

Plans for hovercraft service running between Fife and Edinburgh being explored

Plans for a hovercraft service running between Fife and Edinburgh are being explored by council officials, it has emerged.

A possible route has been looked at before, but it has been more than a decade since the last proposals were dropped.

In a written question for Edinburgh Council's Transport Convenor, SNP councillor Danny Aston asked about any meetings the city's transport leader had held regarding the service.

He was told there had been none – but it was noted that “Fife Council have recently commenced a Feasibility Study to examine the case for a cross Forth vessel operating between Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh.”

And it was confirmed that officers from Edinburgh council had attended initial meetings regarding the proposal, with the written answer saying they would “continue to inform the development of the study.”

A hovercraft service across the Firth of Forth was trialled in 2007, with huge crowds turning up to Portobello Beach for a unique trip over to Kirkcaldy.

The 12-day pilot scheme was run by Stagecoach, and saw a 92ft BHT 130 amphibious vehicle previously used on the crossing from the Isle of Wight to mainland England put into service on

the estuary.

Tens of thousands paid the £3.50 return price to skim across the water in an average time of around 18 minutes.

“There is a broad consensus that a cross-Forth link can deliver significant transport and economic benefits,” Stagecoach’s Brian Souter said at the time.

But red tape surrounding public funding for the project, and arguments over the proposed route led to delays, and in 2011 Edinburgh council axed planning permission for the project.

In 2014, brief hopes were raised the project may be revitalised amid rumours a new firm, named Forthfast, had reignited interest in pursuing a route, but that failed to get off the ground.

The first findings of the latest feasibility study are expected within the next two months, at which point an update will be provided to Edinburgh Council’s transport committee.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter