

Global Tunnelling Giants Appointed to Advance Shetland Fixed Link Plans

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Inter-Island Transport Connectivity



The Shetland Islands Council (SIC) has taken a significant step toward transforming its inter-island transport network, appointing three major international contractors to assess the feasibility of fixed links.

The work is part of the Council's Fixed Link Model (FLM) development, which is using the busy Yell Sound crossing as a critical 'test case' for tunnel construction. Following initial engagement by consultants COWI and Stantec, the following global infrastructure specialists have been contracted for the next phase:

- Leonhard Nilsen & Sønner (LNS): Headquartered in Northern Norway, this firm has a track record of delivering major tunnelling and infrastructure projects in challenging environments including Norway, Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands.
- BEMO Tunnelling: Part of the Metrostav Group, a leading European civil engineering contractor with five decades of experience in constructing and refurbishing tunnels and underground structures across Europe.
- STRABAG: One of Europe's largest construction groups, with a UK division that is already delivering tunnelling projects across the country.

The Focus: Design, Appetite, and Funding

The appointed contractors will immediately begin site visits and detailed work to review and evaluate the reference design for the fixed link.

Crucially, the Council is also using this engagement to understand two vital components for moving

forward:

1. Contractor Appetite: Assessing the industry's willingness to engage in any possible future fixed link tunnel projects.
2. External Funding: Exploring what financial support may be available from outside sources to back this significant infrastructure development.

The conclusions drawn from this phase will feed directly into the overarching Inter-island Transport Connectivity Outline Business Case. This wider business case, which covers preferred options for all eight island routes within the programme, will be considered by Councillors in summer 2026.