



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Stuart Garrett
Managing Director,
NorthLink Ferries
Serco UK & Europe

By email only

**Net Zero, Energy and Transport
Committee**
c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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21 December 2022

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Inquiry into a Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland

I am writing in relation to the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee inquiry into a [Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland](#).

On behalf of the Committee, I would to thank you for hosting a visit to your lairage facilities in Orkney and to extend an invitation to you to give evidence to the Committee in early 2023. The clerks to the Committee will be in touch regarding arrangements. The Committee would welcome the opportunity to hear from you on some of the themes arising in our inquiry so far.

In advance of this, several queries have arisen during our work and it would be helpful to have your views and details of the following in advance—

Cancellations

- Data held by NorthLink on the number of cancellations in the last 10 years broken down by vessel, route and reason;
- Any trends in adverse seasonal weather patterns and their impact on sailings;
- What practical support NorthLink offer to passengers unable to travel due to cancellations, including finding alternative transportation or accommodation?
- How does NorthLink alert passengers who do not have access to the internet about changes to sailing times and cancellations?
- Does NorthLink compensate passengers who have incurred expenses in making alternative travel or accommodation arrangements when ferry services are cancelled? If so, can you provide details of how such compensation arrangements work?

Freight transport

- The Committee is aware that in certain weather conditions the carriage of timber and livestock is prohibited. Could you please provide the detail of why these goods cannot be transported in some weather conditions?
 - What advice is provided by NorthLink about the packaging of timber to enable it to be transported?
 - Does NorthLink offer compensation to owners of livestock lost due to delays in transit?
 - Who is responsible for animal welfare while livestock is in transit on a ferry?
- The proportion of custom on NorthLink ferry services represented by the transportation of whisky? In particular, the Committee would like to know whether there are routes or sailings which are predominantly patronised by the transportation of goods and representatives of the whisky industry and the profits made on these routes by NorthLink?
- What data NorthLink holds on—
 - the types of freight being transported throughout the year on each route broken down by industry; and
 - how the prevalence of freight transportation by type and route fluctuates throughout the year.

Emergency travel

- The Committee would welcome detail of NorthLink's policy for emergency travel by island residents for occasions such as hospital appointments, end of life care requirements and funerals, including—
 - How this is accessed by travellers; and
 - How many spaces, and what proportion of spaces, are retained for these purposes.
- Data held by NorthLink on the number of people seeking last minute ferry bookings broken down by reason and success rate.

Contracts

- Can you set out the contractual process for making changes to timetables, routes or the length of the sailing day?

Staff

- The Committee heard evidence on verbal and physical abuse of ferry staff by passengers. The Committee would welcome information on NorthLink policy on dealing with these situations and on staff wellbeing.
- What are the practical benefits of the provision of on-board accommodation for NorthLink seagoing staff? Could similar benefits be realised by the provision of on-shore accommodation?

On behalf of the Committee, I request a response by 31 January 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Mountain

Edward Mountain MSP
Convener

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee