



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

**Held at The Glen Hotel, Soroba, Oban  
10:00 on Tuesday 17 November 2015**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**HITRANS**

Neil MacRae  
Frank Roach

**ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL**

Cllr Alistair MacDougall (Chair)  
Cllr Robin Currie  
Moya Ingram

**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**

Cllr Donald Manford (until 1300)  
Cllr Ronnie MacKinnon

**ARGYLL & ISLES TOURISM CO-OP**

Neil Goldsmith

**FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESS**

Allan Parker

**ISLAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

Jim Porteous  
William MacFarlane

**TIREE & COLL COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

Ian Gillies

**ROAD ASSOCIATION HAULAGE**

Catriona MacIennan

**ABELLIO SCOTRAIL**

Des Bradley

**CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE**

Eric Smith  
Ross Moran

## **CMAL**

Tom Docherty

## **TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (FERRIES DIVISION)**

Douglas Ellis

### **APOLOGIES**

Jane Macleod – MA Chamber of Commerce  
Cllr Robert G MacIntyre – Argyll & Bute Council  
Cllr Brian Murphy - THC  
Cllr Elaine Robertson – A&B Council  
Sue Gledhill – HIE  
Iain Mackinnon – CnES  
Fraser Smith - Scottish Citylink / CPT

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### **Welcome & Introductions**

Cllr MacDougall welcomed Members to the meeting with round table introductions.

### **ITEM 1**

#### **Minute of Meeting 17 November 2015**

Jim Porteous requested that Item 1a on the agenda relating to Vesel Replacement and Deployment Plan be amended to include the additional line as follows;

'Jim Porteous cited the VR&DP commitment to consult widely on the preparation of future updates and requested that Community Councils be involved in this process'

### **ITEM 2**

#### **Matters Arising**

Douglas Ellis confirmed that the projected reduced utilisation was a result of additional capacity on the route. Jim Porteous requested that more detail on the proposed plans was required.

**Action: Douglas Ellis to request further detail from colleagues in Transport Scotland on the proposed consultation plans for updating the VR&DP and on the specific matter of projected utilisation on the Islay service.**

### **ITEM 3**

#### **Cal Mac Operational & Performance Update**

Eric Smith provided an overview of the operational and performance stats for the period of 25 October 2016 – 24 January 2016.

A number of members raised concern around the communication and decision making protocols for recent cancellations as a result of stormy weather\*.

Cllr Donald Manford commended Masters for their recent efforts to mitigate the impact of forecast stormy weather by sailing early or late to maintain a service.

Members recognised that the Masters decision must always be final but that it would be beneficial for Members and the wider public to have a clear understanding of how and when decisions are made in advance of forecast inclement weather with a view to avoiding scenarios where services were cancelled up to 24 hours in advance when the forecast weather did not then materialise.

Eric Smith said that there was always a conflict between those who prefer early communication of cancellations and those who have more flexibility and would prefer any decision to be left until the last opportunity.

Tom Docherty reported that environmental stations were being rolled out at a number of ports and these would help provide live information on the weather conditions.

Jim Porteous requested that consideration be given to passengers needs at ports with limited catering facilities when services maybe on hold for extended periods of time.

\*Following consultation with Cal Mac's Head of Marine services, Eric Smith provided Members with a summary of the variety of information sources which Masters and Skippers use together with local experience when assessing conditions and making decisions on whether or not to sail.

**Action: Cal Mac to clarify current process for making advance decisions on sailings and their communication of these decisions at the next meeting.**

#### **ITEM 4**

#### **Cal Mac Winter 2016 Timetable Proposals**

Eric Smith advised that while there were no major timetable changes proposed for winter 16/17 he was not in a position to share the draft timetables until the Transport Minister had signed off the budgetary implications of the proposed revised timetables.

Neil MacRae noted that the date for this round of Ferry User Group Meetings and those tabled under Item 7 had specifically been agreed with a view to providing the opportunity for consulting Ferry User Group members in advance of the meeting date and would therefore need to rescheduled.

Des Bradley requested that information on the proposed timetables be shared as early as possible so that if there was any scope to amend rail timetables to maintain or improve connectivity wherever possible.

## **ITEM 5          Ferry Availability Study**

Neil MacRae introduced a report summarising the findings from the 2015 Ferry Availability Study undertaken by Outer Hebrides Tourism on behalf of HITRANS CNeS and Argyll and Bute Council. The research involved daily checking of the Cal Mac website for the availability of services to nine Hebridean islands between April and October 2015 and found 2422 out of 7897 sailings were Unavailable To Book Online (UTBO) for car reservations by the day of sailing or in many cases up to several weeks in advance.

Jim Porteous welcomed the report and asked how Cal Mac and Transport Scotland were hoping to monitor demand as stated in the VRDP. Neil Goldsmith noted that it should be possible to pull stats from the existing website that would enable a better understanding of which sailings had highest demand and even estimate unsatisfied demand.

Eric Smith reported that ideally a new ticketing system would be in place but that this was now the subject of a legal case. As a result refinements were being made to improve the existing website that would be available from July. Cal Mac are also looking to introduce WiFi on services in the near future with it being rolled out at Oban later in the month.

## **ITEM 6          Ferry Freight Fares**

Transport Scotland's Scottish Ferries Plan made a commitment to deliver a more equitable and transparent freight fare structure. Neil MacRae introduced the item advising Members of the report circulated within the meeting papers which had identified a number of options to inform Transport Scotland in developing a new fare structure.

Douglas Ellis advised that further work was now being undertaken by colleagues to understand the economic development impact on islands and a date would be set for the working group to meet following this. Any change in the fare structure would be after the award of the new CHFS contract and be introduced as a contract variation. Catriona MacLennan and Cllr Currie highlighted the issue of high fares to Colonsay with some Islands not experiencing any benefits from RET and asked for the issue to be urgently addressed. Catriona MacLennan also requested that multi-journey tickets be reinstated for Tiree with a reduced rate for local hauliers.

Neil MacRae advised that the need for work to better understand the wider economic impacts of RET was required and would be looking to discuss how this might be progressed with Transport Scotland.

**Action: Transport Scotland to provide an update on the status of the Freight Fares Review at the next meeting.**

**ITEM 7**

**HUBOB Transport Interchange**

Frank Roach provided a presentation on recent 3D modelling work which HITRANS had commissioned of the area encompassing the Ferry terminal, rail station and pier at Oban. The aim of the work together with discussions with the various transport and other stakeholders is to develop proposals for a more integrated transport interchange which will be able to cope with the anticipated increased demand from all modes over the next few years.

**ITEM 8**

**Ferry User Group Meetings 2016**

Neil MacRae advised that revised dates would be re-issued in light of discussion under item 5 of the agenda.

**Action: HITRANS to re-issue revised dates for FUG's after suitable windows for consulting on future timetables had been agreed with Cal Mac and Transport Scotland**

**ITEM 9**

**Public Transport Update**

Des Bradley provided a summary of the impact to the rail timetable resulting from the closure of the Queen St station tunnel for up to 5 months from 20<sup>th</sup> March. The proposed timetable would preserve arrival / departure times at Fort William and Oban with changes at the Glasgow end and services terminating at the low level platform of Queens Street.