

STRONSAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Chair: Shirley Whiteman Vice Chair: Damian Stout

OUTER NORTH ISLES TIMETABLE – SUMMER 2025

The Orkney Islands Council Service Manager – Transportation, has advised that unfortunately, the amendments proposed to the Outer North Isles timetable cannot be accommodated by Orkney Ferries Ltd at this time due to the implications this would have to the maintenance/training schedule, crewing hours and hours of work regulations. The Transportation Service and Orkney Ferries Ltd are currently looking at alternative ways to serve the Outer North Isles during Summer 2025, including the possibility of a passenger vessel, in preparation of the future trials by electric passenger vessel later in 2025. This proposal will be subject to crewing availability and budget. Further consultation with the relevant transport representatives and stakeholders will be undertaken prior to timetable setting for any proposed passenger service.

Background

The draft timetables in respect of ferry services to be operated by Orkney Ferries Limited during summer 2025 was presented to the Ferry Services Consultative Forum for consideration on 20 August 2024 following a period of consultation with communities.

The draft timetables and feedback from the Ferry Services Consultative Forum was presented to the Board of Orkney Ferries on 5 September 2024.

The report and draft timetables will be considered by the Development and Infrastructure Committee on 12 November 2024.

Outer North Isles Timetable

For operational reasons, the Monday and Wednesday sailings to Westray have been amended to revert to 1035 from 1200. The later sailing was trialled during summer 2024 however the timetable change did not provide sufficient turnaround time for crew to carry out essential maintenance checks.

A request was made from the Westray Transport Representative to amend the sailings to 1300 as it was more suitable for the community. Following consideration by Orkney Ferries it was noted that this request could not be accommodated as it would have an impact to the timetable and crewing hours.

An amendment to the timetable was made on Friday mornings to give a more realistic arrival time to Kirkwall, noting that the arrival times are often delayed. This affected the Sanday arrival into Kirkwall due to delays on the loading of the Papa Westray vessel and only one linkspan.

It was noted by all North Isles Transport Representatives that the Friday timetable pushed the vessels to arrive later at Kirkwall which was not a preferred option. For example, the Stronsay/Eday vessel would arrive at 1120 instead of 1100.

It was noted that the loss of overnighting in the isles has meant the loss of early morning sailings on a Wednesday and Friday morning and due to crewing hours, it is not feasible to start the operating day earlier without pulling back the timetable elsewhere.

To address the comments received from members of the community about delays to Kirkwall and conflicts with appointment times, the summer 2024 timetable now better reflects the arrival times into Kirkwall, noting that earlier times cannot be achieved due to crewing hours.

A passenger service covering the Outer North Isles will be explored further with the view to implement during summer 2025 ahead of the ZEVl trial period. This service could potentially provide early morning connectivity which was lost following the loss of overnighting the vessels in the isles. This will be explored further by Orkney Ferries and will be subject to budget availability.

The Outer North Isles Sunday Excursion timetable will be finalised once all key dates are received back from communities.

Accompanying the above update is a DRAFT of the Summer 2025 Outer North Isles ferry timetable.

If you have any comment to make on the information provided, please contact Shane Hourston, Stronsay Community Council's Transport Representative, tel: 07593965600 or email s.hourston@yahoo.co.uk

CMC
08 Oct. 2024