



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

**Held at the Templar's Hall, Harbour Street, Tarbert,
11:00 on 27 November 2012**

IN ATTENDANCE

HITRANS

Councillor John Semple (Chairperson)
Mr Ranald Robertson (RR)
Mrs Katy Cunningham (KC)

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL (A&B)

Councillor Iain Angus MacDonald (IAM)

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Mr Neil MacRae (NM)

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE (CalMac)

Mr David Taylor (DT)
Mr Robbie Brown (RB)

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart (AF)

CONFEDERATION OF TRANSPORT (CPT)

Mr Mike Dean (MD)

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (MID ARGYLL)

Mrs Jane MacLeod (JM)

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)

Ms Sue Gledhill (SG)

KINTYRE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Ian MacIntyre (IM)

SCOTTISH CROFTING FEDERATION/NFUS
Mr Billy Neilson (BN)

APOLOGIES

Councillor Mary-Jean Devon
Councillor Brian Murphy
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr Desmond Bradley
Mr Douglas Ellis

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Semple welcomed members to the meeting.

ITEM 1: **Minute of Previous Meeting**
The minute of 13 March 2012 was approved as a correct reflection of the meeting.

ITEM 2: **Matters Arising**
RR – advised the group that the last meeting of this group was a special meeting solely to prepare a response to the Scottish Government draft Ferries Plan consultation. Ranald informed the group that this response was completed, circulated, signed off and submitted ahead of the consultation deadline. The response is available to view and download from the HITRANS website.
RM – Referred to recent joint meeting of the Argyll and Hebrides Ferry Users Groups held on Barra on 1 October 2012. That meeting was chaired by the MSP for Eilean Siar rather than the HITRANS substitute Board Member present at the meeting which would have been the normal expectation as stated in the Ferry User Group 'Terms of Reference'.

RR – Explained that this was an exceptional meeting of the two groups and this resulted in a different approach in accordance with the attendance of the Minister for Transport and the Veterans at the meeting.

RM – raised the importance that this group should support the introduction of a Mallaig-Lochboisdale service

The Chair asked for this to be raised under AOCB.

ITEM 3:**Ferry User Group Terms of Reference**

RR – gave a brief outline of the Ferry User Groups and background to their establishment. Interest has been expressed at previous meetings for the remit of the Groups to extend to encompass all ferry services in the geographic area of the Group including those operated under contract to (or by direct operation by) local authorities and commercial services.

AF – asked if there were any barriers with including services that were not publically funded.

RR – confirmed that there should not be an issue with including discussion on services that are commercially operated such as the Kintyre Express to Ballycastle.

DM –supported the proposal to extend the coverage of the Group adding there should be a forum to discuss these things.

Chair – asked RR to take this idea away and bring back any issues to a future meeting for further discussion.

RR – Asked member to consider the current membership and advise of any groups individuals that should be included and whether there should be more Council members included in the group.

ITEM 4:**Winter Timetabling**

RR – explained that this item was included on the agenda at the request of Cllr MacKinnon and is designed to cover all routes within the Group area.

RM – there is a feeling in South Uist that with the least bit of wind sailings are being cancelled. This is affecting business particularly livestock carriage. He added that it would be good to have two sailings into Lochboisdale and two into Barra

DT – responded to say sailings are not cancelled on a whim. Decisions are taken for the safety of passengers, ship and crews. These decisions are not taken lightly. Timetable consultation is sent in draft form, typo was included in draft and noticed very quickly and rectified, not pulled at the last minute.

DM acknowledged CalMac has come in and discussed this, which is to be commended. Cancellations are of real concern. It is right that Masters decisions should only be challenged when there is very good reason to challenge these decisions. It is frustrating for passengers when decisions are taken to cancel sailings 3 hours prior to the sailing and this has resulted in sailings cancelled ahead of time when the ship could have sailed as the weather has subsided by sailing time.

DT – advised that if this is what the users want then the approach can change but this would mean that decisions are not taken in advance and intending passengers may have left for the journey to the departure port and arriving to find sailings cancelled.

RR – suggested that while it would be unreasonable to expect systems to be changed as a result of this discussion it would seem reasonable for the operator to take this issue away for further consideration and publish a protocol for how to best handle these situations. People know that if they check the Website/Smart Phone systems and see an amber alert on their sailing it could turn to red nearer sailing time.

Action – DT to take this back and update the Group at the next meeting.

ITEM 5:

Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

CFL Regional Managers David Taylor and Robbie Brown reported on routes within their areas and provided the group with performance reports providing information on reliability and punctuality of routes covered within the group area for the period April- 20 October 2012. Performance reports and statistics were issued prior to meeting.

There followed a general discussion with the following requests made for consideration:

CFL to consider the request that the Coll/Tiree timetable include a call at Tobermory for foot passengers.

CMAL to consider whether the Kennacraig improvement programme could include a right turn lane on the trunk road.

ITEM 6:

Public Transport Update

MD – provided a public transport update to the group.

A written update was provided by Des Bradley, ScotRail, in an email presented by RR as follows:-

"Updates on timetable matters, mainly concerning seasonal trains which will have a longer period of running in 2013:

in previous years, the 0821 (Mon-Fri) combined departure from Glasgow to Oban, Fort William and Mallaig was split to run as 2 separate trains in the summer, to provide more capacity: one train for Oban at 0821, and a 0903 train to Fort William and Mallaig. In 2013, this practice will continue, but instead of applying May - September will now begin from Monday 1st April, running through until Friday 25th October. Same will apply to the corresponding southbound trains. This will provide more capacity on the route during the spring and autumn periods.

Similarly, 0911 Glasgow to Oban and 1611 Oban to Glasgow, which ran from May to September in previous years, will run 31st March to 27th October 2013.

1811 Oban to Glasgow (Mon to Sat) is slightly accelerated to allow a connection into 2130 Glasgow Queen St to Edinburgh, allowing these passengers to arrive half an hour earlier than now.

Seasonal Edinburgh to Oban Sunday train will return in 2013, running Sundays late June to end of August (0810 Edinburgh to Oban and 1711 Oban to Edinburgh).

Other seasonal trains will run as per previous years. If there are any queries on ScotRail matters, happy for any of the group to get in touch."

ITEM 7:

AOCB

AF – new hybrid vessel for the Sconser/Raasay service being launched by the Minister in December. All members of the group welcome to attend launch, with those wishing to attend to contact AF.

RM – asked for FUG view on the proposed Lochboisdale to Mallaig ferry service.

RR – directed RM to the HITRANS website where the Ferry User Group responses to the Draft Ferries Plan consultation have been published. In HITRANS own response the view taken was to support the position adopted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

ITEM 8:

Date of Next Meeting

26 March, Oban