutes to Oban is normally possible in summer, (an hour in winter), to the example of Shapinsay, where the possible daily visit to Kirkwall is just short of 8 hours. The findings for each Island are presented in graphic form in the body of the main report.

Results Summary

- **Commute level service**
- **No day return in 1 or more seasons**
- **Below benchmark**

49%

37%

14%
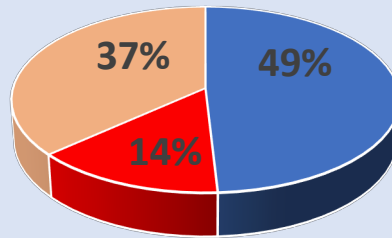
Total Routes: 112

Commute Level: 55

No day return: 16

Below benchmark: 41

The islands of Canna, Rum, Muck, Eigg, Colonsay, Coll, Tiree, North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray were highlighted as especially isolated, having no possibility of a day return trip in at least one season.

The following routes are found to provide services below the benchmark: Castlebay-Oban, Lochboisdale-Oban/Mallaig, Lochmaddy_Uig, Tarbert_Uig, Stornoway_Ullapool, Craignure_Oban, Kirkwall_Aberdeen, Eday_Kirkwall, Sanday_Kirkwall, Western Isles Table, Leverburough_Bernaray, Ullapool_Stornoway, Uig_Tarbert, Scrabster_Stromness, Gills Bay_St Margaret's Hope, Kirkwall_Eday, Kirkwall_Stronsay, Kirkwall_Sanday, and Kirkwall_Westray.

Proposal for further study

This report can act as a first step in directing evidence to the issues that exist for island communities in relation to transport. The formal consultation for the National Transport Strategy will take place in 2019. Additionally, Audit Scotland recommended Transport Scotland have better information in order to demonstrate the impact of their decisions and the contribution that ferries make to the objectives laid out in the Ferry's Plan and the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

The above noted key findings could be expanded upon by broadening the study to include frequency of transit offered, alternative modes of transport available, linkages to other modes of transport and, importantly, access to key services and facilities.

This more holistic understanding of the limitations of current transport infrastructure, with transport linkages expressed in detail would facilitate research into the impacts of isolation, the potential of improvements and provide for the development of a transport appraisal methodology that can address contemporary and emerging policy initiatives at a fine-grained level, providing strong, evidence-based cases for improvements.

For example, evaluating the impact of increased service provision might involve calculating the economic impact of providing 'commuter level' service to the mainland from Mull in winter, as in summer; the health and social impacts to the people of the small isles if a more frequent service was available to the mainland, or if Uist and Harris were served by dedicated ferries that enabled

long regular days on the mainland and a day return opportunity from Skye. All these measures would come with contingent economic effects.

The geographic distribution of these findings should be considered in order to inform potential service provision and procurement options. Vessel choice, service frequency and provider should be considered in terms of the whole problem rather than dealing with communities and organisations in isolation.

Finally, the integrated national strategy desired by government and noted as deficient by Audit Scotland, demands an integrated information system, the absence of which has been evident throughout this research. Simple research such as conducted here, which should be a trivial matter, and everyday information sharing, is severely hampered and made labour intensive due to service operators outdated timetable storage methods. These are issues that could be resolved very easily. They do not require onerous work, advanced technical knowledge or great expense. At a very minimum, information standards that allow cross platform timetable sharing should be mandatory. Research is required into how best to implement these open data standards.

These proposals are consistent with HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy, Audit Scotland's recommendation to develop a Scotland-wide, long term strategy that would take into account the progress made against the proposals in the Ferries Plan, the Ferries Plan's aim to maximise the economic and social potential of remote rural and island communities and The National Transport Strategy goals of developing a better integration of transport, reducing inequality, increasing accessibility, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and public health and wellbeing

Recommendation

Members are invited to support a proposal for further study and development of tools to facilitate analysis.

Risk	Impact	Comment
RTS delivery	√	This work supports several strategic objectives of the RTS.
Policy	√	This work supports the development of the RTS Delivery Plan
Financial	-	
Equality	-	Improvement of public transport services helps reduce social exclusion by improving access to employment and services for those living in our most remote areas.

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Date: 25[h] January 2019