

Argyll Ferry Stakeholder Group

Monday 3rd December 2018 at McCaig Suite, Corran Halls, Oban

Present:

Cllr Mary Jean Devon, Argyll and Bute Council, Chair
Cllr Ann Horn, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Elaine Robertson, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr, Iain MacNeil, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Donald Manford, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland
Douglas Ellis, Transport Scotland
Sean Jamieson, Transport Scotland
Jim Anderson, CMAL
Catriona MacLennan, RHA
Jim Porteous, Islay Community Council / Ferry Committee
Islay MacEachern, Islay Community Council
Martin Shields, Kerrera Ferry Committee
Gary Adams, Kerrera Ferry Committee
Elizabeth Ferguson, Mull and Iona Ferry Committee
Robert Morrison, CalMac Ferries Limited
Simon Richmond, CalMac Ferries Limited
Demi Wylie, CalMac Ferries Limited
Bill Main, CalMac Ferries Limited
David Cannon, CalMac Ferries Limited
Ranald Robertson, HITRANS
Alex Leslie, Argyll and Bute Council

Apologies:

Kevin Hobbs, CMAL
Iain MacKinnon, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Robert Trythall, Tiree Community Council
Pippa Milne, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Roddy McCuish, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr John Armour, Argyll and Bute Council
Ker Corbett, Scottish Citylink
Jane MacLeod, Business Representative

1. Minute of Meeting held on 4 June 2018

The Minute was agreed as an accurate account of the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

Jim Anderson updated that Islay vessel design details are now likely to be shared in first quarter 2019 rather than by end of 2018.

Douglas Ellis confirmed that the decision on funding the new reservations system has not been approved yet.

3. Caledonian MacBrayne Operational and Performance Update

Robert Morrison updated the group on the change in organisational structure at CalMac Ferries with his role not covering day to day operations across the whole of the network. This will see three Area Operations Manager roles relating to a revised geographic focus.

Robert led the operational / performance update for routes in the north of the area and Simon Richmond provided the update for the southern services. The updates covered the following statistics.

The follow up discussion included members asking that it be made clear that the Campbeltown reduction in traffic was the result of a full month of non-operation of that route.

Elizabeth Ferguson noted that three of the four Mull routes were identified as having faced challenges with two of the routes impacted by infrastructure issues. An update on the detail of these and actions being taken by CFL to reedy this with partners.

Robert Morrison noted that CFL are working with partners including Argyll and Bute Council to address the infrastructure issues including seeking a better night berthing of the Iona ferry. Working with CMAL it is intended that slipway improvements will remedy some of the issues that have affected that route. On Oban – Craignure steps are being taken through the Mull STAG to address infrastructure limitations.

Jim Porteous noted the increased traffic on the Islay service but underlined that this growth was achieved despite significant disruption, loss of second vessel and reservations system closure.

Action – CFL will continue to progress the more detailed and higher quality reporting with a view to having this available for future meetings.

4. Winter 2019/20 Timetables Overview

Demi Wylie confirmed that the response deadline for Timetables is 10th December. Only one request has been made for routes in the Argyll FSG area so far. The requests will be submitted to Transport Scotland on 15th December.

Robin Currie asked if it would be possible to share sets of timetables with community representatives as a support document to facilitate comments being made.

Mary Jean Devon underlined the significant negative impact the Craignure timetable has on the island. The desire of the community is to have the ferry berth overnight in Mull to enable the ferry to have an early departure and late arrival in Mull.

Jim Porteous asked if the dry dock process will be more efficient to ensure vessels are all available for the start of the Summer timetable.

Robert Morrison confirmed that the dry dock process is subject to detailed planning to ensure those vessels that need longer dry dock periods are provided for while younger vessels like Loch Seaforth have shorter dry docks.

Bill Main added that this planning will have a five-year horizon so that individual vessel dry dock needs are carefully planned for.

Action – Members will note the 10th December deadline for timetable requests and these should be submitted via ferry committees and / or elected members.

Action – Demi Wylie will consider the opportunity to share easy read versions of the timetables that will be operated subject to changes being agreed following the consultation process.

5. Regional VRDP Update

Bill Main presented the VRDP 2017 and 2018 update report. Key points covered included:

- Updates on the 2016 Annual Report analysis
- Actual carryings data used for period January 2017 to September 2018
- Forecast of future demand based on those used in 2016 analysis.
- Review of vessel capacities
- Summer 2018 and Winter 2019/20 timetables used as baseline for future service frequency

Robin Currie asked if plans are being made with planned utilisation of vessels after the two new vessels are introduced if the ferries that are replaced are available for redeployment.

6. Current project / programme update

a. Marketing

David Cannon presented a marketing update. The Marketing team has undergone a restructuring in the last two months. This is to better align resource and skills within the department to deliver the business needs.

In terms of strategy going forward key priorities are:

- Continually research to understand better our audiences – existing and new
- Align our marketing outputs e.g. digital, social media, outdoor, print
- Build up our assets
- Be more proactive in communicating the good stuff
- Roll out the customer facing brand
- Work collaboratively with our partners (you!) to help each other achieve mutual objectives

Key activities for remainder of calendar year and Q4:

- Big push mid Jan/ Feb to encourage forward booking for Summer 2019
- Working direct with DMOs in joint partnerships to stimulate shoulder season traffic
- A major audit of the website as a preamble to a significant overhaul in 2019

- Review of print including - as priority – timetables to make improvements in format and presentation
- Improving ‘front of house’ presentation - both on vessels and in key ports
- Tactical campaign in run up to end of year focusing on pushing summer timetable, retail offer, Adventures and online shop.

b. Commercial

No update provided for this standing item.

c. Contract Commitments Progress Report

David Cannon presented the report updating Members on progress with the Contract Commitments.

7. Ports / Harbours update

Richard Hadfield set out key port investment plans:

- Fionnphort infrastructure investment is being led by the Council.
- Iona berthing is still being looked at in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council.
- Oban marshalling area extension is now being progressed after CMAL secured access to rail land.
- A wider Oban master planning exercise is being led by Argyll and Bute Council and will consider road infrastructure, ferry terminal development, integrated transport hub, rail service developments.
- Coll / Tiree linkspan works are being looked at with a view to replacing both linkspans. LoLo freight operation is intended during the works.
- Lochboisdale Ferry Terminal STAG has been completed. The long-term proposal would be to move the ferry terminal to Gasay but it is likely that a short to medium term investment will be made first in Lochboisdale.

Ranald Robertson asked if making use of side hoist loading ferries (MV Lord of the Isles) has been considered during the works at Coll and Tiree to maintain a vehicle and freight service.

Bill Main responded to explain that this suggestion was ruled out as staff are not trained in side hoist operation and it was considered unfit for purpose for larger heavier commercial vehicles which are now used when compared to the years when the side hoists were used regularly.

8. Communities Board Update

No update was available from the Communities Board. The attendant Community Board representative had to leave to catch return ferry before the item was discussed

Action – CalMac Ferries Limited will invite a representative from the Communities Board to make a formal update at the next meeting.

9. Transport Integrations Updates

Demi Wylie presented a report on Transport Integration. In the Argyll FSG area the following update was tabled:

CalMac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with TS led rail projects and timetable reviews with other operators • No summer 2019 timetable changes within area so no impact on transport connections to report • Transport integration strategy in draft and due to be finalised Feb 2019 • Exploring shared mobility options within Oban area with external partners
ScotRail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Group may have seen press reports highlighting current work to bring dedicated carriages for cycles and ski equipment into use on selected trains on West Highland Line. This work is still at an early stage and it is likely more information will be available by the time of the next meeting.
Citylink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor re-timing of a journey to improve connection at Kennacraig on morning Glasgow - Campbeltown service. • Citylink are about to begin a review of all their journey time data to ensure that their summer timetables are as punctual as possible (this will ensure all ferry connections are reliable). • On-going discussions regarding afternoon connections for Islay which will be reviewed within summer 2019 changes. • No issues to report
Argyll & Bute Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a recent health and safety visit, the bus service that serves Port Ellen Pier can no longer travel down to the bus stop at the Pier to drop off/pick up. The service will now wait at the stop on Charlotte Street, a short distance away. • A review of Islay bus/ferry connections is on-gong in an attempt to provide more robust connections. • No major timetable changes, updates or issues within area to report

10. Proposal to reduce number of FSGs

Ranald Robertson introduced the paper with the four options for future FSG geography set out. These options were:

- I. Status Quo - Retain the current four FSG groups covering the following areas:
Argyll Group is concerned with services operated in the Campbeltown, Islay, Jura, Gigha, Colonsay, Oban, Mull, Iona, Lismore, Coll & Tiree area.
Clyde Group is concerned with services operated within the Arran, Bute, Campbeltown, Cumbrae, and Cowal area.
Hebrides Group is concerned with services operated within Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Harris and Lewis.
Skye, Raasay, Lochaber and Small Isles Group are concerned with services operated within Skye, Raasay, Lochaber and Small Isles area.
- II. Option 2 - Change FSG Geography to reflect CalMac Area Operations to cover the following areas:
Argyll and Lochaber Group is concerned with services operated in the Campbeltown, Islay, Jura, Gigha, Colonsay, Oban, Mull, Iona, Lismore, South Uist, Barra, Small Isles, Coll & Tiree area.
Clyde Group is concerned with services operated within the Arran, Bute, Campbeltown, Cumbrae, and Cowal area.
Hebrides and Skye Group is concerned with services operated within Skye, Raasay, Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Harris and Lewis.
- III. Option 3 - Change FSG Geography in line with the proposal made by Arran Ferry Committee and Islay Community Council at the previous round of FSG meetings which would see the current Argyll FSG merge with the Clyde FSG to cover the following areas:
Argyll and Clyde Group is concerned with services operated in the Arran, Bute, Campbeltown, Cowal, Cumbrae, Islay, Jura, Gigha, Colonsay, Oban, Mull, Iona, Lismore, Barra, South Uist (winter only), Coll & Tiree area.
Hebrides Group is concerned with services operated within Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Harris and Lewis.
Skye, Raasay, Lochaber and Small Isles Group are concerned with services operated within Skye, Raasay, Lochaber and Small Isles area.
- IV. Option 4 - Change FSG Geography with the objective being grouping more common routes and achieving a better balance in Membership size across groups to cover the following areas:
Argyll, Lochaber, Skye and Small Isles Group is concerned with services operated in the Oban, Colonsay, Mull, Iona, Lismore, South Uist, Barra, Skye, Small Isles, Raasay, Coll & Tiree area.
Clyde and Kintyre Group is concerned with services operated within the Arran, Bute, Campbeltown, Cumbrae, Islay, Jura, Gigha and Cowal area.
Hebrides Group is concerned with services operated within Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Harris and Lewis.

Jim Porteous confirmed that Option 4 was recognised as a good option from the perspective of the authors of the original merger proposal.

There followed a discussion on the proposed options and while there were some individual preferences it proved impossible to reach a consensus on the best option for future Argyll FSG geography.

Cllr Currie suggested that a single meeting of the wider FSG memberships should be held to consider the proposal and seek to reach a consensus by sharing and airing views in a collaborative and collective environment.

Action – It was agreed to seek a resolution to the proposal by arranging a combined FSG membership meeting in the New Year to address the future geography of the FSG meetings.

11. Scottish Islands Passport

Ranald presented an update to Members on progress being made to develop a Scottish Islands Passport as a marketing initiative that has the potential to not only develop sustainable tourism opportunities in our most remote islands but also to support the lifeline ferry and air services that serve them.

Members noted the report.

12. Date of next meeting

It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for **Monday 3rd June 2019** in Oban, depending on the outcome of deliberations at the joint FSG meeting to determine future geographic coverage.