



Media Release

Warm 'Welcome' on NorthLink Ferries with accessibility app

Company is first Scottish transport operator to introduce pioneering support service

Serco NorthLink Ferries has partnered with one of Scotland's digital start-ups to improve journeys for customers who require additional support.

The 'Welcome' app by Neatebox helps to overcome hurdles for passengers with specific accessibility requirements.

The free app allows users to indicate the areas they need customer service to be aware of and the specific assistance they require. Service providers are notified of the visit request and receive an overview of the users condition and top tips to aid their interaction with the customer.

Gavin Neate, founder and Chief Executive of Neatebox, said: "Our app helps disabled people to receive a better service, communicate with ease and travel with confidence. Even staff at companies with excellent customer service, like NorthLink, can struggle sometimes to know how best to support customers. We're delighted that they have seen how the product can help both passengers and staff, and hope that other operators will follow suit."

Seumas Campbell, Serco's Customer Service Director at NorthLink Ferries, said: "We use the Welcome app to make staff aware of the specific needs of their visitors in advance of their arrival. We can greet customers by name and offer them the assistance they may require. This greatly improves the confidence and interactions between customer service teams and passengers helping to build lasting relationships."

The move is the latest in a series of measures aimed at improving journeys for all travelers.

Earlier this year NorthLink implemented its new 'Recite Me' accessibility tool to the website to enable more people to experience the NorthLink Ferries website in a way suitable to their needs.

NorthLink staff have also attended disability awareness training with Access Panel Orkney and in 2018, NorthLink teamed up with a sign language interpreting agency to improve access and user experience for its customers with hearing difficulties.

For more information Neatebox visit <https://www.neatebox.com/>

For more information on NorthLink Ferries visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk/

Ends

02 July 2019

For further information please contact:

Julie Brander or Stewart Argo at Weber Shandwick on 01224 806 608 / 0131 460 3004 or jbrander@webershandwick.com / sargo@webershandwick.com

About NorthLink Ferries

Serco has operated the Northern Isles service since July 2012 providing scheduled lifeline passenger and freight services to the Northern Isles.

Named 'Best Ferry' at the Guardian and Observer Travel Awards 2016, NorthLink Ferries operate throughout the year with the MV Hamnavoe operating to Orkney on the Pentland Firth and MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey sailing to Orkney and Shetland from Aberdeen. MV Hildasay and MV Helliard provide regular timetabled freight services to both Shetland and Orkney. NorthLink Ferries has offices in Aberdeen, Kirkwall, Lerwick, Stromness and Scrabster.

The Hjaltland and Hrossey ferries sail every evening from Aberdeen and Lerwick in Shetland and have 117 en-suite cabins along with eateries, bars and retail shops showcasing the very best of island produce. The MV Hamnavoe, which has an excellent array of services on-board, provides a swift and reliable 90-minute crossing on the Pentland Firth, and offers a unique opportunity to sail past the Old Man of Hoy as it travels between Stromness in Orkney and the Caithness town of Scrabster.

More than just a business, we view ourselves as a member of the local community, serving key sectors within the Northern Isles economies. These include the agriculture, aquaculture and tourism markets, carrying the equivalent of over 43 thousand freight trailers and over 300 thousand passengers per year. This demonstrates the integral part played by the ferry provider working daily with stakeholders in all aspects of the operation.

This community integration, as well as support of the local economy, is important to us and we are therefore proud to purchase over 84% of products for our passengers to enjoy on-board from suppliers based within 50 miles of our operating ports. This has the added benefit of reducing the distances our deliveries have to travel, thereby reducing our environmental impact.

For further information visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk

About Serco

Serco is an international service company, which combines commercial know-how with a deep public service ethos.

Around the world, we improve essential services by managing people, processes, technology and assets more effectively. We advise policy makers, design innovative solutions, integrate systems and - most of all - deliver to the public.

More information can be found at www.serco.com