

To: Stuart Garrett, Managing Director, Northlink Ferries Ltd.
CC: Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Transport Minister

The Labour Party in Shetland believes there is a crisis aboard NorthLink's Aberdeen - Shetland ferries. Travellers are in many cases being made unsafe, uncomfortable and unwell due to lack of proper sleeping accommodation.

Shetland residents travelling alone and using their Scottish Government travel vouchers are discriminated against.

The much-vaunted pods in mixed dormitories are insecure, threatening - especially to solo female travellers - and extremely uncomfortable. Too few cabins are available and the booking system encourages advance 'holding' bookings that are often cancelled at the last minute. This is inefficient and unacceptable.

People are choosing to sleep on the floor but a good night's sleep is never going to be possible. Those facing long drives next day are being put at serious risk.

Sharing of cabins by solo travellers is not officially allowed, and that means that Shetland residents travelling alone with concessions and using Scottish Government travel vouchers are having to use all four of their vouchers to secure cabin accommodation for one return trip, or pay extra for exclusive use of cabins.

This is inefficient and unacceptable. It seems to illustrate an intrinsic bias against Shetland residents with concessions.

As a Constituency Labour Party, we call on NorthLink and the Scottish Transport minister to sort this out. We call for:

- Shetland travellers eligible for four trips vouchers should have cabin accommodation included per voucher.
- Shared cabins generally should be an option
- Pods should be replaced by separate male and female dormitories with bunks, in the short term. The pod lounges must be separated on a gender basis.

**Gordon Thomson, Secretary,
Shetland Labour Party,
Hamar, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, ZE2 9DS.**