

## DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

### SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING ANALYSIS FORM

The purpose of this form is to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for quarterly consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise, and will be referenced in the biannual review of progress made to the Minister and in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Further advice on completion of this form and the screening process including relevant contact information can be accessed via the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Intranet site.

### HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

When considering the impact of this policy you should also consider if there would be any Human Rights implications. Guidance is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/human-rights-and-public-authorities>

Should this be appropriate you will need to complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment. A template is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>

**Don't forget to Rural Proof.**

## **Part 1. Policy scoping**

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

### **Information about the policy**

#### **Name of the policy**

Strangford Lough Ferry Service Fare Increase

#### **Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?**

Existing

#### **What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)**

A fare increase will help to maintain the Strangford Lough Ferry Service for regular users and tourists.

#### **Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how.**

Although standard fares are increasing, discounts and concessions currently available for NI residents and those who carry a SmartPass, will remain.

Whilst it is recognised that the fare increase may have a minor impact on section 75 (s75) categories, given the level of funding available and the pressures faced by the Department, it is anticipated that service levels could be reduced if fares are not increased resulting in potential equality impacts across all s75 groups.

## **Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

The Department for Infrastructure initiated the fare review following the setting of the Northern Ireland (NI) budget by the Executive for Northern Ireland Departments in April 2025.

The current Strangford Lough Ferry Service fare structure was initiated by the Department for Infrastructure in 2023 and implemented during January 2024.

## **Who owns and who implements the policy?**

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) own and implement the policy.

## **Background**

The Strangford Lough Ferry Service operates between Strangford and Portaferry for approximately 16 hours every day of the year (except Christmas Day) and has over 22,000 scheduled sailings carrying over 600,000 passengers annually.

The service directly links the villages of Strangford and Portaferry, thereby reducing a 46 mile road trip (taking approximately 90 minutes) to a distance of 0.6 nautical miles (taking approximately eight minutes). In addition to the significant social and economic benefits for local residents this important link in the transport network facilitates, it also serves as a tourist attraction in the area and has allowed the creation of the Mourne Coastal route which links Belfast via the east coast of the Newtownards (N'Ards) Peninsula to the South Down coast, Mourne Mountains and Carlingford Lough.

Fares remained static from 2009 to January 2024, when the last fare increase for the service was implemented. The current budget pressure on the Department and the increased subvention requirement for the ferry service has exacerbated the need for a review of the fares, along with increasing costs of running the ferry.

The Department for Infrastructure's funding of the ferry service supports their strategic objective to – "Support the economy by planning, developing and managing safe and sustainable transportation networks".

The Strangford Lough Ferry Service, which is owned by the Department and operated by DfI Public Transport Operations, contributes to several draft

Programme for Government outcomes by enabling educational, social and business links between the N'Ards Peninsula and South Down.

While Strangford Lough Ferry Service is not a lifeline service (as there is an alternative route), it has long been considered by the Department and many locals, regular users and their representatives, to be an essential service regularly transporting emergency response vehicles, while also attracting visitors to the area.

### **Implementation factors**

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

Financial - Yes, increasing fares amidst the wider economic climate may have a detrimental effect on passenger numbers. That said, given the cost pressures to run the ferry service and to ensure a service continues, the Department has no other recourse than to increase fares.

Legislative - The implementation of this policy requires for a decision to be made by the Minister.

Other - The current budgetary pressures on the Department have required the need to examine all areas where costs can be reduced or revenue raised. If the fare increase is not introduced, the Department will need to make significant savings from its operation which could result in cuts to routes/services therefore resulting in a reduction in travel options for the consumer.

### **Main stakeholders affected**

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? (please delete as appropriate)

staff

service users

public sector organisations

voluntary/community groups ~~trade unions~~

other,

### Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- Managing Public Money NI

### Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Data specific to Section 75 categories is not gathered from users of Strangford Lough Ferry Service.

The Northern Ireland Census Data from 2021 published by NISRA was used to gather the following information relating to Northern Ireland and more specifically Strangford and Portaferry as identified within the publication.

[Northern Ireland Census Data \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk)

### Religious belief evidence / information:

Across Northern Ireland's total population of approximately 1.9 million people, 42.3% identify as Catholic, 37.4% as Protestant or belonging to other Christian denominations, 1.3% follow other religions and 19% either did not state a religion or reported no religious affiliation. Strangford has a population of 590, 73% of which are Catholic, 19% are Protestant or other Christian, less than 1% follow other religions and 7% did not state a religion. Portaferry has a population of 2,372, 85% identify as Catholic, 10% as Protestant or other Christian, less than 1% follow other religions and 4% did not state a religion.

No specific data in relation to the religion of Strangford Lough ferry users is currently held by the Department. Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service between Strangford and Portaferry, will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

### **Political Opinion** evidence / information:

There is no 2021 census category equivalent to a person's political opinion. The most recent election results from the 2024 General Election however provide a breakdown of vote share for NI to demonstrate political opinion as follows: Sinn Fein 27%, Democratic Unionist Party 22.1 %, Social Democratic and Labour Party 11.1%, Alliance 15%, Ulster Unionist Party 12.2%, Traditional Unionist Party 6.2%, Green Party Northern Ireland 1.1%, People Before Profit Alliance 1.1%, Aontú 1%, Conservative 0.1% and others 3.1%. Turnout for Northern Ireland for the 2024 General Election was 57.2%

No specific data in relation to political opinion of Strangford Lough ferry users is currently held by the Department. Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service between Strangford and Portaferry, will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

### **Racial Group** evidence / information:

According to the data, the total population surveyed is approximately 1.9 million, with White individuals making up 96.55% of the population. Other ethnic groups include Irish Travellers (0.14%), Roma (0.08%), Indian (0.52%), Chinese (0.50%), Filipino (0.23%), Pakistani (0.08%), and Arab (0.10%). Additionally, Other Asian groups account for 0.28%, Black African 0.42%, Black Other 0.16%, Mixed ethnicities 0.76%, and Other ethnicities 0.19%. In more localized areas, Strangford has a population of 590 with 98% identifying as White and 2% as other ethnic groups while Portaferry, with a population of 2,372, reports 99% identifying as White and less than 1% from other ethnic backgrounds.

No specific data in relation to racial or ethnic group of Strangford Lough ferry users is currently held by the Department. Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service between Strangford and Portaferry, will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

### **Age evidence / information:**

Out of a total population of approximately 1.9 million, 19% are aged 0–14, 31% are between 15–39, 32% fall within the 40–64 age group, and 17% are aged 65 and over. In Strangford, with a population of 590, the age distribution shows 16% aged 0–14, 18% aged 15–39, 37% aged 40–64, and 29% aged 65 and over, indicating a relatively older population. In Portaferry, which has 2,372 residents, 16% are aged 0–14, 28% are 15–39, 35% are 40–64, and 21% are 65 and over, reflecting a slightly younger demographic compared to Strangford.

The Department does not have specific data relating to age for those who journey on the Strangford Ferry, however some information is available from the ticket sales database.

The table below contains all passenger journeys completed during 2023/24, on the ferry service.

Ticket Category	No. of Passengers	% of total passengers
Adult	183,185	29.84%
Child 5-15	58,045	9.46%
Child under 5	38,275	6.24%
School Pupils	45,210	7.36%
N. Ireland Issued SmartPass	57,099	9.30%
Vehicles Including Driver	232,049	37.80%

57,099 were made by Senior SmartPass holders, representing 9.30% of the total number of passenger only trips (381,184). Approximately a further 141,530 trips were made by children up to the age of 15 (includes Education Authority school passes), representing 35% of total trips.

## **Marital Status** evidence / information:

Out of a total population of approximately 1.81 million, 36.14% are single, having never married or registered a same-sex civil partnership. The majority, 47.56% are married, while 0.09% are in a registered same-sex civil partnership. Additionally, 3.98% are separated, 5.45% are divorced or formerly in a dissolved same-sex civil partnership and 6.78% are widowed or surviving partners from a same-sex civil partnership. In Strangford, with a population of 590, 31% are single, 48% are married or in a civil partnership, 3% are separated, 8% are divorced and 10% are widowed. In Portaferry, which has 2,372 residents, 39% are single, 43% are married or in a civil partnership, 4% are separated, 6% are divorced and 8% are widowed.

No specific data in relation to marital status is currently held by the Department of Strangford Lough ferry users. Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service between Strangford and Portaferry will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

## **Sexual Orientation** evidence / information:

According to the data presented, across Northern Ireland's total population of approximately 1.9 million people, 90% identify as straight or heterosexual, 2% as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other, and 8% either preferred not to say or did not state their sexual orientation. In Strangford, which has a population of 590, 89% identify as straight or heterosexual, 4% as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other, and 7% preferred not to disclose. Meanwhile, in Portaferry, with a population of 2,372, 92% identify as straight or heterosexual, 1% as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other, and 7% preferred not to say.

Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service to and from Strangford and Portaferry will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

## **Men & Women generally** evidence / information:

Across Northern Ireland's total population of approximately 1.9 million people, 51% are female and 49% are male. In Strangford, which has a population of 590, the gender distribution is slightly different, with 47% female and 53% male. Meanwhile, in Portaferry, which has a population of 2,372, the gender split is evenly balanced, with 50% identifying as female and 50% as male.

No specific data in relation to men and women generally is currently held by the Department of Strangford Lough ferry users.

Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service to and from Strangford and Portaferry will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

## **Disability** evidence / information:

Across Northern Ireland's total population of approximately 1.9 million people, 76% reported that their day-to-day activities were not limited by health problems or disabilities, while 13% were limited a little and 11% were limited a lot. In Strangford, which has a population of 590, 74% of individuals reported no limitations, 15% were limited a little, and 10% were limited a lot. In Portaferry, with a population of 2,372, 68% of residents reported no limitations, 18% were limited a little and 15% were limited a lot.

The Department supports people with disabilities using public transport through the Concessionary Fare Scheme, this also applies to the Strangford Lough Ferry Service.

On public transport just under 900k journeys are taken each year by people with disabilities who hold concessionary fare passes providing the majority of people with a disability half-fare travel. It is worth noting that this only applies to those people aged 16-59. People with a disability aged 60+ can avail of free travel under the Scheme.

During 2023/24, approximately 23,400 trips between Strangford and Portaferry were made by customers with a disability eligible for concessionary fares discount, representing 3.8% of the total number trips (613,863).

It is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service to and from Strangford and Portaferry will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

**Dependants evidence / information:**

Across Northern Ireland's total population of approximately 1.9 million people, 71% of households have no dependent children, while 11% have one, another 11% have two, and 6% have three dependent children. In Strangford, which has a population of 590, 79% of households have no dependent children, 7% have one, 10% have two, and 5% have three. In Portaferry, with a population of 2,372, 76% of households have no dependent children, 9% have one, 11% have two, and 5% have three.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of provision of unpaid care by broad age band. This shows that 12.42% of residents provided unpaid care. Of this 12.42%, 3.84% of people provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week. Unpaid care was most common among those aged between 40 and 64 years old.

No specific data in relation to dependants is currently held by the Department of Strangford Lough ferry users.

Whilst the Department has no robust ferry journeys data on this s75 group either from a regular user or tourist perspective, it is likely that those who fall into this group and use the ferry service to and from Strangford and Portaferry will be impacted by the fare increase. However, concessions will continue to apply for users of the service within this s75 group who fulfil the appropriate criteria.

## **Needs, experiences and priorities**

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

The Strangford Ferry provides a much needed service to the local communities of both Portaferry and Strangford. In particular the Ferry supports local children accessing second level education in Downpatrick and further afield. Enables key and front-line workers from Ards Peninsula to commute to work on public transport. While also supporting the local economy, sports clubs / events and tourism within the region.

## **Religious belief**

The Strangford Lough Ferry Service is used by the residents of Strangford, Portaferry and people/tourists from the wider surrounding areas. Therefore, an increase in fares has the potential to affect this s75 category. The main specific needs, priorities and experiences identified for this group is to be able to travel between Strangford and the Ards Peninsula on a regular, reliable and affordable ferry service to access employment, goods, services, education and leisure activities including tourism.

Research completed for the Consumer Council's 2017 publication 'Public Transport Why People Use it, Why People Don't and How to Get Them On Board' shows that for many people, public transport is their only choice. When asked to cite the main reason why they use public transport, almost a third of respondents stated they had no other option. This increased to approximately half of those respondents with a disability, those in a low-income household and those aged 16-24. This dependence on public transport has implications for vulnerable consumers' ability to access employment, education and social opportunities as they may have no alternative means of transport.

## **Political Opinion**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Racial Group**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Age**

As outlined above in religious belief.

Young people who meet Education Authority criteria can use the ferry service for free, to access education. In addition, children under 5 travel free of charge while those between 5 and 16 receive a discount of 50%.

The impact of the price increase for children aged between 5 and 16 outside of the school calendar will be minimal while those under 5 will see no impact.

Older people over the age of 60 and in possession of a SmartPass also avail of free travel. There is no impact on these passengers.

## **Marital status**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Sexual orientation**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Men and Women Generally**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Disability**

As outlined above in religious belief.

People with specific accessibility requirements may also have needs in respect of the cost of transport services in relation to this policy.

The Department supports people with disabilities using the Strangford Lough Ferry Service through discounts available. During 2022/23 there were around 20,000 journeys attracting a discount of (approximately) 60%, made by vehicles displaying a Blue Badge and 623 journeys by people who hold concessionary fare passes, providing the majority of people with a disability half-fare travel. It is worth noting that this only applies to those people aged 16-59. People with a disability aged 60+ can avail of free travel with a 60+ or Senior SmartPass.

## **Dependants**

As outlined above at religious belief.

People with dependants and those who are dependents may have needs in respect of the cost of services in relation to this policy as a potentially vulnerable consumer. The sections entitled 'Age and Disability' above refers to concessions available for people who fall into these s75 categories.

## **Part 2. Screening questions**

### **Introduction**

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of a 'major' impact**

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

### **In favour of 'minor' impact**

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of none**

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

## Screening questions

### 1. **What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

Research completed for the Consumer Council's for 2017 publication 'Public Transport Why People Use it, Why People Don't and How to Get Them On Board' shows that for many people, public transport is their only choice. When asked to cite the main reason why they use public transport, almost a third of respondents stated they have no other option. Consumers in Strangford and Portaferry have an alternative option to use the existing road network to reach their destination. Travelling from Portaferry to Strangford by road is a journey of approximately 46 miles and could take 90 minutes, whereas the ferry crossing of 0.46 nautical mile takes approximately 8 minutes. The ferry service is used to access employment, education, health care and social opportunities. An increase in fares therefore, has the potential to impact on some of the most vulnerable consumers that have no alternative means of transport, irrespective of their s75 category.

If the policy is not taken forward, there is the possibility that the ferry services would have to be reduced or stopped to offset losses being sustained by the service. The reduction or stopping of the ferry service would have an even more adverse impact upon this S75 category as it would limit people's choice and ability to connect to socio-economic activities.

The proposed fare increase has been calculated using CPI percentage increase from February 2024 to May 2025. The potential alternatives i.e. full cost recovery, a reduction to or cessation of services would have a much

greater detrimental impact on this group. Therefore, it is considered that this policy revision will have a minor impact.

What is the level of impact? Minor negative

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? Minor negative

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? Minor negative

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

Based on the evidence above, this decision would have little or no impact on equality of opportunity for older people. Older people (60+) will continue to avail of free travel through the discounts available.

Children under the age of 16 will continue to receive at least half price travel through the discounts available (with children under 5 and pupils with Education Authority passes continuing to receive free travel) and the impact of the fare increase is likely to be minor on this category.

What is the level of impact? Minor Negative

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? Minor Negative

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? **Minor negative**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? **Minor negative**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

Based on the evidence above, this decision would have minor impact on equality of opportunity for people with a disability. Older people with a disability who are more than 60 years old will continue to avail of free travel through the discounts available.

People with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 59 will continue to receive half price travel concessionary fares. The discounts available will continue to protect this s75 category from the majority of the fare increases.

As noted above, in addition to these concessions, other mitigations were considered and deemed not feasible.

What is the level of impact? **Minor negative**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

Children under the age of 16 will continue to receive at least half price travel (with children under 5 and pupils with Education Authority passes receiving free travel) through the discounts available.

People with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 59 will continue to receive half price travel through the provided discounts. The impact of the fare increase is likely to be minor on this dependant's category.

People over the age of 60 and in possession of a SmartPass will continue to avail of free travel.

What is the level of impact? **Minor negative**

**2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? Yes/No**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief – No**

Strangford Lough Ferry Service uses its fare revenue and subvention to deliver an agreed timetable. As such, it already promotes equality of opportunity across this s75 group and there are no further promotion opportunities.

There is no evidence to suggest that persons of one particular religious belief will be impacted by the fare increase more than another.

**Political Opinion – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

**Racial Group – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

**Age – No**

As above in religious belief. However, the discounts which will continue to be available will go some way to promote equality of opportunity across certain age profiles within this s75 group.

### **Marital Status – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

### **Sexual Orientation – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

### **Men and Women generally – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

### **Disability – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

The Strangford Lough Ferry Service uses its fare revenue and subvention to deliver an agreed timetable, using vessels which meet accessibility standards. As such, it promotes equality of opportunity across this s75 group by way of financial assistance for people with disabilities through the discounts available.

### **Dependants – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

However, the discounts which will continue to be available will go some way to promote equality of opportunity across certain demographic profiles within this s75 group.

- 3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

The proposed fares increase on Strangford Lough Ferry Service will be applicable to all using the service regardless of their s75category. This movement of people, no matter the volume, has a potential residual impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

As outlined above in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? None

**4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief – No**

The Ferry Service uses its fare revenue and subvention to deliver an agreed service timetable. The fare increase does not provide the opportunity to better promote good relations.

**Political Opinion – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

## **Racial Group – No**

As outlined above in religious belief.

### **Additional considerations**

#### **Multiple identity**

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

*(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).*

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

As the majority of people belong to more than one s75 category, this fare increase is likely to have a minor impact on people with multiple identities.

### **Part 3. Screening decision**

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

The Department acknowledges that the proposed fare increase is likely to have a minor impact on the s75 groups identified above. The fares were last increased in 2024 and this increase is required to ensure the service continues at its current level.

While the impact of the fare increase will have a minor negative impact on the s75 categories above, there is a possibility that the Department can no longer subsidise the ferry at the current level and therefore ferry services would be reduced. That decision would have a greater impact on s75 groups.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is not required at this time as the impact to all s75 categories is considered a minor negative one.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.

The Department, as mitigation, provides and funds the discount schemes that seek to protect a number of s75 categories including Age and Disability. When considering the alternative of not implementing a fare increase, i.e. service reductions, the Department considers the impact of the fare increase is minor negative and an EQIA is not required.

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

### **Mitigation**

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may

consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

No additional mitigations other than the discounts available for those who hold a valid SmartPass or Strangford Ferry SmartCard. To maintain the current level of service within the existing budget pressures it is necessary to increase revenue.

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A

## Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

### Priority criterion

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations **Rating 1, 2 or3**

Social need **Rating 1, 2 or3**

Effect on people's daily lives **Rating 1, 2 or3**

Relevance to a public authority's functions **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

No

If yes, please provide details.

## Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The Department will continue to monitor ferry usage/data and the impact on s75 categories, reviewing and amending this screening as and when necessary.

## Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Ann-Marie Cunningham  
Position/Job Title: SPTO, Ferry Operations  
Date: 08/10/2025

Approved by: Peter Rice  
Position/Job Title: Director of Public Transport Operations  
Date: 15/10/2025

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

### For Equality Team Completion:

Date Received: 16/10/2025  
Amendments Requested: Yes  
Date Returned to Business Area: 04/11/2025  
Date Final Version Received / Confirmed: 04/12/2025  
Date Published on Dfl's Section 75 webpage: 05/12/2025

## ANNEX A – CURRENT FARE STRUCTURE

Discounted fares are offered as part of the Strangford Lough Ferry Service fares structure, which are not part of the Northern Ireland Concessionary Scheme but is an approved scheme for this ferry service.

<b>Passengers</b>	<b>Discount on Standard Fare</b>
Child under 5	Free
Child aged 5-16	50%
Child SmartCard top-up (20 Journeys)	45%
Adult SmartCard top-up (20 Journeys)	40%
Child Group Warrant*	70%
Adult Group Warrant*	40%

\* available for groups making a minimum of 20 single or 10 return journeys

<b>Vehicle and Driver</b>	<b>Discount on Standard Fare</b>
Vehicles with Blue Badge holder	60%
Emergency “Blue Light” Services – Police, Fire, Ambulance and Coastguard in response to emergencies	Free

## NI Concessionary Fares Scheme

NI Concessionary Pass Scheme Holders	Single	Return
Senior (65+) SmartPass	Free	Free
60+ SmartPass	Free	Free
War Disablement SmartPass	Free	Free
Registered Blind SmartPass	Free	Free
RoI Senior Smartpass issued by Translink	Free	Free
Concessionary Ticket*	50%	50%

\* Concessionary passenger fare, available on presentation of a valid Northern Ireland issued SmartPass for;

- Learning disability
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (previously Disability Living Allowance (DLA))
- Registered partially sighted
- Refusal of driving licence on the grounds of medical fitness

Children under 5 years travel free

Children under 16 years receive 50% discount on standard fares.

## Strangford Lough Ferry Service

### Table of Rates, Fares and Charges

<b>Passenger Fares</b>			
	<b>Single</b>	<b>Return</b>	<b>SmartCard top-up</b>
Adult	£1.40	£2.80	£16.80
Child 5 – 15 years	£0.70	£1.40	£7.60
Child under 5 years	Free	Free	N/A
Concessionary Ticket *	£0.70	£1.40	N/A
Group Warrant adult	£0.85	£1.70	N/A
Group Warrant child	£0.40	£0.80	N/A
Concessionary Ticket **	Free	Free	N/A
<b>Vehicle and Driver Fares</b>			
Vehicles up to 6m in length	£8.00	£13.90	£69.70
Vehicles 6 – 8m in length	£13.90	£25.10	£167.30
Long vehicles – each additional 2m length over 8m	£6.30	£11.20	£75.20
Motorcycles	£4.90	£7.60	£43.30
Vehicles with Blue Badge holder	£3.20	£5.60	N/A

\* Requires a valid Northern Ireland-issued SmartPass. Holders of either a Learning Disability, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Registered Partially-Sighted or Refusal of a Driving Licence on the Grounds of Medical Fitness SmartPass.

\*\* Requires a valid Northern Ireland-issued SmartPass. Holders of either a Senior 65+, 60+, War Disablement, Republic of Ireland Senior Citizen SmartPass (issued by Translink), or Registered Blind SmartPass