

Item:

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Argyll Lochaber, Skye and Small Isles Ferry Stakeholder Group

Monday 2nd December 2019, Corran Halls Oban

Present:

Cllr Mary Jean Devon, Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)
Cllr Elaine Robertson, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Denis Rixson, Highland Council
Cllr Elaine Robertson, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Donald Manford, CNES
Stuart Adams, Kerrera Ferry Committee
Billy Neilson, Crofting Commission
Murray Bain, Highland Council
Brian Gordon, Transport Scotland
Kevin Hobbs, CMAL
Marc Stevenson, CalMac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Alex Leslie, Argyll and Bute Council
Marie Garvie, Transport Scotland
Susan Malcolm, Transport Scotland
Andrew McNair, CalMac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Don McKillop, CalMac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Robert Morrison, CalMac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Ker Corbett, Scottish Citylink
David Herriot, CalMac Communities Board
Ranald Robertson, HITRANS

Apologies:

Cllr Iain MacNeil, CNES
Joe Reade, Mull Ferry Committee
Angus Murray, CNES
Cllr Allan Henderson, THC
Cllr Robin Currie, ABC
Pippa Milne, ABC
Stewart Clark, ABC
David Summers, Highland Council
Richard Porteous, Highland Council
Jane MacLeod, Business Representative
Finlay MacRae, CFL
Demi Wylie, CFL
Rob Ware, Sleat Transport Forum
David Hobhouse, Colonsay Community Council

1. Minute of 3 June 2019

Minute approved as an accurate note of discussion.

2. Matters Arising

Ranald Robertson reported that the letter from the Ferry Stakeholder Group (FSG) to the Minister for Islands was sent and while the Minister was unable to attend this meeting he did arrange to meet the Chair on a visit to Mull in the Summer.

3. Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan (VRDP)

Brian Gordon updated on VRDP.

- Ministers are considering the final draft which points to a need for an increased fleet of major vessels built to fit with current infrastructure.
- Publication date expected to be published by the end of December.
- Current STAG appraisals will input to the report.

Items raised were:

- Need for Harbour investment at Barra was raised by Cllr Manford.

Action – RR will share the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar correspondence on Outer Hebrides Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (OH STAG) study with Cllr Manford.

4. National Transport Strategy NTS 2 / Strategic Transport Projects Report (STPR) Update

Brian Gordon updated on NTS 2 and STPR 2.

NTS draft published in July for consultation that closed on 23 October.

Final NTS will be published on 30th January. This will be followed by a delivery plan that correlates with other plans including the Islands Plan.

A summary of consultation responses is not available on the Scottish Government website.

Concern was raised on the Islands Plan engagement and the degree of input that people living and experiencing island life are not feeding into the process. There was also concern that those representing islands in for a such as the CalMac Communities Board are not resident in the island they are supposed to represent. A representative based on a neighbouring island might be driven by different priorities. There should be an opportunity to develop the Communities Board by having it represent each island. It should be more democratic with the appointments being by the Communities themselves. This was in the context of supporting the CB to realised its potential.

STPR is currently being scoped with input through Regional Working Groups.

5. Ferries Plan 2

Brian Gordon reported that Ferries Plan 2 has been committed to in the NTS. Ferries Plan 2 is being scoped but will include:

- Fares Policy
- Vessel and Harbour Investment Plan

Ferries Plan 2 needs to be in place by 2022 but key parts will be released before this.

Members expressed a desire to input to the process and have as early sight as possible of the draft scope.

The Ferries Plan was recognised as having been a very positive step forward on ferries policy and a huge step forward on the services being delivered to communities. There was some disappointment that the socio-economic benefit of the Ferries Plan was not captured as that loses the value it has delivered.

Brian Gordon confirmed that robust monitoring and evaluation will be an important feature in the next Ferries Plan.

Brian Gordon confirmed that the impact of RET on 2015 routes is being undertaken and will be completed by the end of December. This will inform the Ferries Plan consideration of future fares policy. The same applies to the Freight Fares Review long term decision.

6. Caledonian MacBrayne Operational and Performance Presentation

Robert Morrison introduced the item which would have input from colleagues.

Andrew McNair provided the Commercial and Marketing update. This presentation covered:

- Contact Centre
 - Won CCA award
 - New Beacon system introduced to get information circulated more quickly on service events within CFL.
- Current Ticketing System
- Online Sales Mechanism for Tours introduced with 150k sales made
- Increased tours sales with 35% year on year increase for a snapshot of sales in June.
- Summer STV Campaign
 - Increased focus on research.
- Joint Marketing with DMOs
 - Carron Tobin of Argyll Tourism Collective has led a very strong partnership approach on the West Coast Waters project which will be showcased in the Year of Coasts and Water 2020
 - CFL are very open to working in partnership with local stakeholders and DMOs to deliver support for sympathetic local projects.

- Support for local events / Community Fund

Marc Stevenson provided an update on An Turas – the replacement booking and reservations system – to the Group which covered:

- The Vision for Ar Turas
 - A programme to deliver a modern booking, ticketing and travel experience for our customers and staff
 - Standardised, accessible and digitally enabled
 - Maximise available bookable space
 - Deliver customer insight allowing better understanding of those customers
 - Use market leading software to help standardise and simplify CFL processes in line with best practice
 - It will help make buying CalMac travel easy.
- Investment Objectives
 - Deliver enhanced customer experience for passengers
 - Deliver enhanced vessel capacity management.
 - Enhance insight for both CalMac and TS from appropriate customer information
 - Improve operational efficiency.
- Team Structure
 - Senior responsible officer at CFL – Robbie Drummond
 - Senior responsible officer at TS – Graham Laidlaw
 - Programme Manager – Robin Scorthorne
 -
- The Plan
 - Currently in Procurement phase at the pre tender release stage.
 - Procurement expected to run to mid 2020
 - Implementation Phase 1 – COTS, Ticketing and Reservations Implementation to take 12 months to mid 2021
 - Implementation Phase 2 – ITSO to be complete early 2022

Don McKillop provided the operational and performance report covering the following key points:

Coll Linkspan replacement completed on time and was a very successful implementation.

Coll experience bodes well for Tiree linkspan replacement.

Lochaline slipway reopened this morning (2 December).

The key points on the performance statistics were:

Route Name	Passengers	Cars	Coaches	CVs
Ardmhor (Barra) - Eriskay	3%	4%	-30%	-3%

Fionnphort - Iona	5%	-3%	-100%	33%
Fishnish - Lochaline	11%	13%	12%	3%
Gallanach - Kerrera	9%	15%		-100%
Kennacraig - Islay/C'say/Oban	5%	6%	-7%	2%
Mallaig - Armadale	8%	13%	4%	-8%
Mallaig - Eigg/Muck/Rum/Canna	1%	5%	0%	-37%
Mallaig - Lochboisdale	45%	49%	7%	-22%
Oban - Castlebay/Lochboisdale	-10%	-11%	-64%	-26%
Oban - Coll/Tiree	5%	9%	88%	9%
Oban - Colonsay	-11%	-2%	50%	16%
Oban - Craignure	1%	2%	1%	-6%
Oban - Lismore	1%	-1%	0%	-21%
Sconser - Raasay	7%	7%	20%	57%
Tobermory - Kilchoan	7%	19%	-12%	-21%
Uig - Tarbert/Lochmaddy	6%	5%	10%	-2%

CLlr Rixson raised a number of issues affecting parts of his ward. These include:

- Non Landing Cruises issue should be addressed and a fix is not to pass the problem on to another of the Small Isles.
- Freight booking / availability
- Variable Message Signage Update (A830 Lochybridge, Skye Bridge and Broadford)
- Winter Timetabling and extra sailings at peak times such as the festive season
- RET extension to all Scottish lifeline ferry services. To include Knoydart, Corran Ferry

Robert Morrison agreed that non landing cruises was an issue on the Small Isles. The contract does not make it easy for CFL to address. It is felt that a way of reserving space or allowing island residents only to book in advance. Consideration is also being given to moving beyond a non landing tour by changing this type of trip to become a landing one so that there is a local economic impact from these travellers.

Robert Morrison added that the freight issue has been a long standing problem that CFL are trying to address. The unregulated and sometimes inadvisable mixing of

goods had to be addressed. Discussion continues on the forklift proposal and Transport Scotland are engaged on this.

Susan Malcolm confirmed that SG / TS are still looking at options regarding the provision of forklift or Hi-Ab truck service.

Robert Morrison asked that any requests for additional services be fed in to the process for timetable changes which runs to 9 December 2019.

Gary Adams outlined a similar concern to that reported for the Small Isles for Kerrera where demand by tourist to travel is impacting on the ability for local people to move themselves and freight / goods.

Robert Morrison recognised the concern from Kerrera and accepted that they are doing what they can to address the issue and put on additional sailings whenever possible.

It was noted that Carvorra cannot carry the Ambulance.

Ronald Robertson confirmed that procurement is being progressed for the 3 x trunk road ferry information signs.

Cllr Manford raised concern at the suitability of MV Isle of Arran for the provision of relief cover for the Barra service. During the recent National Mod there was not sufficient in door accommodation to seat people inside and left people needing to sit outside. The back up of MV Clansman operating via Coll and Tiree is not good enough given a crossing time of 7 to 8 hours compared with the 4 hr 45 minute sailing time of MV Isle of Lewis. Cllr Manford noted that the Ferries Plan was a tremendous step forward but the primary route designation established in that document does not seem to be respected.

7. Ports, Harbours and Infrastructure Update

a. CMAL

Kevin Hobbs provided the CMAL update which covered:

- Oban Marshalling Area
- Oban No. 2 Linkspan Upgrade
- Coll Linkspan Replacement
- Tiree Linkspan Replacement
- Tiree marshalling area and land purchase from Argyll and Bute Council
- Lochaline Upgrade
- Kerrera Lighting (completed on Kerrera but not possible yet at Gallanach)
- Skye Triangle
- Castlebay – replacement fendering and main pier improvement to life extend the current berth.

- A full asset survey and audit will be undertaken on all CMAL facilities.
- b. Argyll and Bute Council
- Alex Leslie provided the Argyll and Bute Council update:
- ABC have undertaken a study on the infrastructure requirements at both Fionnphort and Iona. Sedimentation monitoring is being undertaken by GBA consultants and this is expected to be reported by end of January 2020.
 - Craignure STAG
 - + SBC identified three options for new berths.
 - + OBC to be taken forward in the future to look in detail at the SBC recommendations plus options identified in an interim OBC.
 - + An interim OBC has been awarded to Mott Macdonald to look at interim options to include upgrade to current pier and structure with roundhead and dolphins. This report will be completed by March 2020.

8. Communities Board Update

David Heriot provided an update on behalf of the CalMac Communities Board. This covered:

- Lobbied for more resource to the CHFS ferry services.
- Lobbied in support for funding to be released for Ar Turas.
- Sought to maximise Ar Turas benefits.
- CB has represented community views on issues of service resilience.
- CB has created evidence to support investment.
- Been involved in responding to a number of consultation processes.
- Secured more clearly signed disabled seating on a number of routes.
- Encouraged and facilitated more local produce on vessels.
- Promote Community Fund.
- Sought reduced fares for school transport.
- Customer Service Group
- Fleet Deployment and Resilience Sub Committee

Currently undergoing a Community Board refresh which is intended to be a periodic process. This will be advertised soon.

9. Scottish Islands Passport

Ranald Robertson presented a report updating on the Scottish Islands Passport project. The key update is the confirmation of LEADER funding and subsequent to this the appointment of Project Managers on a job share basis. Kirsten Gow and Sarah Compton-Bishop will be based in a new HITRANS office in Jura Service Point.

10. Programme for Government / Net Zero Update

Ranald Robertson presented a report detailing Programme for Government commitments on Net Zero. This expanded into current projects that could set out a roadmap for net zero in ferry services.

Ranald also presented verbally on the MF Ellen which is now in service in Denmark as a fully electric ferry. MV Ellen (the battery-electric ferry) has taken over from the diesel-powered MF Skjoldnæs to carry passengers and vehicles between Sjøby on Ærø island and Fynshav on Als island. Named Ellen, the electric ferry made its inaugural voyage on August 15 before going into service in September. Ellen has 59.5 x 12.8 m dimensions and a draft of 2.5 metre. She can sail up to 22 nautical miles, get up to 15.5 knots, carry about 30 vehicles and 200 passengers, and is expected to make up to seven return trips per day when she goes into service proper.

Robert Morrison added that CFL have now appointed a Carbon Reduction Manager to lead the company's work on managing environmental impact.

11. Meeting Feedback Form

Andrew McNair circulated a meeting feedback form setting out the rationale behind this and the importance in members completing this to ensure the FSG meetings meet the needs of the Membership. There is also a survey monkey form available for online completion at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9LZ88BD>

12. Confirm Date of Next Meeting

Monday 1 June 2020 in Oban.