

# Transport

*Preface by Geordie Drever*

*Basing the boat in Westray was identified in 1998 as potentially offering great benefits both socially and economically to Westray. The Development Trust carried out an island-wide survey (and other studies) and, whilst recognizing that some people have reservations about the boat lying safely at Rapness, reached clear conclusions about the benefits once that hurdle was overcome. It was also shown that the boat could offer, more daily runs on less crew hours, if it was based here. The boat, currently, is often almost empty on its first and last run of the day because of the direction in which it is going. The other runs are often over-booked days ahead. The ferry company was less than enthusiastic about it and also said they would only deal with the Community Council. The issue was therefore passed by the Development Trust to the Community Council who have been endeavoring, ever since, to make*

Report by Danny Marcus

At the last AGM we reported that we were hoping for a trial period of the boat being based in Westray during the summer of 2004. This is not now going to happen for various reasons but the major one is the accommodation on the boat does not meet the DTI regulations for permanent overnight use.

**The proposal at the moment is to design the replacement ferries with suitable accommodation so they can be based in the islands. Sanday and Stronsay are now looking more favourably on the possibility of having their boats based in the islands as well, which strengthens our case.**

OIC transport committee are looking at a proposed 10 year plan and putting together the costings of what will be required to upgrade the ferry service including ferry replacements and pier improvements. Improving the piers at Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay are also part of this.

The haulage depot provision at Hatston has been retendered recently and won by Streamline. This is initially a two- year contract with the possibility of a one- year extension. A totally new depot for Hatston is in the early stages of discussion.

The Coast to Coast tickets introduced for tourists last year were very successful with 500 sold, representing 1500, trips.

The passenger and vehicle usage on the ferries continues to show a steady increase year on year.

## Air transport

Air travel has shown an approximate 28% increase in numbers between 2001 and 2003. Reducing the fares has led to considerable increase in the number of passengers to Westray, Sanday and Stronsay.

The Airport Bus is working but needs more support. Anyone who has difficulties with the bus service should let us know as it would help in devising timetables.

The channels for transport issues are: through the Westray Development Trust or Community Council to the Westray Transport Representative who, at the moment, is Danny Marcus.

# Development Officer's Report

Another year has passed in a flash. What have been the highlights? Work starting on the Care Centre - the fact we will have a place to care for our elderly and employ up to 14 people surely comes out on top.

There have been lots of other smaller developments over the last year, from the visitor parking area at Roadmire which will soon be landscaped (with the help of some school pupils), to the purchase of an area of land at Sand o' Gill (in conjunction with the Community Council), which will soon be an access and picnic area, but there have also been a few frustrations. Problems with the marina in Kirkwall have had a knock-on effect here but we still hope to have better facilities for small boats in by summer. South Hammer has been another frustratingly slow project, but again we hope that work will be done over this summer to consolidate the building.

The project that will probably have the most impact over the next few years is the new Renewable Energy Officer's post. This will maximise the benefits of renewable energy and energy efficiency throughout the whole community. Other projects include the formation of an active Building Preservation Trust as the original WBPT concentrate on the Heritage Centre. The intention is to save some of our buildings, creating employment and housing. The recreation of small holdings is a possibility we are looking at with the Crofters Commission, to "put lights back in the glen" and enable people to begin on the farming ladder.

Although I work primarily for Westray & Papay, it is in my job description to "network with other rural areas .... as appropriate" - so it has been a pleasure for me and good for Westray, that I have been involved a little with the emerging Development Trusts in the other isles, both individually and at the Isles Forum, where we can discuss and work towards solutions to our common problems. For example, top of the list is transport and housing. Slightly further away, we are still working closely with Unst and hope to forge stronger exciting links in the near future.

Our work has had remarkable press coverage this past year locally, on the web, and internationally, but we still have to address the fact on a very local level we could do better. There are a few ideas on how to address this but if people want to know what we are doing I, or any of the directors, would be only to glad to have a chat.

I have had the opportunity to travel to some other communities over the last year, from Tiree to Shetland, and tell them what we are doing and what our aims are. Everyone is envious of our achievements here and my response, when asked how we have achieved so much, is that it could not happen without the complete backing of the community, who have the ability to step back, let any petty problems or grievances take second place, and grasp the bigger picture.

We intend to publish our updated version of the plan very soon so I hope to be able to work on our projects for some time yet, and this is only possible if local agencies continue to fund the post.

There has been quite a battle on this front, fought by the WDT and its chair against a minority who see the work we do here only as a project with a limited time-scale and wish to move elsewhere and tick a few more boxes. Although our list of achievements gets progressively longer so does the list of aspirations - that is the sign of an active community. We have done a lot but there is still a way to go, which means effort by us all, working jointly and positively, together for a sustainable future.

Sam Harcus