



News from HITRANS

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HITRANS welcomes RET trial on Western Isles Routes

HITRANS has welcomed the trial of a version of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) for routes to the Western Isles. Commenting on news announced today by Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change, Chair Duncan MacIntyre said, "We have long promoted the case that improving accessibility to remote regions consistently releases economic benefits that outstrip the cost of implementing the scheme. This can be achieved by improving infrastructure through bridges and other fixed links, or by reducing charges for using services."

The principle argument in favour of Road Equivalent Tariff is that the cost of a ferry journey should be no more than the cost of a road journey over the same distance.

"Island and peninsular communities have been constrained in developing their full potential by the application of high charges for access by sea and air," continued Duncan MacIntyre. "There is now no charge for using any of the road system across Scotland, and islanders see ferries as merely the equivalent of the roads that the rest of the country use to access services and employment. This trial will provide the opportunity for demonstration of the economic and social benefits that improved access can generate on some of our remotest communities."

While details are still awaited, HITRANS have concerns at this stage on the potential negative impact that a discretionary trial will have on the communities not included at this time.

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The Partnership will be seeking a reassurance from the Government that any communities on other islands who encounter significant negative impact from the trial will be compensated in some way. This is particularly an issue for the adjacent islands of Tiree, Coll, Colonsay, and the Small Isles, but the impact may well be felt as far a field as the Northern Isles and on the Clyde.

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HITRANS is the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership in Scotland. As a statutory body its remit covers all forms of public transport in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland including ferry, road transport, rail, air travel, cycling and walking.

HITRANS partners are Argyll and Bute Council ; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ; The Highland Council ; Moray Council ; Orkney Islands Council ; Highlands and Islands Enterprise Public Transport Forum ; Scottish Council for Development and Industry.

For more information about HITRANS go to www.hitrans.org.uk

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