

**HEBRIDES FERRY STAKEHOLDER GROUP  
(Barra, the Uists, Lewis and Harris)**

Minute of Meeting held through Microsoft Teams, on 4 June 2020 at 11.00am.

IN ATTENDANCE	<p><b>COMHAIRLE NAN EILAN SIAR</b>          Cllr Uisdean Robertson (Chairman)          Cllr Iain A MacNeil          Cllr Iain M Macleod          Cllr John Mackay          Cllr. Donald Manford          Cllr Paul Finnegan (Guest)          Mr Angus Murray          Mr Kenny Morrison          Miss Mairi Sine Macdonald (Clerk)</p> <p><b>TRANSPORT SCOTLAND</b>          Mr Richard Hadfield          Ms Caroline Connelly          Mr Michael Kean          Mr David Caulfield          Mr Alan McCabe</p> <p><b>CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD (CALMAC)</b>          Mr Robert Morrison          Mr Finlay Macrae          Mr Andrew MacNair          Ms Demi Wylie          Mr Blair Moglia</p> <p><b>CALMAC COMMUNITIES BOARD</b>          Mr Angus Campbell          Mrs Rhoda Campbell</p> <p><b>CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD. (CMAL)</b>          Mr Kevin Hobbs          Mr Richie Morgan</p> <p><b>HITRANS</b>          Mr Neil Macrae          Mr Ranald Robertson          Mrs Sarah Compton-Bishop</p> <p><b>HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)</b>          Ms Joanna Peteranna</p> <p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP</b>          Ms Gail Robertson</p> <p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM</b>          Mr Rob McKinnon          Mr Alan Graham</p> <p><b>ROAD HAULIERS ASSOCIATION</b>          Mr D.R. Macleod</p> <p><b>CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT</b>          Mr Ker Corbett (Scottish Citylink)</p>
APOLOGIES	<p>Cllr Kenny Macleod (CNES)          Mr Kevin Peach (Ullapool Harbour Trust)          Mr David Summers (The Highland Council)          Mr Ker Corbett (CPT)          Cllr Iain Cockburn (The Highland Council)</p>

	<p>Mr Neil Halket (AECOM)  Mr Angus Campbell (CALMAC Community Board)  Mr Robbie Drummond (CALMAC)  Mr David Gibson (CALMAC)  Mr Brian Gordon (Transport Scotland)  Ms Gail Robertson (Outer Hebrides Commerce Group)  Mr Alan Graham (Outer Hebrides Tourism)</p>
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1	Minute of Meeting held on 15 January 2020.	The Minute of Meeting of 15 January 2020 was <b>approved</b> .
2	Matters Arising	<p>Item 6 - Sound of Barra – Enhanced Timetable</p> <p>Ranald Robertson HITRANS and Joanna Peteranna HIE confirmed that a joint piece of work would be undertaken by both agencies but it had been deferred until the current financial year after initial discussions in January.</p>
3	COVID-19 Transport Transition Plan	<p>Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland referred to the guidance issued by the Scottish Government for transport operators in Scotland on how to keep their staff and those using their services safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. The guidance came into immediate effect on 26 May 2020 and would be reviewed in line with the regular three weekly review of lockdown requirement. The guidance set out the expectations and a framework for ongoing action to ensure transport operators continued to adapt and operate safely. It outlined measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus (Covid-19) in the transport sector across Scotland.</p> <p>The Guidance emphasised the importance of undertaking a robust and ongoing risk based assessment with full input from trade unions and workforce representatives and to keep all risk mitigation measures under regular review so that transport facilities, vehicles and vessels continued to be safe. It was highlighted that the guidance did not apply to airports or airlines as separate guidance for that sector had been issued on 19 May 2020 by the European Aviation Safety Agency.</p> <p>In regard to ferries operations, the main issues were the impacts of 2m physical distancing and the significant reduction in capacity, which varied vessel to vessel and route to route and how the assets and services could operate within the restraints dictated by the Scottish Government during the Public Health crisis. Richard Hadfield stated that following discussion at the Islands Strategic Group, formal engagement had been initiated by Transport Scotland and CalMac with the Chief Executives of those local authorities within the CHIF's network to discuss the Transition Plan. A meeting with Orkney and Shetland had been arranged on 4 June and with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on Friday 5 June 2020.</p> <p>Robert Morrison, CalMac indicated that there was regular dialogue with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government on physical distancing plans for ports and vessels. He further highlighted the challenges of adhering to the guidelines and keeping people safe with the competing priorities of commerce, health and tourism and trying to serve all communities' needs. He further stated that CalMac were currently operating a 'broad' winter timetable and had given reassurances to Scottish Government that there was flexibility to increase capacity if required within the guidelines.</p> <p>In regard to the impacts to the economy, Rob Mackinnon, OHT and Joanna Peteranna, HIE highlighted the respective points of exemptions to social distancing on other forms of transport e.g. trains and taxis and that ferries be treated equally in the context of 'island proofing'. Angus Campbell, Communities Board stated that feedback from the islands' groups was concern over the economy whilst not wishing to risk safety.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the update.</b></p> <p><b>Under consideration of this item it was further agreed that Richard Hadfield would feedback the views of the FSG in relation to capacity issues and, specifically the following points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lochmaddy – either reinstate the Sunday sailing or introduce an earlier Monday sailing;</b></li> <li>• <b>Stornoway – reintroduce the Freight Service; and</b></li> <li>• <b>Sound of Barra – reschedule to align with the postal service</b></li> </ul>

4	Transport Scotland Update	<p>The Transport Scotland update report provided details on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 Response and Support to Essential Ferry Services</li> <li>• RET Evaluation – finalised but publication had been deferred due to COVID-19 priorities</li> <li>• Timetables - finalisation and publication of the Winter 2020/21 timetables had been delayed due to Covid-19.</li> <li>• Fares - application of the planned annual fares increase due to take place at the start of the summer 2020 timetables had been delayed due to Covid-19.</li> <li>• Progress on major infrastructure projects at non-CMAL ports – Ardrossan and Uig</li> <li>• Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan; and</li> <li>• Outer Hebrides STAG Study - finalised and being prepared for publication</li> </ul> <p>Richard Hadfield indicated that VRDP and the STAG were in the pipeline and highlighted proposed future investment priorities for Mallaig-Lochboisdale and a second Stornoway-Ullapool vessel had been included for future planning and consideration.</p> <p>He further stated that a review of freight ferries fares had been concluded and the evaluation of RET fares (in place for 10 years) had been shared with HITRANS and the Comhairle. Transport Scotland proposed to undertake a strategic and comprehensive review of all fares over the next 12 months to develop a Fares Policy and would engage with the communities and keep FSGs updated.</p> <p>D.R. Macleod, Road Hauliers Association highlighted an action arising from a request he made at the previous meeting in January seeking the introduction of the Traders Rebate Scheme for the Outer Hebrides and Tiree and registered his disappointment that this would not be reviewed.</p> <p>The Chairman, in support of all Hauliers, indicated his intention to request that this be included on the agenda for the next Islands Strategic Group meeting on 25 June 2020 and that he would also raise it at the next Islands Transport Forum.</p> <p><b>It was agreed:</b></p> <p><b>(1) to note the Transport Scotland Update; and</b></p> <p><b>(2) that the Chair would undertake bilateral engagement with Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland on any proposals/requests for a Traders Rebate Scheme in the context of the proposed Ferries Fares Review.</b></p>
5	Caledonian MacBrayne Operational and Performance Presentation covering (CFL)	<p>The CalMac operational and performance papers covered the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Commercial Update</li> <li>• Contract Commitments</li> <li>• Timetable Integration and Consultation Update</li> <li>• FSG Review (Summary) Update</li> <li>• Socio-Economic Report</li> <li>• Route Updates</li> </ul> <p>Mr Finlay Macrae, CalMac, provided an overview of the operational performance of vessels across the Outer Hebrides network for the period 21 October 2019 to 26 March 2020. He indicated that that during October to December 2019 vessels had operated as expected. However, January and February were challenging due to a long period of bad weather which caused major disruptions and lost sailings, particular in the Southern Isles. Clearly bad winter weather would have to be factored into future planning.</p> <p>Covid-19 restrictions had come into force in March 2020 and he conveyed his thanks to all the staff at the ports and on vessels in the Outer Hebrides for their work and support in very difficult circumstances. He indicated that the proposed upgrade works at Tarbert and Lochmaddy would proceed but had been delayed due to Covid-19 and that work was currently being undertaken on ferries timetables going forward.</p>

		<p>Cllr. Uisdean Robertson, on behalf of the Hebrides Ferry Stakeholders Group, thanked Mr Macrae for his continued support and assistance.</p> <p>Andrew McNair, CalMac provided an overview of commercial issues and wished to acknowledge Rob Mackinnon, OHT for his support and valuable input and participation in weekly DMO meetings, to which Rob Mackinnon returned his thanks. Andrew McNair highlighted the importance of community engagement during the restrictions and the efforts to have continued and coordinated communication with customers through social media and the web. He stated that aligned thinking was key and that there was a willingness to work and preparedness to act. It was noted that discussions with HIE were to take place shortly.</p> <p>Andrew McNair left the meeting at 12.07pm.</p> <p>Blair Moglia spoke to the items on the Ferry Stakeholders Review and the Socio-Economic Report. In regard to the Ferry Stakeholders Review the survey had been generally positive. Feedback provided prior to the last change (amalgamating the 4 groups into 3), had been significantly more negative than this, showing the change has had a positive impact. She extended her thanks to all those who participated. The feedback had been appreciated and the data provided would be an important tool in progressing and changing FSGs for the better. If Members required further information on the raw data, they could contact Blair Moglia directly.</p> <p>Blair Moglia also provided an update on the Calmac Socio- Economic Report. A notice to tender for a supplier to report on CalMac's impact on the communities it serviced had been initiated in November 2019. Work had commenced in February 2020 and due to Covid-19 the work had been paused and the Report will take cognisance of the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Calmac Update</b></p>
6	CMAL Report	<p>The CMAL Report provided an overview of the work that was underway. The Reports stated that offices had closed week commencing 16 March 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak, no employees had been furloughed and were working from home utilising Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>The Report stated that an assessment panel reviewed critical infrastructure works on a "case-by-case basis" and discussion was underway with Transport Scotland colleagues as to how island based construction projects could get underway once construction was permitted. There was concern regarding all projects whether vessels or port Infrastructure in regard to the period of inactivity and also the productivity that could be achieved whilst the 2m social distancing measures were in place.</p> <p>An update was provided on the MV Glen Sannox and the H802. It was anticipated that work would resume on 1 July and the dates for delivery of the vessels, subject to further review due to Covid-19 impacts, would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MV Glen Sannox – October 2021 through to December 2021</li> <li>• H802 – July 2022 through to September 2022</li> </ul> <p>The Report detailed the progress on current port infrastructure projects at Tarbert and Lochmaddy and Kevin Hobbs, CMAL confirmed that project management and planning continued and discussions with Scottish Government Colleagues on the restart for construction works. He confirmed that local engagement would take place prior to commencement on-site.</p> <p>Cllr. Manford raised in a question reference to Comhairle owned ports and the restrictions on access for double axel bus coaches to vessels. Kevin Hobbs stated that it was an engineering issue and it happened in some tidal conditions across the network. It was not something that had been formally raised in his time in post but he would be willing to undertake modelling if requested.</p>

		<p>Ranald Robertson recollected that there had been some work done through HITRANS in 2016 that looked in detail at this issue and his recollection was that it recommended lengthening the ramp on the ferry rather than infrastructure works to reduce the slipway gradient. Kenny Morrison Comhairle Harbour Master stated that it was a national issue and that a possible long term solution would be to review the class of ferries. Kevin Hobbs left the meeting at 12.27pm.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the CMAL Update.</b></p>
7	Scottish Islands Passport (HITRANS)	<p>A Report was submitted on the Scottish Islands Passport. The project was a LEADER funded project to December 2020, with additional support from Scottish Government, HITRANS and ZetTrans, and was being managed from the Isle of Jura by job-share partners Sarah Compton-Bishop and Kirsten Gow. The project was in the Scottish Government's Programme for Government and also listed in the Islands Plan and aligned with the Year of Coast and Water 2020 initiative. The Report outlined what would be in the passport, what stage the project was at, when it would be launched and contact details.</p> <p>A presentation by Sarah Compton-Bishop provided further detail. She stated that the main outcome of the project was to get more visitors to visit more of Scotland for more of the year. In addition to supporting islands communities and economies and promoting balanced tourism. The approach was aligned with the National Tourism Strategy and, HITRANS Strategic aims.</p> <p>She highlighted the tight timescales specific to LEADER finance and conditions and the outputs to be achieved by December 2020 which included delivering an app, website, a physical passport, stamps, launch activity and marketing. Taking cognisance of Covid-19 impacts, work continued to get all aspects in place ready for launch. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• project and work stream planning</li> <li>• social media campaign</li> <li>• stakeholder engagement and feedback</li> <li>• digital tender award</li> <li>• gathering island contacts</li> <li>• developing a brand identity; and</li> <li>• stamp designs</li> </ul> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Update and the Presentation.</b></p>
8	Communities Board Update	<p>Angus Campbell, Chairman of the Board detailed the appointment of four new members to the Board:</p> <p>Stacey Macdonald, Uig, Isle of Lewis Rhoda Campbell, Harris Kevin Peach, Ullapool Elizabeth Ferguson, Mull</p> <p>Angus Campbell stated that the Board had met the previous week and discussion was focussed on Covid-1 and feedback from the communities in regard to health and safety and the importance of economics. He stressed the importance of community engagement going forward as there were differing needs across the network. He indicated that separate meetings had been scheduled with the full Board and Transport Scotland and Visit Scotland shortly. It was noted that Chris Wilcock and Fran Pacitti of Transport Scotland would be also be meeting with the Community Board.</p> <p>Kevin Hobbs, CMAL presented to the previous Community Board meeting covering a number of topics touched on in his FSG report including fleet deployment and future vessel and harbour investment planning in the small and large ferry fleets.</p> <p>Angus Campbell referred to the establishment of a new Communications Sub-Group who would be undertaking work to establish the Community Board's independence and enhance the Board's online and virtual presence over the next couple of months.</p>

		<p>In regard to the new ticketing system Angus Campbell stated there has been a presentation to the Board and reiterated the importance that it should encapsulate growth and unmet demand.</p> <p>Angus Campbell highlighted the issue of free ferry travel for under 19's in terms of equality with mainland contemporaries and that the Community Board would be raising this again with Transport Scotland.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Update:</b></p>
9	Confirm Pre-agreed Date of Next Meeting	It was <b>agreed</b> that the next Meeting of the Hebrides Ferry Stakeholder Group would be held on Thursday 3 December 2020.