

Kirkwall Announces New Policy On Simultaneous Multiple Port Calls

The significant growth over the last 5 years in cruise ship gross tonnage and the number of cruise ship passengers visiting Kirkwall is something that Orkney very much welcomes. The Harbour Authority, as part of Orkney Islands Council, embraces the cruise ship industry and is proud of the fact that Kirkwall, despite its size, remains the most popular cruise ship destination in the United Kingdom. In 2013, Kirkwall was a finalist in the Port of the Year Category at the Seatrade Hamburg Awards.

These accolades are very important as it signals that Orkney, and the port of Kirkwall in particular, is providing a level of service and visitor experience that is recognised by the industry as award winning. It is that level of service and visitor experience that Orkney wishes to build on for the future and at the core of that is the overall preservation of the integrity of the cruise ship experience.

As a relatively small island community with a population of only 22,000 people, the arrival of very large ships with well over 3000 passengers does provide the shore based infrastructure and attractions with challenges, but these are challenges that Orkney can and has successfully accommodated. However through experience of port calls in 2013-14, the Orkney community has been over stressed on days where there are multiple port calls of large cruise ships calling on the same day.

The port is able to provide first class berthing and anchoring facilities for these calls; however the onus on the provision of tour coaches, shuttle buses, shore facilities including rest rooms, qualified multi lingual guides and the avoidance of major tourist site congestion has led the Council to review its capacity for the reception of simultaneous multiple port calls. Large numbers of passengers require in turn additional resources to be made available in line with the Councils event and emergency planning so that Orkney is prepared for any eventuality.

The Council is are very conscious of the fact that cruise ships need to maximise on their in port revenue potential through the sale of guided shore excursions, and therefore as a prime destination for cruise, Orkney needs to be certain that it can provide the best opportunity for ships to optimise revenue opportunity and have complimentary customer feedback. In order to achieve this, to further develop a sustainable cruise ship business and to give passengers and crew the best possible visitor experience, the Council has therefore adopted a policy to place some controls on the number of passengers coming ashore in one day.

This policy does not affect any current cruise ship confirmed bookings for 2015-17, but from henceforth the Harbour Authority, as instructed by Orkney Islands Council, will not ordinarily accept simultaneous multiple port calls where the passenger numbers could exceed 4500 passengers. There will be a level of flexibility depending on the number of ships involved, the day of the week and/or the local school holiday period but the figure above will be used as the baseline for planning and decision making purposes.

Requests for berthing and anchorage in Kirkwall should continue as normal via agents, and the final decision to confirm or decline cruise ship berthing and anchorage requests will remain with the Harbour Master, Orkney Islands Council. It is hoped that this policy will be understood and embraced by the cruise ship industry in whose interests this policy lies.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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