



**Minute of Hebrides Ferry Users Group Meeting
(Barra, South and North Uist, Harris, Lewis)**

**Held in the Council Chambers, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway
10:30 on 27 January 2015**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Cllr John Mackay (Chairperson)
Cllr Uisdean Robertson
Cllr Phillip McLean
Cllr Ronald Mackinnon
Cllr Catherine MacDonald
Cllr Kenneth MacLeod
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr David Smart

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Cllr George Farlow

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries Division)

Mr Graham Laidlaw
Mr Paul Linhart-MacAskill
Mr Alan Malone

HITRANS

Mr Ranald Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr Bill Main
Mr David Cannon
Mr Chris Dolan
Mr Eric Smith
Mr Mathew Harrison
Ms Karen Milliken

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)

Ms Rachel Mackenzie

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Ms Lorna Spencer
Mr Tom Docherty

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Roddy Jardine
Mr Murdo Murray

ULLAPOOL PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Kevin Peach

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTIA)

Mr Ian Fordham
Mr Donald McArthur

OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP

Mr David Wood

FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Mr D.R. MacLeod

PRESENT Cllr Angus Campbell, CnES (Observer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Donald Manford

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr John Mackay welcomed all to the meeting and this was followed by a round table of introductions.

ITEM 1: Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the 26 June 2014 meeting was approved as a true reflection of meeting

ITEM 2: Matters Arising – no items raised

ITEM 3: Regional Issues

Graham Laidlaw provided a brief update and summary on the introduction of MV Loch Seaforth and the disruption plans during the replacement linkspan project at Ullapool. Key updates covered included:

- the scheduled disruption is unavoidable in the vent of necessary infrastructure works.

- a taskforce has been set up focussing on the works with the Minister taking an active role including Chairing the initial meeting. The plan is to have closure to vehicular traffic to Ullapool for a 5 week period expected to be approximately 20 April – 25 May.
- Compensation will be considered within the mitigation and this may focus on ticketing arrangements for the Relief Event Timetable.
- MV Isle of Lewis to remain on standby with the MV Loch Seaforth service to be monitored by CalMac throughout the remainder of Summer 2015.

Discussion followed with the following raised:

Ian Fordham raised concern with disruption during May, asking why hotels/tourism/hauliers were not included in the taskforce. Had these groups been included they would have made the taskforce fully aware of the impact of the disruption on business at this time.

Concern on the number of sailings reduced on the Stornoway route and arrival time into Stornoway which might be very late in the evening so will not be an attractive alternative to the lost sailings.

Concern with the engagement process, adding there has been no further consultation from CalMac.

Mathew Harrison explained that consultation has been held with a number of key stakeholders and that this should have included tourism interests and this would be remedied now. Mathew added that Calmac have started to take paper bookings for the affected period but they are keen to make the timetable available to book online so they would be keen to get the timetable finalised.

Iain offered to start the process of gathering feedback from member immediately on confirmation that the timetable he had was correct.

Iain Mackinnon – Suggested consideration be given to fares reduction on passenger only services and those services operating from Uig to Stornoway to help manage the impact on the Uig to Tarbert service during the disruption.

Iain Fordham raised a concern that actions from the Ferry User Group meetings do not always get attended to and there needs to be consideration on how actions are picked up and reported back to the group.

Ranald Robertson agreed this was an issue and suggested that HITRANS could improve the process after meetings by circulating an action note and communicate to the wider group when actions have been completed.

Other issues covered included a longstanding desire that Rescheduling departure times on Saturday be changed to allow sporting groups to return to Stornoway from the mainland.

Action: HITRANS to circulate minutes and updates from the Stornoway – Ullapool Taskforce to this group when they have been issued.

ITEM 4: Ferry Demand Capacity Forecasting/ Vessel Replacement Strategy
PowerPoint presentation given by Karen Milliken and Bill Main on the CalMac Vessel Replacement Strategy.

Karen provided background to the CalMac vessel replacement strategy across the CHFS network which is a tripartite project also involving Transport Scotland and CMAL. The work has been supported with independent forecasting undertaken by Reference Economic Consultants. The Strategy is designed to compliment the Ferries Plan covering acquisitions and disposal of vessels to create a refined and repeatable process which could facilitate annual review,

Bill Main provided the detail on statistics on the model which will help decide a replacement vessel programme. Looking at the entire network, forecasting demand on each route/model for capacity utilisation.

ITEM 5: Ferry Availability Study 2014
Donald McArthur provided a report on the OHTIA Booking System Analysis for Summer 2014. This work followed a similar process to previous years and captured the availability of online booking in advance of every sailing during the summer timetable on the routes included in the work.

Discussion followed on the findings of the research and the impact that limited availability throughout the summer season can have on the economy of the islands.

The Chair thanked Donald for his presentation.

Action – HITRANS to publish the Ferry Availability Study on their website.

ITEM 6: Caledonian MacBrayne Digital Projects Platform Update

Mathew Harrison gave a PowerPoint presentation on the new online ticketing and reservation/booking system that CFL are in the process of implementing under the project title of Titan. Matthew provided background on the new system highlighting that the benefits and functionality offered by the system will support -

- printing of boarding cards
- sms/email/ Smartphone/ipad compatible
- Smart Ticketing
- M Ticketing
- Improved intelligence on who is on board.
- Tracking who is going onto the islands, this will help with issue of block booking as will be able to see what other services people are booked on..

ITEM 7: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

Matthew Harrison reported on routes within the area and provided the group with performance reports providing information on reliability and punctuality of routes covered within the group area for the period 26 October 2014 – 11 January 2015.

Ian Fordham asked if possible to have volumes presented in numbers rather than percentage changes from previous periods.

Mathew advised he doesn't know if this is possible but will find out if and if it is feasible future updates will be presented on the basis of actual carrying statistics.

Iain Mackinnon drew attention to the very poor reliability and performance of the Mallaig – Lochboisdale service. The high incidence of cancellation is inevitably reducing local confidence in the service and will have a major impact on booking patterns.

Ronnie Mackinnon agreed with this observation suggesting that the winter trial has prevented the benefits of the service from being proven observing that while no vessel has been made available for a summer trial it has been possible to introduce a new summer mainland to mainland service linking Ardrossan with Campbeltown.

Graham Laidlaw agreed that the service reliability results are very disappointing. The operator and Transport Scotland were only able to offer a winter pilot service due to the fleet availability and while the new Campbeltown service is a summer pilot this operates on the back of the longstanding deployment of a second vessel on the Arran service to cope with peak period capacity constraints on the Ardrossan to Brodick route.

ITEM 8: CHFS Contract Procurement Process

Allan Malone presented on the procurement process that will be followed for the CHFS Contract tendering. The Contract specification will be extensively drawn from the Ferries Plan. Communication with stakeholder groups and communities will be included in the process. FUGs to be informed of engagement, with communication through

RTPs. All Information will be placed on Transport Scotland Ferries page website.

The Chair thanked Allan for his presentation

ITEM 9:

Ferry User Group Review

Ranald Robertson presented a report that outlined the remit and membership of the Ferry User Groups and how they should link to the operator led local community consultation and engagement.

ITEM 10:

Caledonian MacBrayne Events Calendar 2015

Matthew Harrison provided an update on the Caledonian MacBrayne Events Calendar 2015 and agreed to circulate the Events calendar to the FUG membership via the secretariat.

Action – Matthew Harrison to send HITRANS the Events Calendar 2015 for circulation to Members.

ITEM 11:

AOCB

No items raised under AOCB.