

**Submission from Campaign for 7-Day Ferry Services to Lewis & Harris
– 17 March 2008**

The socio-economic case for 7 day ferry services to Lewis and Harris

There is a strong demand for 7-day ferry services to Lewis and Harris and evidence that the majority of islanders support the introduction of such services.

- Over 1,000 written requests to CalMac since September 2007
- Petitions with over 5,000 signatories in favour
- Mori/BBC Scotland Survey 2000
- Fisher Associates Report 2007

As well as boosting tourism, Sunday ferry services would have many social benefits for island residents and their families and friends elsewhere, for example:

- More frequent visits to friends and relatives
- Weekend holiday, leisure or shopping trips with no time off work/school
- Weekend hospital visits to Inverness, Glasgow etc
- School and sports club trips – inward and outward
- Attending weekend sporting events
- Attending weddings and other social events
- Increased weather flexibility – especially in winter

in order to provide these social benefits and extend the tourist season, 7-day ferry services must be provided on an all year round basis.

Less tangible but vitally important for many island residents will be the psychological benefits brought about by the removal of an unjustifiable, unnecessary and enforced isolation.

A report commissioned by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Fisher Associates 2006) demonstrated that 7-day ferry services on the Stornoway-Ullapool route would generate substantial economic benefits for the island.

The introduction of RET fares from October 2008 is will be of great benefit to the Western Isles economy and will increase traffic volume and visitor numbers. The early introduction of 7-day services is the next logical step.

Regular affordable transport is a key factor in people's migration decisions to and from the Outer Hebrides and Sunday travel restrictions are regarded as a negative aspect of island life.

There are contradictions between the Sunday policies of CnES and many of the objectives of the main economic development strategy for the islands. For example, the lack of 7-day ferry services is a major constraint on tourism development.

The CnES Sunday policies (which cover Sunday working by its staff, Sunday transport and Sunday use of leisure facilities) appear to be one of the main reasons why Lewis and Harris have no Sunday ferry services direct to the mainland.

The development of these policies and their most recent review in March 2006 has been undertaken with no formal consultation with the community or other affected parties.

Community leaders have not represented the views and wishes of a substantial section of the island community, who support 7-day transport services.

The use of the transport network is an accepted right in modern civic societies throughout the world. In the Western Isles one group is currently preventing access for others to an essential part of the public transport network on Sundays. This is an infringement of normal civic and human rights.

Background Information

Business Case

This paper provides background information to support the socio-economic case for 7-day ferry services to Lewis and Harris. This is linked to but distinct from the business case, which is primarily a matter for CalMac as operators and for the Scottish Government.

Experience from other islands and routes suggests that Sunday ferry services to Lewis and Harris would generate substantial new business and would increase net revenues for the operator. The introduction of RET based fares will also create additional demand which will require additional capacity at peak times. Sunday services are the most obvious way of providing that capacity, particularly on the Stornoway – Ullapool route.

Evidence of demand/community support

There is strong evidence of community support and demand for 7-day ferry services including:

- Mori/BBC Scotland Survey 2000
- Fisher Associates Report 2007
- Over 1,000 written requests to CalMac since September 2007
- Petitions with over 5,000 signatories in favour of 7-day ferry services

MORI/BBC Survey 2000

This survey was commissioned by BBC Scotland in Feb/March 2000. Mori carried out telephone interviews with 750 residents aged 18 and over in Lewis and Harris. The responses showed that 61% either strongly supported or tended to support the introduction of Sunday ferry services (41% strongly supported, 20% tended to support). 24% said they strongly opposed sailings, while 9% tended to oppose. 4% neither supported nor opposed, while 1% had no opinion.

Fisher Associates Report 2006

In a report commissioned by CnES, Fisher Associates examined a number of options for the Stornoway-Ullapool service in terms of suitable vessels and estimated the likely economic benefits. The consultants looked at two scenarios for each option – 6-day services (the base case) and 7-day services.

For every option the 7-day service was estimated to generate the greater economic benefits for the local economy. The simple expedient of moving the FV Isle of Lewis to a 7 Day service in Summer would grow passenger and car traffic by 4%, raise output in the local economy by £4m over 10 years and contribute to 19 FTE jobs

These economic benefits would come mainly from additional tourism and would enable the islands to penetrate the weekend/short break market. A 7-day service would also reduce the 'bunching' of demand in hotels in Stornoway which suppresses occupancy levels outside Stornoway.

'Consideration should be given to providing services 7 days per week in summer. There are strong cultural reasons why this is not currently the case but on the basis of our consultations many residents support and would benefit from this.' (p23)

'There is a perception that there is insufficient accommodation on the island to handle expansion of the tourism industry. This may be misguided... most hotels and guesthouses are operating at 70% to 80% summer occupancy .B&B's are operating at 50% summer occupancy.' (p26)

It is difficult to recruit key professional staff onto the island. Poor connectivity particularly on Sundays is seen as a major constraint. (p25)

Outer Hebrides Migration Study (Hall Aitken – January 2007)

This report was commissioned by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), WIE and Communities Scotland. It confirms the trend towards an increasing imbalance in the population structure of the Outer Hebrides. Using 2004 as the base it projects a reduction in school age population, working age people and women aged 15-44 (-23%) and an ageing population by 2019.

The study examined the dynamics and motivations for migration and included interviews and focus groups with a range of people including, stayers, leavers, returners and in-migrants, both on the islands and elsewhere. It's not all doom and gloom but the following extracts are relevant to the case for 7-day ferry services.

- *Short stay professionals – a growing phenomenon* (p21)
- *More short-stay and commuting workers who leave partners or spouses on the mainland* (p24)
- *Overall anything which made visiting home easier and cheaper would mean more trips home.* (p65)
- *Some (leavers) focused on what they saw as negative aspects of Island life. This included a lack of things to do or restricted travel but more commonly social aspects such as a goldfish bowl existence or claustrophobic community.* (p63)
- *Interviewees frequently identify transport as a key factor in decisions around leaving or returning to the Outer Hebrides.* (p29)
- *Feedback from stayers illustrated widely opposing viewpoints with several supporting a Sunday Ferry as allowing weekend visits to family and friends on the mainland without affecting work.* (p60)
- *Several stakeholders and interviewees also identify the disproportionate influence of the churches in some parts of the isles. While most accept this situation, several people feel that this stifles their personal choices and restricts necessary changes. One stakeholder felt that this 'cultural conservatism' runs counter to promoting economic development.* (p32)
- *Several interviewees have identified lack of confidence and self-belief as a factor fuelling past out-migration. The role of public agencies and the island media in promoting a pessimistic outlook was identified several times in interviews. This was also seen to be reflected in an almost exclusively negative portrayal of the Outer Hebrides in the national media.* (p32)

- *“Despite a lot of evidence that public opinion would support such sailings (on Sundays), there is silence. There will always be a religious opinion and that one will be taken into account, rather than the views of the majority. It impinges on what you can do” (p84)*
- *One Glasgow participant felt the Presbyterian religion is still exerting an ‘ideological oppression’ in a small gated community. (p65)*

Creating Communities of the Future

This is the key development strategy document for the Outer Hebrides drawn up by the Community Planning Partnership. The vision set out in this document is that with appropriate support, the Outer Hebrides in 2020 will be characterised by:

- *a diverse and growing population with **a balanced demographic structure allowing young people to move freely as lifestyles change** and allowing effective public services*
- *a dynamic renewable energy sector of international renown providing the base for new forms of economic activity*
- *a private sector that is a high-level economic contributor*
- ***a tourism industry, which has developed the Western Isles as a world-class destination***
- *a confident community, utilising new forms of land and sea ownership*
- *communities which are **globally connected through a high quality transport infrastructure** and leading-edge communications systems*
- *Stornoway has grown significantly and has been developed **as a world-class entry-point to the Western Isles***

*‘The success of the economy of the Western Isles is dependent on a modern, efficient air and sea transport network. There is an on-going need to reduce transport costs and to introduce faster, **more regular services, which are responsive to customer requirements**’.*

CNES Sunday Policies

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar opposed and attempted (unsuccessfully) to prevent Sunday ferry services to Lochmaddy in 1989/90. The Comhairle also opposed the introduction of a Sunday service on the Sound of Harris route and the introduction of Sunday air services to Stornoway, by Loganair, in 2002

Largely – it appears - as a result of the CnES policy on Sunday transport, Lewis and Harris - the largest of the Scottish islands and the third largest of the British Isles – do not enjoy the benefits of a direct ferry service to the mainland 7 days of the week.

The council confirmed its opposition to Sunday ferry services to Lewis and Harris in March 2006 following a consideration of a report by the Chief Executive – ‘Review of Policies on Sunday Working and Related Matters’.

The council’s Sunday policies affect, directly or indirectly, a wide range of people, including the council’s own employees, council tax payers who are denied the use of leisure facilities in Lewis

and Harris on Sundays and island residents and visitors who are denied the choice of direct Sunday ferry transport to and from the mainland.

There has been no formal consultation with the community or affected parties in the development or review of the CnES Sunday policies. On at least two occasions – in May 2000 and again in March 2006 – the Comhairle appears to have considered consulting the community on Sunday transport issues but on each occasion it has decided not to do so.

The Outer Hebrides Community Survey, a major community consultation exercise undertaken by the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership in September 2007, presented another opportunity to consult the community on Sunday transport and Sunday use of leisure facilities. However, no questions on these issues were included in the survey.