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WESTERN ISLES AIR SERVICE: LOGANAIR FLIES TO THE RESCUE

Flybe franchise carrier Loganair has stepped in to rescue the Western Isles air service following the closure of the previous operator of the service, Highland Airways.

From Monday 29 March, Loganair will offer two return flights each weekday between Stornoway and Benbecula in conjunction with the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Loganair will use a 33-seat Saab 340B aircraft for the 30-minute flight. Services will depart Stornoway at 09:05 and 15:45 each weekday, with return flight departures from Benbecula at 10:05 or 11:05; and at 16:45.

Flights are now on sale at www.flybe.com and via travel agents. A range of fares will be offered, with lead-in fares from £34.99 one-way including all taxes, fees and charges. Flights are presently bookable up to and including 30 April; it is expected that services for the summer season will be released for sale at a later date once further discussions with CNES have taken place.

Commenting on the move, Loganair's Commercial Director Jonathan Hinkles said: "We have moved as quickly as we can to maintain this essential air service between the Western Isles following today's sad news of the closure of Highland Airways.

"Loganair is pleased to be able to assist travellers and the CNES by stepping in at a moment's notice to keep the route open."

"The addition of the Stornoway-Benbecula route to the Flybe network will also allow customers to make a single reservation for travel between Stornoway and Barra; and between Benbecula and Inverness or Edinburgh for the first time. The new, easier booking process and the ability to enjoy through check-in at the airport or via the Flybe website will make these connections far more attractive."

Flybe is also offering rescue fares on Loganair services for those passengers who held forward reservations with Highland Airways on the Stornoway-Benbecula or Inverness-Stornoway routes so that they can continue their journeys as planned.

Rescue fares are £34.99 one-way between Stornoway and Benbecula and £34.99 one-way between Inverness and Stornoway (£26.85 for registered Air Discount Scheme card holders), including all taxes and charges.

To take advantage of this offer, customers should call the Flybe reservations centre on 0870 800 2555 with their Highland Airways booking reference. Air Discount Scheme card holders should call the ADS helpline on 0844 800 2555 for reservations. Rescue fares can be booked up to and including 09 April 2010.

Jonathan Hinkles said: "The closure of Highland Airways is clearly a sad event for all concerned, including that company's employees and those who had paid for forward reservations.

"The introduction of Loganair's rescue fare will hopefully enable customers to continue their journey as planned and is a sign of our commitment to the travelling public in the Western Isles."

Notes to Editors:

1. New non-stop flights between Stornoway and Benbecula are available for bookings from today. Services involving flight connections including Inverness-Benbecula and Stornoway-Barra will be available via www.flybe.com for reservations from tomorrow.
2. Services between Benbecula and Stornoway are operated under a Public Service Obligation order administered the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Loganair also operates PSO services for the CNES between Benbecula and Barra; on behalf of the Scottish Government from Glasgow to Tiree, Barra and Campbeltown; and on behalf of the Orkney Islands Council within the Orkney Islands.
3. Loganair is Scotland's leading regional airline with a comprehensive network of scheduled services serving 26 routes. Over half a million passengers each year fly on its 20 aircraft. It is one of the longest established airlines in the UK with 40 years continuous service and serves the Highlands and Islands as well as Dundee, Birmingham, Belfast and the Isle of Man.

4. Loganair became a franchise of Flybe, Europe's largest regional airline, in October 2008 and connections are available to the Flybe and British Airways networks throughout the UK, Europe and beyond using its services.