

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Ministear an Àiteachais agus Ceangal
Jim Fairlie MSP
Jim Fairlie BPA



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email: netzero.committee@Parliament.Scot

02 May 2025

Dear Convener,

Following the letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to the Committee 27 March 2025 regarding ferry fares, I am writing to inform the Committee of progress made more generally on the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) since the then Minister for Transport, Fiona Hyslop MSP, wrote to you on 1 February 2024.

As Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, I have assumed responsibility for the Islands Connectivity Plan. My role covers matters within the portfolios of both the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and so I am able to bring both these perspectives together in overseeing work on the ICP, and in promoting alignment with the new National Islands Plan.

Transport Scotland published the ICP draft Strategic Approach paper and updated Vessel and Ports Plan on 1 February for public consultation that ended Monday 6 May 2024. Alongside the public consultation, public engagement took place in 23 island and peninsula locations.

The independent consultation analysis report was published at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/ferries/islands-connectivity-plan/> on 3 September along with our Initial Responses. Where permission was granted, consultation responses have also been published.

The majority of respondents agreed that the key themes of the Strategic Approach paper capture the main aspects of transport connectivity for island and peninsula communities. There was particularly high support for Reliability and Resilience as the first priority of ICP and for the development of an Accessibility Standard for ferry services.

Support for retaining the current Road Equivalent Tarriff principles was highlighted, along with support for a fares structure that encourages passengers to travel without a private

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver



vehicle, incentivising travel at quieter periods, and for creating different levels of fares for different users, such as islander/non-islander fares.

We have used this feedback, and the feedback received following completion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment in 2025 to finalise the Strategic Approach and the Vessels and Ports Plan and have now published final versions on [the Transport Scotland website](#).

We have also made progress with the community needs assessments (CNA). We have undertaken a “baseline study” of the communities served by the Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles Ferry Service networks. This baseline data will be used as the starting point for the planned community needs assessments in 2025.

We are committed to continuing to work with communities and the revised CNA methodology includes two distinct points of engagement: to confirm understanding of the operational situation and community needs prior to “gap analysis” of any differences between needs and provision; and to seek feedback on options and next steps for addressing any identified over and/or under-provision.

I will keep the Committee informed of further progress on the ICP.

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE