



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

**Held at the Council HQ, Kilmory, Lochgilphead
14:00 on 30 July 2014**

IN ATTENDANCE

HITRANS

Ranald Robertson
Neil MacRae

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL (A&B)

Cllr Duncan MacIntyre (Chair)
Cllr Alistair MacDougall
Cllr Robin Currie
Pippa Milne
Fergus Murray

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Cllr Donald Manford (DM)
Cllr Uisdean Robertson (UR)

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE (CalMac)

David Cannon
Bill Main
Matthew Harrison
Simon Richmond
Finlay MacRae

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries Division)

Graham Laidlaw
Paul Linhart-Macaskill

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)

Sue Gledhill

NFU / Crofters Federation

Billy Nelson

Road Haulage Association

Ben Mundell

Unable to participate due to VC not working

Stewart MacLennan
Jane MacLeod
Sheena Nisbet

APOLOGIES

Councillor Ronnie MacKinnon
Councillor Iain Angus MacDonald
Councillor Brian Murphy
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Lorna Spencer
Des Bradley

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Duncan MacIntyre welcomed Members to the meeting.

Stewart MacLennan, Jane Macleod and Sheena Nisbet hoped to join the meeting by video conferencing but it was not possible to establish a connection.

ITEM 1: Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of 26th March 2013 was approved as a correct reflection of the meeting.

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

BN sought clarification on the reasons for the superior provision of facilities for the carriage of livestock to the Northern Isles compared to the Western Isles. GL explained that there was a significant cost in providing livestock containers at each port and that they had been introduced for the Northern Isles because of the length of crossing. However, should the regulations change in this area he confirmed that TS would be happy to review provision as appropriate. DM requested that the request be made in writing. FM agreed to provide information with regard to the current operation at Lochboisdale.

Action - FM agreed to provide information with regard to the current operation at Lochboisdale.

ITEM 3: On Vessel Wi-Fi

David Cannon provided an update on the introduction of Wi-Fi to all vessels and ports in the Cal Mac fleet by the end of next year. A contractor had been appointed and the first ships would be equipped later in 2014. The introduction of this facility was warmly welcomed.

ITEM 4: Caledonian MacBrayne Events 2014

David Cannon provided an overview of the wide range of events and promotional campaigns which Cal Mac was involved with during 2014. This included the links with VisitScotland for the 2014 Homecoming campaign a revamping of the Days Out leaflet and

working with various partners to promote events such as the Tìree Music Festival, Hebridean Celt Festival, Royal National Mod and the Queens Baton Relay.

Robin Currie highlighted concern that many of the promotions were targeted at visitors with less focus on regular island users. GL stated that the roll out of RET rather than ad hoc deals was best means of addressing issues fares structure.

Robin also highlighted the particular problems faced by young people travelling to sporting events on the mainland. DM agreed that this was a key issue and requested that efforts be made to engage with Education section of Scottish Government on this issue.

Action – Robin Currie to send Sport Scotland a copy of minute to help highlight issue with them.

Members also raised concern that there was insufficient capacity to cope with demand at peak times. DC highlighted need to encourage more people to travel during the week when vessels had spare capacity.

DM commended CalMac for the work which they had done to support the careers of many young people in island communities.

Action – Invite Cathy Craig of CalMac to next FUG meeting.

ITEM 5: Integration with Corran Ferry

Cllr Brian Murphy requested that this item be removed from the agenda due to his unforeseen absence.

ITEM 6: LGV Charging Regime

Matthew Harrison provided an overview of the steps which CalMac had recently taken with regard to LGV's. Following queries on the weights of vehicles by staff and other users, hauliers had been notified of their intention to undertake checks with weighbridges. Over 1700 vehicles have been checked to date of which 6 vehicles have been refused. It was highlighted that the restrictions which were being applied also apply to the road network and that Cal Mac have a legal responsibility to enforce where they are aware of vehicles in excess of their plated weight. MH stated that no ferry had run late as a result of the routine checks which only take around 30 sec per vehicle. Any delayed vessels were as a result of car volumes on peak sailings.

A general discussion on the impact of the LGV charging regime took place. There was agreement that the law should be applied but concern from many members on the impact that this would have on a number of communities served by Cal Mac.

Graham Laidlaw stated his support for CalMac's actions in this area and highlighted the ongoing Ferry Freight Fares Review which would

hopefully be completed towards the end of this year and address issues relating to freight pricing structure.

It was agreed that a short life working group be established to consider a recommendation on behalf of the group that can be submitted to the Transport Minister in respect of the following:

1. Identifying a short term method of introducing a lower tariff regime for the carriage of small vans that are over the 3.5 ton plated weight but fall within the up to 6.0m vehicle length.

2. Identifying a proposal that can be considered by Transport Scotland in their ongoing freight fares review that would see a graduated charge levied on a per ton of freight basis. In identifying such a system the working group will seek to ensure that the charge will not materially disadvantage commercial hauliers but will allow the flexibility for goods to be moved in vans / small goods vehicles.

Action: HITRANS to arrange a meeting of the short life working group at the earliest opportunity.

ITEM 7: Winter 14/15 & Summer 2015 Timetable Consultation

BM provided an overview of the proposed timetables for winter 14/15 and summer 2015 as outlined in the paper attached in the agenda papers.

DM highlighted concern at the ongoing problem of advising passengers with private vehicles to go to the port and see if there was capacity during peak periods where sailings were close to capacity was impractical for many who needed to make advance arrangements. DM also highlighted concern at recent late arrivals in Oban of the Barra service, also for arrival/departure times to coincide with other public transport. DM and UR highlighted desire for increase the number of days on which service operated to both Barra and Lochboisdale. BM indicated that these requests would be considered and that there was ongoing dialogue with ScotRail to ensure integration with enhanced train services to Glasgow.

Action: CalMac to ensure that updates on all ferry services relevant to the Argyll User Group were contained in future meetings

ITEM 8: CalMac Operational Update

BM provided an overview of the operational updates as per the summary Reliability and Punctuality reports enclosed in the Meeting papers highlighting the impact of the poor weather during winter 13/14.

RC highlighted concerns over capacity issues on Islay during peak months. BF stated that there was continuing dialogue with CAML and TS over plans to bring forward new vessels but also expressed need to work with partners to help encourage spreading of

demand away from weekends. GL highlighted strategy contained within the Ferries Plan and that this would seek to provide more resilience through a mix of investment in new vessels and port infrastructure.

ITEM 9: Public Transport Update

RR highlighted the encouraging patronage figures on the recently enhanced services between Oban and Glasgow, opportunities arising from the new Caledonian Sleeper Franchise which had been awarded to Serco and would result in new rolling stock and improved connections from Oban.

ITEM 10: AOCB

BN highlighted concern about the available tonnage to meet demand on the Islay service as a result increased output from the distilleries operating on the island.