

Northern Lights



INSIDE

.....

Winter Menu
Competition Winners
Orkney Chairs
Shetland Museum

PLUS

.....

Children's
Section
Lighthouse
Cover Story:
Noup Head



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Welcome

A warm welcome to NorthLink Ferries and to *Northern Lights* - our onboard magazine.

Since our last issue we have improved the efficiency of our food service with the introduction of coaster buzzers in our Feast restaurant. These have proved to be very popular with those who have tried them, allowing meals to be cooked to order and collected from the service counter. Why not give them a go on this crossing!

We have also launched a new electronic feedback system through the use of iPads on board to capture customer feedback. These have been extremely useful, providing me with a chance to hear your thoughts and views on the service so that we can continually improve every aspect of the service you receive. If you aren't asked to complete a survey and would like to then please ask at reception Deck 5.

Our partnership with local suppliers in the Northern Isles and the North East of Scotland can be seen throughout the on-board food, drink and shop range. Why not try some of our local dishes in the Feast Restaurant where you can also enjoy a wide range of ethically sourced hot drinks. We have recently been recognised by the Scottish Fair Trade Forum for our support of ethically sourced products which now also includes new Fair Trade polo shirts for our crew.

This issue is packed full of a host of features – including an insight into Orkney's traditionally crafted chairs, the Shetland Museum and Archives, Lava Jewellery Design and the popular Caithness produced Rock Rose Gin, so sit back and enjoy.

I hope that you have a safe and comfortable journey and make the most of our facilities. We look forward to seeing you on board again soon.



Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

Contents

Welcome	2
Travel information - on board features to suit you	3
Your questions answered	4
Focus on kids	6
Lighthouse feature (cover story)	8
Orkney Chairs	10
Lava Jewellery Design	12
Meet our Captain	14
Rock Rose Gin	15
Shetland Museum and Archives	16
Winter menu competition	18

NorthLink Ferries

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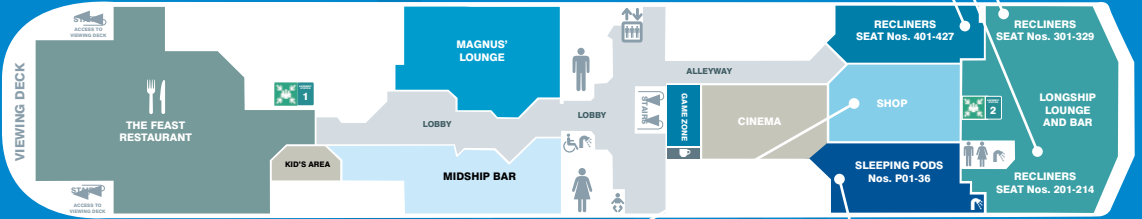
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Contact Stuart

I would welcome your feedback at any time. If you have any questions, then please contact me at speaktostuart@northlinkferries.co.uk

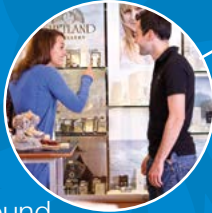


Travel information



MV Hjalmland and MV Hrossey DECK 6

Reception and cabin accommodation can be found on Deck 5



MV Hamnavoe DECK 6



DECK 5



Your questions answered

From cabin choices to food and drink available on board, we have included answers to some frequently asked questions to help you make the most of your NorthLink Ferries adventure.

What cabin options can I choose from when travelling overnight?

Each of our three vessels provide great accommodation facilities.

On board MV Hamnavoe, MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey there are a wide variety of comfortable, modern and fully equipped cabins to choose from, suiting every budget. Options include exclusive and shared use, as well as cabins suitable for those with restricted mobility.

If you are booked onto the 0630 or 0900 MV Hamnavoe sailing from Stromness, you can make the most of the affordable bed and breakfast deal. Prices start from just £36.50 and include evening access to Magnus' Lounge where you can enjoy complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks and nibbles. Premium Cabin ticket holders will also receive a complimentary drinks voucher.

Are there any other accommodation options to choose from?

MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey offer comfortable options for passengers choosing to travel without overnight accommodation. Reclining seats are available towards the front of the ship and blankets and pillows can be hired from the Northern Isles on board shop.

Passengers can also choose to relax in a sleeping pod, which comes with a large table, adjustable lighting and USB socket.

Costing just £18.00, the pods include a sleep pack comprising a blanket, pillow and eye mask, as well as a shower token for the adjacent facilities. The sleep pack can be collected from the ship's reception desk.

Where can I choose to eat and drink whilst on board?

There are a number of options for eating and drinking on board. You can order a variety of locally sourced produce from our main restaurant The Feast, the Midship Bar or enjoy your meal served to your table in Magnus' Lounge.

What is included in Magnus Lounge?

Great value can be found by upgrading to Magnus' Lounge.

On MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey, Magnus' Lounge costs from just £14.50 and remains open until 0130 before reopening in the morning where an inclusive continental breakfast is served. You will receive complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks and nibbles and two vouchers for bar drinks.

On MV Hamnavoe for just £7.50 you will receive complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks, nibbles and newspapers. On morning sailings hot filled rolls are on offer, and in the afternoons and evenings, passengers can relax with a complimentary drink.

Can I purchase local island crafts and produce on board?

The Northern Isles shops stock the very best of Shetland and Orkney's crafts and produce, with a wide selection of jewellery, food, drink and gifts.

There is also an extensive range of books and magazines including many by local writers.

Should you have any further questions, please ask one of the NorthLink Ferries crewmembers who will be very happy to help.

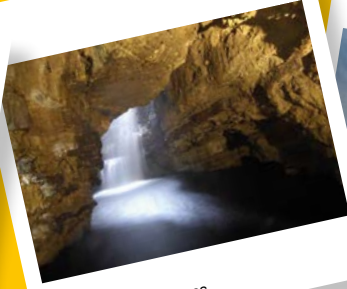
What entertainment is available on board?

Our cinemas on board MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey show up to three films each evening and have comfortable reclining seats, a cinematic sound system and airline style high quality viewing from suspended LCD screens and a large screen to the front. Each passenger vessel also has a Games Zone featuring Xbox360 towers.

Focus on kids



Guided walk on the Dubh, Caithness



Smoo Caves, Durness



Condonas Fun Fair, Aberdeen



Zoology Museum, Aberdeen

The North East and Highlands of Scotland have a wealth of activities for children of all ages. From seal and dolphin spotting at Aberdeen Harbour to forest trails in Caithness, there are a range of hidden gems to entertain kids.

Aberdeen

More than just high street shops and stage shows, Aberdeen is perfect for children. The city is home to the Satosphere science centre - a hub of discovery in the north of Scotland.

Towards the city's beach boulevard and harbour, families can find a range of amusements such as crazy golf and Codona's funfair. The Linx Ice Arena is also located here and is one of Scotland's premier ice rinks. The rink is of national size and runs family skate sessions, tuition, ice hockey and events for children.

Aberdeen Football Club's Pittodrie Stadium is another venue offering fun for all ages. With a range of sporting events including rugby internationals, children will love watching a big game. There are also behind the scene tours available for those looking to find out a bit more.

The 44-acre Duthie Park is located just one mile from the ferry terminal and is filled with exotic plants, play areas and lush lawns. Duthie Park is also home to the David Welch Winter Gardens, one of Europe's largest indoor garden areas. This floral paradise is free to enter and showcases some of the world's rarest plants.

During winter, children can catch a glimpse of doe-eyed grey and common seals along the Aberdeenshire coast. Key spots include the mouth of the River Don and close to Newburgh Golf Club on the River Ythan, with grey seal pups born in the area up until mid-December. On clear days keep a look out for dolphins and porpoise from the ship as you leave and enter Aberdeen Harbour.

If wildlife watching isn't their thing, Scotland's Castle Trail spans for miles across the North East and is great for young explorers. The trail comprises more than 15 castles and palaces and includes over 2,000 years of history.

Huntley Falconry Centre, Huntley



Cineworld, Aberdeen



Grampian Transport Museum, Aberdeen



Aberdeen Maritime Museum



Beach Leisure Centre, Aberdeen

Caithness

The far north of Scotland is home to some of the country's greatest outdoor spots. Adventurous trips to the Smoo Caves of Durness and the Forsinard Nature Reserve will leave children wide-eyed and desperate to see more.

Other popular attractions such as the Castle of Mey Animal Centre and the Seadrift Centre at Dunnet Bay will allow children to discover the big and small creatures that live in these idyllic areas.

Just inland from Dunnet Bay lies the most northerly community woodland on the British mainland. Children can tour Dunnet Forest finding carved animals, sculptures and bird hides in amongst the trees.

On rainy days step into the past at Mary-Ann's Cottage in Dunbeath where you will find a series of rooms almost unaltered since 1850. Preserved as it was, the croft is a real representation of what rural life was like for crofters in the Highlands.

For more information for things to see and do in Scotland, visit the NorthLink Ferries blog at www.northlinkferries.co.uk where you'll find a range of guides for Orkney, Shetland and the mainland.



Bettyhill Leisure Pool, Caithness



Castle of Mey, Caithness

Experience Noup Head

Sitting 79 metres above seawater on a dramatic cliff top, Noup Head Lighthouse is located on the westerly cliffs of Westray in Orkney.

Completed in 1898, the lighthouse was designed by the renowned Stevenson family, who were responsible for creating many of Scotland's most impressive lighthouses. The building at Noup Head was designed and constructed to provide safe passage for vessels travelling along the north-west coast of Orkney.

Costing just £7,500 to build, the lighthouse was the first in Scotland to make use of a mercury flotation system in the revolving carriage of the light's lantern – a new technology introduced from France just a few years earlier.

From opening until automation in 1964, the lighthouse was occupied by 33 keepers in total, each ensuring the protection of hundreds of ships as they travelled along Orkney's magnificent coastline.

Noup Head Wildlife

The rugged cliffs that surround Noup Head are home to Orkney's largest seabird colony. Gannet chicks and migrating Fulmars can be seen from the RSPB Noup Cliff nature reserve in the autumn months. On clear days, keep a look out for whales and dolphins as they surface and restful seals that cover the rocky shore.

The nature reserve is free of charge to enter with parking spaces available near the lighthouse.

Links of Noltland

A visit to Westray wouldn't be complete without a trip to the Links of Noltland. This fascinating archaeological site offers a glimpse of the history that surrounds Orkney.

One stand-out discovery is the unearthed Orkney Venus – a 41mm tall sandstone figure which is the earliest artistic

representation of the human form found in the UK. The small stone figurine is believed to be more than 5,000 years old and can currently be viewed at the Westray Heritage Centre.

Many thanks to Nancy and Allan Scott for all of their help and support with this feature.



All about Orkney chairs

An Orkney chair is a unique part of the rich heritage of the Orkney Islands. The chairs are wooden, handcrafted and have a straw back, and were traditionally made from wood and straw found on the islands.

Robert H. Towers is a master craftsman who has been making Orkney chairs for over 38 years. We met with Robert to ask him some questions about the history and process of creating these stunning pieces.

Tell us about the history of the Orkney chair

In the beginning, Orkney chairs were nothing more than a low round stool covered with straw. Orkney has little timber, so straw was a good agricultural by-product to use.

Sometime later, the design developed into a low chair with a straw back almost two feet in height, and a hood which would shelter the occupant from draughts. This design was then enhanced further when a native of the North Isles added a square wooden seat and a small storage drawer. It is this design that we know as the Orkney chair today.

Which materials are used in the creation of an Orkney chair?

There is a myth that the Orkney chair was first created from driftwood; in the past chairs were governed by the materials the maker had available. Wood came from different places, from old furniture or old steadings. The range of wood used to craft the chairs meant that no two Orkney chairs were ever the same.

I work with pine and sapele wood these days. Pine has become less fashionable over the past decade, so mostly I work with sapele which is not too difficult to use. It's also popular with the customers which is important; it's no use if they don't like it!



Where do you source the straw used for the back of the chair?

I have two or three farmers that I work with. I also have a cousin who farms on one of the isles and I've had some from him - you're not needing a great deal for an Orkney chair.

I like the straw to be long and thick, I use Air Bounty to back a chair. Sometime you hear about Orkney chairs made with straw from black oats. However black oats are very thin and quite short so you're going to increase your time cleaning it and it doesn't tighten well.

So you have to clean the straw?

Oh yes, by hand! It's the laborious part of the job, but if Presley is playing in the background it's not so bad!

What was the traditional use of the drawer found at the bottom of the chair?

In the very old examples there are more chairs with hoods than there are chairs with drawers. Possibly they may not have had the necessary skills to fit a drawer. Maybe they just didn't want to! I'm not sure what was kept in the drawer – I've heard of everything from knitting and fishing hooks to whisky bottles and books.

When did you begin crafting Orkney chairs yourself?

I enjoyed woodwork for many years during my childhood but on leaving school, I joined the catering industry. I was a waiter on board RMS Queen Mary. I then worked for some eleven years in the management of a hotel in Kirkwall.

I started my own chair-making business in the parish of St Ola in Orkney in 1977. I would have been 33 or 34 when I started. Some friends asked me one Saturday afternoon if I had ever thought of making an Orkney chair. As they say, the rest is history.

Did you have any friends or relatives who made Orkney chairs - someone who guided your hand?

No, making those first Orkney chairs was trial and error, I'd always worked at woodwork as a hobby and made things for fun at every possible opportunity I had. It just seemed like the thing to do – it beats working for a living!

Where is the furthest you have sent an Orkney chair?

I have sent the chairs all over the world. There has never been any problem with deliveries!

Do you find your job satisfying?

I find my job very satisfying as I really like working with wood. It could have been another wooden item that was in demand at the time, but Orkney chairs presented themselves and I have a good working life out of it.

I do woodwork for fun as well as work so there must be some satisfaction in it, and I've always had good feedback from customers too!

What would you say to someone considering buying an Orkney chair?

Buy two!

Robert would like to welcome visitors to Orkney to stop by his workshop. Appointments can be made in advance by contacting Robert H. Towers on 01856 873521 or for more information please visit www.orkney-chair.co.uk

Coming in Issue 4 - a chance to win your very own Orkney Chair!

Lava Jewellery Design



About Lava Jewellery Design

The business was founded in 2006 by husband and wife team Duncan and Jacqui Grant. Both trained at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen and have over twenty years of experience in the design and creation of bespoke jewellery.

Working from a studio in Peterculter in Aberdeen, Duncan and Jacqui produce a range of contemporary Scottish jewellery based on Scotland's landscapes and the work of Robert Burns and Rhoda Bulter.

Collections and Commissions

With nine collections currently available, Lava Jewellery Designs offers a wide range of accessories from earrings and pendants to kilt pins and cufflinks.

The Eshaness Collection showcases Jacqui's fond childhood memories of Shetland's north-westerly cliffs, with individual pieces featuring rugged textures and pointed edges.

Duncan's fond childhood memories of growing up alongside the rivers of Moray are highlighted in the Speyside Collection, which represents the sparkling waters surrounding Spey Bay and the rivers running through the valley.



Lava Jewellery Design is an Aberdeen-based company which creates distinctive and exclusive pieces made to the highest standards of craftsmanship.



In addition, Lava Jewellery Design also offers commissioned pieces designed to individual specification. Working with precious metals and specially sourced diamonds and gemstones, the team can create one-off pieces including engagement and wedding rings, gifts and keepsakes.

Lava Jewellery Design and the Jarl Squad

Lava Jewellery Design has been working closely with Shetland's Up Helly Aa Jarl Squad for more than four years.

Originally from Lerwick in Shetland, Jacqui was passed the tradition of creating the Squad's jewellery from her former art teacher Jim Kerr – a Guizer Jarl from the year 1974.

Jacqui and Duncan are now responsible for designing and creating the Squad's exclusive cloak brooches as well as the jewellery gifts provided to the female family members of the Squad.





Meet our captain Allan Scott:

Tell us a bit about you

I have lived on the island of Westray in Orkney for all of my life. I have grown up with great views overlooking dramatic coastlines, golden sands and of course Noup Head Lighthouse. I now live with my wife, Cheryl, our two children, four hens and two hamsters.

How did you get to where you are today?

Living on an island, I have had a keen interest in boats for as long as I can remember. I joined the Westray Sea Cadets as a boy and then began working on my uncle's fishing boat when I left school.

My uncle had worked in the Merchant Navy for many years so he was a great teacher and role model for me. We fished around the coast of the northern isles and would often land at Aberdeen Harbour so I have been familiar with the route for many years.

I obtained my Mates certificate and then my Skipper certificate from Stromness Navigation School. After working in various positions offshore, including roles on the coast of Australia and Japan, I was offered a career with NorthLink Ferries in 2008. I've been with the company ever since.

What does your current role involve?

As Captain, my responsibilities include ensuring that passengers and freight reach their destination safely.

During winter months when the weather can be changeable, I spend much of my morning analysing the forecasted conditions and deciding when is safe to sail. Sometimes this means delaying or bringing sailing times forward but the safety of passengers and the crew always remains of prime concern.

What do you enjoy most about your job with NorthLink Ferries?

There are several aspects about my role that I enjoy, but I take real pride in planning the best routes when adverse weather conditions are forecasted. The North Sea weather can be challenging but cautious planning ensures that we sail on the correct course.

I also really enjoy the crew I work with and the passengers that I meet. It's great to hear positive feedback and thoughts on what improvements can be made – that's how we learn how to do things better.

I am very lucky to have seen some of Scotland's most breathtaking scenery and beautiful sunsets while at NorthLink Ferries.

Rock Rose Gin

Since launching in 2014, Claire and Martin Murray's Rock Rose Gin has emerged as one of the newest and most exciting Scottish drink brands of recent years.

Produced at Dunnet Bay Distillery in Caithness, mainland Scotland's most northern distillery, the gin is crafted by the husband and wife team using rhodiola rosea, a root that grows in the rock surrounding the local area, giving the drink it's unique and flavoursome taste.

Along with a selection of 18 other botanicals, the rose root is mixed with locally picked rowan berries and sea buckthorn which is found across the nearby cliffs and forests.

Award Wins

Rock Rose Gin has been quick to be named as one of the top 50 brands in the Great Taste Awards and is a recipient of the bronze award at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition. Claire and Martin have also secured two silver awards at the Global Gin Masters and were finalists at this year's Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards.

Telling us a little more about the company, Claire explains: "Rock Rose is a real family enterprise. Martin, our two children and I pick local ingredients, including rock rose, close to our home in Caithness. Each year we create a new vintage as our local botanicals may vary slightly in taste due to the year's weather conditions."

"We are very pleased to have come so far with Rock Rose Gin in just a short space of time. To be recognised for our product is brilliant, and Rock Rose Gin can only go from strength to strength as we build on our product over the coming years."

Future Plans

The high demand and popularity of Rock Rose Gin has led to Claire and Martin running distillery tours. Opening from

Easter 2016, the tours will be available Monday to Thursday twice a day.

As well as a chance to find out more about the distilling process, visitors can tour the company's geo-dome which gardener Hanna Miedema has built to learn more about growing botanicals and their use in drink production.

Products

In addition to the original popular Rock Rose Gin, Claire and Martin have launched a new Navy Strength version of the gin. The bespoke product has been crafted at the request of bartenders across the country who are keen to add the spirit to cocktails.

In coming months special distiller editions of Rock Rose will also be available to buy directly from Rock Rose Gin.

Perfect serve

Claire offers her recommendation for creating a perfect Rock Rose serving: "Serve with a good tonic such as Fever Tree or for a Scottish G&T try Walter Gregor's tonic. Add either a wee curl of orange or a sprig of rosemary. If you are unsure, we suggest trying both garnishes as I enjoy it with orange and Martin prefers it with rosemary. In fact Martin actually toasts his rosemary lightly before putting it into the glass - it smells amazing!"

Rock Rose Gin is currently available in the NorthLink Ferries on board shop. For more information about Rock Rose Gin please visit www.rockrosegin.co.uk



Established
2014

Shetland Museum and Archives

Shetland Museum and Archives opened its doors in the spring of 2007 and is a treasure trove of artefacts relating to Shetland life and culture. The centre is located on Hay's Dock, one of the last remaining areas of original dock on Lerwick's waterfront.

Home to a fascinating array of maritime and island pieces, the items are housed within several distinct areas at the Museum and Archives site. The main museum building houses objects unique to Shetland, reflecting the rich natural history, archaeology, folk life and industrial past of the islands. The archive contains over 5,000 books, magazines, journals and pamphlets as well as maps, sound recordings, music and images.

The Boat Shed also forms an integral part of the interpretation and visitors can see the renovation of boats using traditional techniques.

Ian Tait, Curator of Collections at the Shetland Museum and Archives, has been with the museum for over 30 years. He talks to Northern Lights about the centre and what visitors can experience.

Shetland Museum and Archives is a relatively new building. Could you tell us about its history?

There's been a permanent museum in Shetland since 1966. At that time the Shetland Museum shared a building with the local library and both operated from the same site in the centre of Lerwick.

When plans for the new building were being developed, it was clear that any museum or heritage facility in Shetland should be near the sea. We are an island group and so much of our history has been governed by the sea - either by people coming in and out, or by exports and imports.

The new building, which integrated the archives and the museum, was built on Hay's Dock - a former industrial business and a location that reflects the islands' maritime history.

What can visitors expect to see at the museum?

For visitors unfamiliar with the islands' history and culture, you can come and learn more about the Shetland story. We want to give a balanced view so we don't have too much about farming or fishing, industry or archaeology - we've got a little bit of everything!

Visitors start their journey with ancient geological history - from the first human discovery of Shetland through to Viking colonisation and into the medieval period. We then broaden the exhibit out into different themes including home life, farm life and fisheries.



But it's not all just artefacts in cabinets. We have a very lively educational service including interactive elements in the gallery and an on-going programme throughout the year for adults and children. These include informal sessions such as crafts, storytelling or teachings and lectures.

Is there an exhibit in the Shetland Museum that attracts the most attention?

That's an interesting one! When folk come here for the first time the things that attract the most attention tend to be archaeological objects such as the early Christian sculptured stones or textiles including Fair Isle knitwear.

The architecture of the boat hall is quite dramatic and the suspended boats from the ceiling are really eye-catching, so this also proves popular with visitors.

Does the Shetland Museum have anything of interest for children?

We offer real hands on experiences for children – they can grind their own barley on a quern stone, play at fishing from a boat, or dress up in 19th century garments from Victorian times. For little ones our learning services team hold sessions such as painting and art classes, which are extremely popular.

NorthLink Ferries were delighted to help with the transportation of artefacts from Old Scatness. Can you tell us why the site is so important?

Old Scatness is the largest archaeological dig that has taken place in Shetland since the unearthing of Jarlshof in the 1920s. The site has provided a huge collection of archaeological artefacts, many of which we have here.

Now that the dig is complete, the next stage is for Shetland Amenity Trust, our parent organisation, to secure international funding to develop the site into a visitor attraction.

The university that carried out the dig was based in Bradford, so we worked with NorthLink Ferries to facilitate the movement of the items between Shetland and the mainland.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I always discover something new in this home of old things and that is what makes my job so exciting. People can spend the whole day here - we have a café upstairs which transforms into a restaurant in the evening. The shop has some really quirky products for sale, all of which allow visitors to enjoy and make the most of this fascinating collection and location.

From time to time we do also have some special guests. This year we had a visit from historian Dan Snow and comedian Jeremy Bolem. Previous visitors include Michael Palin, and the Faroese Prime Minister also stopped by this year.

Winter menu competi

Local Children Serve Up NorthLink Ferries Menu

In 2015, NorthLink Ferries invited primary school pupils from across Orkney and Shetland to enter a competition to help shape the new autumn/winter on board restaurant menu.

The pupils were asked to write and submit a recipe featuring their favourite meal and with more than 330 entries received, the on board chefs and Passenger Services Officer Jim Wallace had the tough decision of selecting a winner.

Weeks were spent reviewing the imaginative ideas which included everything from seafood platters and smoked sausage to chocolate éclairs and candy floss Frappuccino's. After much debate, two lucky winners, Lonnie Paton from Hamnavoe Primary School and Dylan McKay from Sandwick Junior High School, were selected.

Lonnie's spaghetti with meatballs in a tomato sauce recipe will add an Italian flavour to the menu whilst Dylan's waffle with chocolate sauce dessert brings added indulgence to the menu.

Our winners were invited on board MV Hjalmland to sample their dishes alongside the restaurant crew before being awarded a plethora of prizes which included a NorthLink Ferries voucher for a trip with their families.



With so many standout entries received, ten runners up were also chosen who each received a Vikling goodie bag.

Commenting on the competition entries, Jim told Northern Lights: "It has been great to see such a fantastic response to the competition and we are very grateful to each and every pupil who entered.

"Choosing the winners was a very difficult task as all entries were excellent. We were really taken by the extremely imaginative and descriptive entries received. We'd like to congratulate both of the winners and hope they now enjoy seeing their recipes served on board."

Locally Sourced Produce

Dylan and Lonnie's winning recipes are now prepared daily by the on board culinary team using local sourced produce where possible.

NorthLink Ferries' vast and varied use of local produce such as hot smoked salmon and Orkney beef has led to each vessel receiving the highly commended Taste Our Best Award from VisitScotland.

Life on



The award recognises NorthLink Ferries' commitment to showcasing and celebrating the country's seasonal food and drink offering as well as providing passengers with the highest quality meals.

Commitment to Communities

The school menu competition is just one of many activities that form the NorthLink Ferries sponsorship programme.

The programme is designed to support local communities across Orkney and Shetland covering a range of sports clubs, community groups, individuals and elite individuals through a range of disciplines, as well as supporting local events and festivals.

If you would like to try the winning recipes or some of the other great dishes available, please visit The Feast Restaurant where crew members will happily assist.





*A million miles from
what you imagine...*

Orkney and Shetland are closer than you think. Rich in unique culture, unrivalled wildlife and fascinating ancient ruins, the islands are yours to discover. And with regular, comfortable crossings, their beauty and wonder are just a sailing away.

Far isn't far



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