



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01421

Name of petitioner

Gail Robertson on behalf of Outer Hebrides Transport Group

Petition title

Fair Ferry Fares

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government not to remove Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) for freight vehicles that would lead to an increase in fares for commercial traffic to and from the Western Isles and to conduct a socio-economic impact study before any policy changes.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Meeting with MSP and Transport Minister.

A large number of local business representatives met with MSP Alasdair Allan in January 2012 to highlight their concerns. The unanimous vote taken at that meeting was to retain fares for commercial traffic in its current form.

A meeting was arranged between the Transport Minister and a representative group. This representative group was NOT allowed to meet with the Transport Minister, instead 4 hauliers from Uist, Barra, Lewis & Harris and Coll & Tiree were invited.

A request for a moratorium until a socio-economic study be carried out was denied by the Transport Minister.

The Outer Hebrides Transport Group was formed, made up of a representative group of businesses and interested parties across all sectors and communities of the Outer Hebrides.

Representatives of the Outer Hebrides Transport Group met with elected members of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. As a result the Comhairle showed a unanimous vote supporting the Group and its aims and objectives.

Petition background information

The petition follows on from the announcement by the Scottish Government that they were going to implement substantial fare increases for commercial transport to and from the Western Isles from the end of March 2012. (detailed below)

Proposed increases due to be implemented 30th March 2012 (based on a 17m lorry)

Route	%	cost now	proposed cost	difference
Stornoway/Ullapool	134%	£ 458.30	£ 1073.04	£ 614.74

Oban/Coll/Tiree	94%	£ 519.50	£ 1008.57	£ 489.07
Uig/Lochmaddy/Tarbert	172%	£ 278.78	£ 758.88	£ 480.10
Oban/Lochboisdale/Castlebay	80%	£ 748.80	£ 1348.03	£ 599.23

The Scottish Government's announcement is heavily based on their suggestion that hauliers did not pass any savings from RET back to the customer – an allegation which hauliers have continuously refuted AND have provided evidence to the Scottish Government and MSPs.

A later announcement was made by the Scottish Government detailing an extra £2.5m for transitional relief which would cap the increases to 50% in any one year.

From the end of March 2012 the fares will rise from:

Stornoway – Ullapool	From: £458.30	To: £687.45
Uig – Lochmaddy/Tarbert	From: £278.78	To: £418.17
Oban – Lochboisdale/Castlebay	From: £748.80	To: £1123.20
Oban – Coll/Tiree	From: £519.50	To: £779.25

The 50% increase is still a very substantial rise in fares and is only for one year.

After the first year the fares will continue to rise and in year 3 the overall increase will be the same as first proposed in the table above.

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/documents/water/RET_-_Paper_Transitional_approach_-_Updated_-_13_February_2012.pdf

The Scottish Government should carry out a socio-economic analysis before any increases are implemented to ascertain the impact that any increases will have on an already fragile community.

Small businesses and commercial vehicles are the crux of the economy of these islands and the impact on these businesses will be substantial – as outlined in the above tables. The increases in prices will have to be passed on and paid for by the whole community. Every man, woman and child will be affected by this policy. The communities are fragile and disadvantaged in many ways and this decision will only make the situation far worse.

RET over the past few years has benefitted the islands in many ways. It has allowed small businesses to be competitive locally, nationally and internationally and if the proposed increases were to go ahead many of these businesses will cease to trade or it will leave them unable to compete with their mainland counterparts.

Job losses are inevitable if this policy goes ahead as businesses will have to downsize or cease to trade completely.

Although RET is remaining in place for other vehicles, the cost of living on a day to day basis will rise significantly which will remove the choice from islanders to be able to take advantage of the reduced fares for social travel.

Further information can be provided by contacting the Outer Hebrides Transport Group by emailing them at: outerhebridestransportgroup@aol.co.uk

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01421>

Related information for petition

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NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

1

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

Comments to stimulate online discussion