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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
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15 April 2025

Dear Convener,

UNDER 22S CONCESSIONARY FERRY TRAVEL

Further to my letter of 27 March regarding the introduction of free inter-island ferry travel under 22s, I am pleased to be writing again to confirm that the Scottish Government will today announce that from 23 June 2025, young people aged 19-21 who live on a Scottish island will be eligible for concessionary ferry vouchers providing 4 free journeys per year between their island and the Scottish mainland. This is an expansion from the current scheme which supports young people aged 16-18 and full-time volunteers up to 25.

As I said in my previous letter, the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's 26 June 2023 report 'A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland' called on the Scottish Government to consider how it can make ferry services more affordable to young people through a concessionary scheme. Therefore, in addition to the free inter-island travel already announced, this additional announcement for mainland travel will help to achieve this.

Proposed in the Islands Connectivity Plan last year and forming a key commitment in the transport budget for 2025-26, these schemes form part of the Scottish Government's long term strategy to ensure ferry services are affordable and sustainable for years to come, as well as helping eradicate child poverty and grow the economy.

The extension to concessionary ferry vouchers will help to ensure public transport is available, accessible and affordable for all and will enable children and young people to travel more often, improving their access to education, employment, training, health and social activities and much more.

Eradicating child poverty is the single greatest priority of this Government and we are committed to giving all of our children and young people the very best chance to succeed in life.

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This Government is committed to growing the economy. We know bus, ferry and rail services provide vital connectivity to employment, education and training opportunities, and the offer of concessionary and discounted journeys makes it more affordable to access these important opportunities.

We are doing all we can to ensure young people growing up on our islands can access similar opportunities to their peers on mainland Scotland. I recognise that many will want us to offer more free ferry travel to and from the mainland and we will keep that under review, but this latest concession is additional to the free bus travel that many young island residents also benefit from.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport

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