

Orkney Cruise sector continues to flourish with new booking system to be implemented

Orkney remains a top cruise destination in the UK and yesterday received the approval of a new booking policy by Orkney Islands Council, which has responsibility for Orkney Harbours, for a new cruise booking and confirmation policy to bring a better defined and transparent process for the busiest locations in Orkney – Hatston Pier, Kirkwall Anchorage and the Kirkwall Piers

A vital part of the Orkney economy it is estimated that the cruise industry injects £12-15 million annually with a significant number of people working directly and indirectly with cruise and tourism in the islands. In 2023 the total number of booked cruise lines visiting Orkney is 41, continuing to make it the number one transit call location for cruise in the UK.

The new booking policy is expected to offer a more effective and efficient allocation of berths at Orkney Harbours, based on vessel prenotification, arrival and administrative compliances. The aim is to make the booking, anchoring and the management of passenger traffic a smooth and efficient process for cruise liner crews and the staff at Orkney Harbours. Following its approval by the Council, it will be implemented with immediate effect.

The smooth running of Orkney's cruise industry is seen as a beacon of success by other UK ports and Kirkwall is often named "top of the stops" in northern Europe by cruise liner passengers.

Paul Olvhoj, Business Development Manager with Marine Services at the Orkney Harbour Authority commented: "Orkney Harbours is the busiest port for transit passengers (day trips only) in the UK. Across the year we welcome up to 200,000 passengers and they are a vital part of our vibrant tourism industry which showcases Orkney and the beauty, history and significance of our islands."

"All cruise ships that currently call here in Orkney will continue to be able to do so. This policy has been developed by looking at models from other ports around the world so we can ensure we operate the best possible booking procedures which offer clear and transparent guidance to Cruise operators and enhance the experience for passengers."

Olvhoj continued: "This will allow the staff at our busiest locations to better manage the size and frequency of vessels anchoring here and also enable better management of supporting local infrastructure for our visitors and our resident communities."

Many busy cruise ports have defined policies in place to handle cruise bookings. As part of the development of this policy Orkney Harbours engaged with other ports and reviewed booking policies around the world.