

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR



**BUSINESS TRAVEL POLICY
2024**

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AMENDMENT RECORD

This plan is to be reviewed every three years.

VERSION	DATE	AMENDMENTS MADE	DATE OF NEXT REVIEW
1	04/07/2024	Full Review – First draft	04/07/2027 - Highlighted links to be updated once new website is launched late 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

The Business Travel Policy outlines the Comhairle's business travel booking procedures and ensures a consistent approach for all business travel and accommodation arrangements when Members, employees and external individuals are required to travel on the Comhairle's business. It is designed to ensure that:

- All persons undertaking business travel do so in a safe and appropriate manner.
- Spending on business travel and accommodation is operationally and economically efficient.
- Emissions from business travel are minimised in line with net zero targets.

The policy applies to Elected Members, Chief Officers, Local Government Employees, Teaching Staff, and all parties where the cost of travel falls to the Comhairle, including consultants who bill the authority for expenses.

2. GUIDELINES FOR BUSINESS TRAVEL

2.1 Booking Procedures

- (a) Travel requests must be authorised by Head of Service or above before any travel can be booked. There will be no authorisation for travel if remote alternatives are available and appropriate.
- (b) **All bookings for air and ferry travel, including inter-island travel, and car hire must be made through the Corporate Travel Booker.** Mainland bus and rail travel should also be booked through the Corporate Travel Booker if cheaper tickets can be purchased in advance.
- (c) **Travellers must submit a Travel Order Form to the Departmental Travel Booker** as soon as possible before travel. Departmental Travel Bookers will arrange bookings through the Corporate Travel Bookers in the Chief Executive's Department. For emergency or last-minute travel requests, Corporate Travel Bookers should be contacted by phone and any emails marked as urgent.
- (d) **No direct bookings should be made other than by the Corporate Travel Bookers,** excepting for an emergency which requires travel to be booked outwith 08:30-16:30 Monday–Friday. Written notification as to why independent travel arrangements were necessary will be required and Departmental Travel Bookers must be informed.

2.2 General Principles

- (a) The Comhairle will only pay the **cheapest available price for the minimum time.** Business travel will only be authorised when it is necessary and cannot be effectively replaced by digital solutions. The most cost-effective transport arrangements will be booked, considering fares, mileage & subsistence claims, time away from work and any other expenses. Day return travel arrangements will be made whenever possible to minimise subsistence costs. All employees will travel second class on public transport. Expenses will be reimbursed as per the terms detailed in the Expenses Policy.
- (b) Business and personal travel may be combined if there is no additional cost to the Comhairle and leave is authorised. **Any additional costs incurred to accommodate the traveller's preference must be paid for by the traveller.** Leave must be authorised prior to travel arrangements being made and confirmation attached to the Travel Order Form. Amendments to travel arrangements already booked will not be made to accommodate personal preference.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in arranging travel are detailed below:

3.1 Traveller

The Traveller must:

- Ensure the journey is essential, considering remote alternatives (e.g. Microsoft Teams meetings).
- Ensure the [Sustainable Travel Hierarchy](#) is followed when travel is necessary.
- Complete and submit a **Travel Order Form** to the Departmental Travel Booker as soon as possible before travel.
- Ensure the Travel Order Form is signed off by a Head of Service or above.
- Ensure they are available to discuss travel arrangements with the Departmental and Corporate Travel Booker as required.
- Ensure familiarity with the terms of the Business Travel Policy prior to travel.
- Check all travel documentation details – including personal details, departure times and dates, baggage allowance etc – prior to travel.
- For travel arrangements subject to change, delay or cancellation (e.g. ferries and flights), check for any updates prior to departure.
- Carry all necessary documentation and identification (i.e. passport, visa, driving licence etc).
- Retain itemised receipts for travel and subsistence expense claims.
- Contact the Departmental Travel Booker immediately in the event of a cancellation.
- Contact accommodation as soon as possible in the event of an out of hours cancellation.

3.2 Departmental Travel Booker

The Departmental Travel Booker must:

- Ensure that booking requests comply with the Business Travel Policy and the Expenses Policy.
- Check that Travel Order Forms have been signed off by the Traveller's Head of Service or above.
- Ensure value for money.
- Discuss travel requirements and options with the Traveller, including special needs.
- Submit completed and signed off Travel Order Form to travelbookings@cne-siar.gov.uk.
- Ensure ages are provided where children/young adults are travelling.
- Arrange internal minibus hire.
- Ensure that the make, model, registration number and length of vehicle is detailed on the booking form for vehicular bookings.
- Ensure the Traveller's mobile number is on the Travel Order Form.
- Notify the Corporate Travel Booker of all travel cancellations immediately.
- Obtain documentation regarding cancellations, unused, void, lost or stolen airline tickets and return to the Corporate Travel Booker.
- Maintain booking records and business travel data including a record of flights kept on hold.

3.3 Corporate Travel Booker

The Corporate Travel Booker must:

- Arrange and book all forms of travel including air, ferry, bus, rail travel and car rental.
- Arrange and book suitable overnight accommodation.
- Book cheapest travel unless other arrangements are specified on the Travel Order Form.
- Send tickets or confirmation to Departmental Travel Bookers or direct to traveller if requested.
- Seek refunds for cancellations, unused, void, lost or stolen airline tickets.

4. FERRY TRAVEL

- 4.1 The Comhairle will only pay a ferry fare if it is necessary for business and cheaper than alternative travel arrangements considering the total cost, including time away from work, compared to the lowest price air fare. Any additional costs incurred solely to accommodate the traveller's preference must be paid for by the traveller.
- 4.2 For regular journeys, travellers should request multiple journey bookings at once.
- 4.3 An Electronic Ticket (eTicket) will be sent to the traveller for each journey. Travellers should have their eTicket for boarding. The QR code can be scanned directly from the Traveller's device. There is no longer a need to print tickets or collect tickets from the port however eTickets can be printed if required. The QR code must be readable and scannable in printed eTickets.

5. AIR TRAVEL

- 5.1 Baggage requirements for air travel should be detailed on the Travel Order Form.
- 5.2 The airport bus, rail or Tube link should be used to transfer from the airport.
- 5.3 If a flight is cancelled, the Departmental Travel Booker must be informed immediately so a refund can be requested, and alternative travel arrangements made. For out of hours cancellations, the traveller must contact any accommodation which has been booked to cancel.
- 5.4 Travellers should not volunteer for denied boarding compensation when on Comhairle business. However, where travellers are denied boarding, and financial compensation is offered, this may be accepted and should be returned to the Comhairle if there is no personal financial detriment to the traveller.
- 5.5 Travellers are not obliged to take up an airline's offer to take the boat and can wait to fly.

6. POOL ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- 6.1 For business travel within the Western Isles which requires use of a vehicle, the Comhairle's pool Electric Vehicles (EVs) should be used whenever possible.
- 6.2 Pool EVs should be booked by the traveller using the [Temporary EV Booking Form \(sharepoint.com\)](#) and emailing it to ElectricCarBookings@cne-siar.gov.uk as per the [Policy on Pool Electric Vehicles \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

7. TRAINS

- 7.1 Digital tickets are usually used for train journeys. Digital tickets are QR codes that hold the same information as a paper ticket and can be scanned directly from a phone or other electronic device without needing to be printed.
- 7.2 Travellers will be emailed digital tickets for train bookings. An eTicket with a QR code will be attached as a PDF. The QR code can be scanned at the ticket gate or shown to staff directly from the Traveller's device. There is the option to print an eTicket if the traveller does not have access to a suitable device.

- 7.3 Travellers who have downloaded the Trainline app on to their mobile phone can use a Mobile Ticket. The Mobile Ticket should be activated just before travel (once activated, a refund can no longer be requested). The QR code can be scanned at the ticket gate or shown to staff.

8. BUSES

- 8.1 Travellers will be emailed bus tickets where these can be purchased in advanced.
- 8.2 For bus travel where tickets cannot be purchased in advance, or where there is no cost saving from purchasing tickets in advance, travellers may purchase a ticket on the bus and reclaim the costs as per the Expenses Policy. Receipts must be retained.

9. CAR HIRE

- 9.1 Car hire is only permitted in exceptional circumstances, when time is constrained, in the interest of personal safety, or where suitable public transport is not available or cost-effective.
- 9.2 Comhairle employees can hire a vehicle subject to authorisation and confirmation that the employee is on the approved Comhairle driver list. Car hire reservations must be made through the Departmental Travel Bookers. All car hire should be classification group C/Medium or lower, unless in exceptional circumstances. **Hire cars must be refuelled before return.**
- 9.3 Any additional requirements (e.g. number of passengers, baggage or luggage requirements, child safety seats) should be detailed on the Travel Order Form.

10. TAXIS

- 10.1 Taxis should only be used when in exceptional circumstances, when time is constrained, where travellers have certain physical conditions or disabilities, where suitable public transport is not available or cost-effective or in the interests of personal safety. The use of a taxi should be agreed with line managers in advance.
- 10.2 Corporate Travel Bookers do not book taxis for employees. In cases where use of a taxi or car hire is agreed in advance, the actual expenditure will be reimbursed as detailed in the [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Expenses Policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

11. PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

- 11.1 Use of privately owned vehicles for business travel is permitted where this is the most cost-effective arrangement considering all expenses and all alternative forms of transport.
- 11.2 Private motor vehicles used for work purposes must be taxed, have a valid MOT certificate, and have their personal insurance extended to include Business Use. All authorised business users must be appropriately insured for business use at their own expense.
- 11.3 Wherever reasonably practicable, employees travelling to the same destination by car should travel together. Slight variations in intended times of departure or return, or the need for slight detours, will not justify travelling separately.

- 11.4 Use of privately owned bicycles for business travel is permitted up to a maximum of 5 miles each way.
- 11.5 Reimbursement will be made as detailed in **the Expenses Policy**.

12. OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

- 12.1 Accommodation (single occupancy only) will be booked at a Bed and Breakfast establishment or a hotel up to the maximum permissible limit. An Evening Meal allowance up to the permissible limit, as detailed on the intranet, can be requested to be added to the booking where evening meals are provided by the overnight accommodation provider.
- 12.3 If accommodation cannot be procured within the limit, the traveller's Head of Service must confirm authorisation of the booking at the stated price via email.
- 11.4 Any additional requirements for overnight accommodation bookings (e.g., accessibility, parking, meeting places) should be detailed on the Travel Order Form.
- 11.5 Accommodation with family and friends will be reimbursed at the rates detailed on the intranet. A receipt is not required.

13. FOREIGN TRAVEL

- 13.1 Requests for overseas travel can only be authorised by the Chief Executive or, in the absence of the Chief Executive, the Chief Executive's Depute.
- 13.2 Officers who undertake foreign travel should familiarise themselves with the following matters:
- protocols for the authorisation of foreign travel
 - guidelines for travel arrangements, accommodation, subsistence, out of pocket expenses and gratuities
 - foreign travel insurance provisions
 - hospitality provisions
 - foreign currency advances
 - the use of charge cards and protocols for the reimbursement of expenditure.

14. RECLAIMING OF FLEXTIME FOR TRAVELLING

- 14.1 Under the Working Time Directive, travel time is deemed to be working time and should be reclaimed through the Flexi System.
- 14.2 For anything more than a standard day, a detailed breakdown of the day's activities is required. Any non-working time should be counted as a Flexi absence.
- 14.3 It is expected that travellers return to work when returning within core hours.

15. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE BUSINESS TRAVEL POLICY

Failure to comply with the Business Travel Policy could lead to:

- A loss of public confidence in the Comhairle where expenditure on travel is not within the terms of value for money.
- Action being taken against Employees under the terms of the disciplinary procedure.

16. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years.