



**Minute of Argyll Ferry Users Group Meeting (FUG)
(Oban, Colonsay, Iona, Lismore, Coll, Tiree, Barra, South Uist)**

**Held at the Corran Halls, Oban
11:00 on 26 March 2013**

IN ATTENDANCE

HITRANS

Mr Ranald Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL (A&B)

Ms Moya Ingram

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Councillor Donald Manford (DM)
Councillor Ronnie MacKinnon (RM)

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE (CalMac)

Mr David Cannon
Mr Robbie Brown
Mr Findlay MacRae

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries Division)

Mr John Nicholls
Mr Brian Gordon

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)

Mrs Sue Gledhill by VC (not successful)

APOLOGIES

Councillor John Semple
Councillor Mary-Jean Devon
Councillor Brian Murphy
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr Billy Neilson
Mr Andrew Flockhart
Mr Jim Martin

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Ranald Robertson welcomed Members to the meeting and thanked all who made it to the meeting explaining that a few late apologies had been submitted including Cllr Semple, Chair of this group, due to extreme weather conditions that are affecting Kintyre.

Sue Gledhill joined by video conferencing but her connection was lost due to which later investigation suggested was a result of weather related impact on the telecommunications network.

ITEM 1: Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of 27 November 2012 was approved as a correct reflection of the meeting

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

Cllr Ronnie Mackinnon raised the process and policy for Masters taking the decision not to sail. This often involves decisions being taken late in the day while passengers may travel to the port with uncertainty surrounding the likelihood of the ferry sailing.

General discussion followed where it was highlighted that there was a real dilemma of making this where early cancellation might avoid unnecessary travel but this might mean that weather conditions change and the ferry stays in port when she could have sailed.

ITEM 3: Scottish Government Ferries Plan

Brian Gordon provided a presentation on the Scottish Government Ferries Plan. Brian advised the group he has been with Transport Scotland Ferries Division only a short time and will try to answer all questions but happy take back any he is unable to answer.

Brian circulated hand-out on the plan to the group and provided background, summary, and overview of the Ferries Plan, highlighting impacts and enhancements to services within this group's area

Brian outlined results by community

- Mull – medium term - increase number of sailings during winter months. MV Isle of Mull will no longer be used for Colonsay sailing during winter.
- Ardnamurchan and Morven – no service change.
- Iona – long term plan to provide a longer operating day and new berthing facility at Fionnphort
- Coll and Tiree – additional winter sailing, two vessels to made available.
- Kerrera - short term- funding to secure current service. Working with Argyll and Bute Council at the moment, and

willing to take on the route if agreement is reached on this with the Council.

- Jura – transfer of responsibility, could be considered. A plan would be that part of an onward journey to the mainland there would be no charge for the Jura to Islay fare.
- Islay – consultation responses indicated a general satisfaction with existing service levels but the Minister has agreed to have further analysis on this route.

Ranald Robertson raised Billy Nielson's correspondence received by email prior to meeting.

"1) The main item of contention is the cancellation of livestock ferries, where welfare and safety are at the forefront of considerations, I would like Hi-Trans and Caledonian MacBrayne to take a look and examine the process of livestock transport from the Northern Isles, where animals are transported in specialised crates/cassettes, these fulfil all the animal welfare criteria and allow the transport of animals whenever a ferry can sail, livestock seem to be more comfortable than their human counterparts, certainly for the fulfilment legal travelling times they allow a period of Lairage for stock which allows them to be further transported without delays, QMS (Quality Meat Scotland) and RSPCA would certainly be onside for these ventures.

2) A note from the Islay ferry users, via the NFUS Islay branch, from Catriona Bell, branch member:

Our local NFUS branch has a problem with the Ferries Plan and I hope that you might raise it.

"We have 2 ferry ports, the sailing time to one, Port Askaig is 2 hours, to the other, Port Ellen 2 hours and 20 minutes. In addition the Port Askaig route in most weather conditions is the more sheltered, and is the nearest port to the local auction mart.

The Ferries Review proposed to take most of the sailings away from Port Ellen. This made financial and environmental sense and would have provided a better service to Jura which has a ferry connection with Port Askaig. However our branch and other organisations felt it was unfair and inequitable to take most sailings away from Port Ellen and recommended that it should have at least one sailing per day. However, when the plan was published the reviewers had gone back to the status quo i.e. 3 out of every 4 sailings going to Port Ellen.

The branch has now voted to press for equal sailings to each port. Brain Abbott (our local rep), would have been bringing it up at the now cancelled meeting with CalMac, I would be grateful if you could draw attention to the Islay NFUs position".

- Colonsay – Saturday sailing via Islay to Kennacraig and will in next few years look to provide a dedicated vessel increase 4-6 in winter and 7 day summer service
- Gigha- long term plan to introduce a longer operating

- Barra – additional sailing for Barra in the winter.
- Lochboisdale – Mallaig – continued commitment and continued to be considered at the next CHFS contract.
- Fares - RET is being rolled out across the network in the lifetime of this Parliament. The RET formula will be updated each year and multi fare equivalent will be comparable. Commercial vehicles removed as not affordable. A working group on Commercial Fares that will include representatives from HITRANS and Argyll and Bute Council will be established.

A general discussion followed.

Ranald Robertson thanked Brian for his comprehensive presentation

ITEM 4: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

Regional Manager Robbie Brown 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 October 2012 to March 2013.

ITEM 5: Public Transport Update

Ranald Robertson advised Members of the announcement on improvements to the Glasgow – Oban rail service that will be implemented in May 2014.

ITEM 6: AOCB

No items raised

ITEM 8: Date of Next Meeting

No date set for next meeting