

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Pilot brings boost to island tourism Road Equivalent Tariff extended

More islands are set to benefit from an extension of the Road Equivalent Tariff Minister for Housing and Transport, Keith Brown, announced today.

The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) report published today shows clear indications that the RET pilot has boosted journeys by up to 31%, benefitting tourism and local business.

As part of their commitment to encouraging economic growth and employment, Ministers have announced the Scottish Government's intention to;

- continue RET as a permanent feature on the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree for passengers and cars, including small commercial vehicles and coaches;
- replace RET for larger commercial vehicles on the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree, with an enhanced pre-RET discount scheme;
- providing greater inter-island connectivity by rolling out RET to services between islands including routes across the Sounds of Barra and Harris
- roll out a further RET pilot for passenger and cars including small commercial vehicles and coaches to Colonsay, Islay and Gigha from October 2012;
- roll out a further RET pilot for passenger and cars including small commercial vehicles and coaches to Arran from October 2014;
- roll out RET to other West Coast and Clyde islands within the term of this Parliament.

Mr Brown said:

“We made a commitment to continue with RET on the current routes and look to roll out RET to the Argyll and Clyde islands in light of the Western Isles pilot. And today we are announcing a package that not only makes good on that commitment but goes above and beyond it - a commitment which will see more remote and island communities benefit from the scheme.

More specifically, while we will see a further roll out of the scheme between our islands and the mainland - as a government we want to see more island to island routes included. That is why we have committed to roll out RET to routes across the

Sounds of Barra and Harris providing greater inter-island connectivity, linking communities right across the Western Isles.

The Scottish Government also remains committed to assessing the affordability of ferry travel to and from our remote island communities and we are pleased with the results so far.

“The RET pilot has had a positive impact since it was introduced in October 2008, boosting the local tourist trade and local economies as a result,- and we want to see that continue, that is why we are continuing with RET on the current routes while extending it to include new routes.

”Tourism is just one benefit the RET pilot has brought our thriving island communities and we expect this continuation to bring further positive results to the additional routes now being included.”

The Scottish Government used the pilot, which was scheduled to end in spring 2012, to consider how the current ferry fares system can be improved by introducing a RET scheme, with the aim to bring cheaper travel for islanders, tourists and businesses across the country.

## **Notes to editor**

1. Transport Scotland is the Scottish Government’s national transport agency responsible for; aviation, bus, freight and taxi policy; coordinating the National Transport Strategy for Scotland; ferries, ports and harbours; impartial travel services; liaising with regional transport partnerships, including monitoring of funding; local roads policy; major public transport projects; national concessionary travel schemes; rail and trunk road networks; sustainable transport, road safety and accessibility; the Blue Badge Scheme. Transport Scotland is an Executive agency accountable to Scottish Ministers. <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/>
2. The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme involves setting ferry fares on the basis of the cost of travelling an equivalent distance by road. Typically RET would offer substantial fares reductions across almost all ferry routes in Scotland. A pilot has been running in the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree since October 2008 and is due to end in spring 2012.
3. Vehicles on the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree routes that currently pay CalMac’s commercial vehicle rate will have RET replaced by an enhanced pre-RET discount scheme. The maximum pre-RET discount was 15%. This has been increased to 25%.
4. Commercial vehicles that fall within the measurements required to attract a car ticket will attract RET. CalMac charge their commercial vehicle rate to vehicles that are over 5m in length, 2.3m in width, 3m in height or 3.5 tonnes in weight. Coaches will continue to attract RET.

5. The report published today was originally published in draft form on 22 March 2011.

### **Key findings of the report into the RET**

- The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has resulted in an increased number of passenger and vehicle traffic on ferries in the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree.
- Passenger numbers are up by 20% and car carryings up by 31% on RET routes.
- With 65% of new travel by visitors, the tourist industry has been one of the main beneficiaries. There has been a 24% increase in room occupancy in the Western Isles and there is evidence that the tourist season has extended.
- Residents have also benefited from RET, accounting for 35% of new travel. This travel includes visits to family and friends and to purchase goods and services on the mainland.
- The increased demand generated has resulted in travel pressures on peak services.

6. A full copy of the final report has been published today and can be found at <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/water/ferries>

### **Routes Included in RET Plans**

Confirmed to continue from spring 2012:

**Western Isles:** Oban-Castlebay, Oban – Lochboisdale, Ullapool – Stornoway, Uig-Tarbert, Uig-Lochmaddy

**Coll and Tiree:** Oban-Coll-Tiree

Confirmed to begin a pilot in October 2012:

**Colonsay:** Oban – Colonsay – Port Askaig– Kennacraig

**Gigha :** Tayinloan - Gigha

**Islay** Kennacraig – Port Askaig/Port Ellen,

Confirmed to begin a pilot in October 2014:

**Arran:** Ardrossan – Brodick & Claonaig – Lochranza

Confirmed to be rolled out within the term of this Parliament:

**Bute:** Colintrave – Rhubodach & Wemyss Bay – Rothesay

**Cumbræ:** Largs - Cumbræ Slip

**Iona:** Fionnphort - Iona

**Lismore:** Oban - Lismore

**Mull:** Oban-Craignure, Tobermory-Kilchoan & Lochaline-Fishnish

**Raasay:** Sconser– Raasay **Skye:** Mallaig-Armadale

**Small Isles:** Mallaig – Eigg, Muck, Rum, Canna

**Sound of Barra:** Barra-Eriskay

**Sound of Harris:** Berneray-Leverburgh

We will consider roll out of RET to Local Authority, commercially run routes and mainland – mainland routes following the outcome of the Ferries Review.

For further information contact:

News release