



THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

**Minute of Clyde Ferry Users Group Meeting (FUG)
(Arran, Bute, Cumbrae, Cowal, Dunoon)**

**Held at the Seamill Hydro, Seamill,
10:00 on 25 November 2011**

IN ATTENDANCE

HITRANS

Mr Ranaid Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL

Councillor George White (Chair)

STRATHCLYDE PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSPORT (SPT)

Mr Bryan Tennant

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

Councillor Len Scoullar
Councillor Bruce Marshall

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (FERRIES DIVISION)

Mr Douglas Ellis

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE (CalMac)

Mr Robbie Brown

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre
Councillor Denis McKenna
Councillor Ronnie Ahlfeld
Councillor Margie Currie
Councillor Alex Gallagher
Mr Andrew Flockhart
Mr David Cannon
Mr Alasdair Henderson
Mrs Fay Harris
Mr Brian Fulton
Mr Mike Dean
Mr Des Bradley

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

ITEM 1: Minute of Meeting

The minute of meeting of 24 June 2011 was approved.

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

No matters raised under matters arising.

ITEM 3: Scottish Government Ferries Review Update

Douglas Ellis provided a short update on the Scottish Government Ferries Review advising that the draft plan should be published by Christmas. A 12 week consultation period will follow publication.

There followed a general discussion on this item.

ITEM 4: TransTourism ERDF Project

Ranald Robertson gave a short verbal report on the TransTourism ERDF Project.

TRANSTOURISM-Sustainable Transport in Rural Tourism Areas is a Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) project with partners in Sweden, Iceland, Scotland, Eire and Northern Ireland and has a total value of €1.356M. EU funding is €808k. The project runs from 01 September 2010 until 31 August 2013. HITRANS is to contribute £60000 over 3 years, with HIE funding up to £21360 over the same period. The project delivers two key priorities:

- a) Promoting innovation and competitiveness in remote and peripheral areas.
- b) Sustainable development of natural and community resources.

The project consists of web-based timetables and itineraries to enable the visitor to browse at home and then commit to a public transport based trip in the Highlands and Islands, as part of a multi-national bid. This project is consistent with the recommendations of the Regional Access Scoping Study and helps relieve the constraints of current Highlands and Islands tourism/travel sites being either mode specific or simply very patchy in the information given on the opportunity to travel by public transport for a full multi-modal trip. Comprehensive single mode timetables do not facilitate the creation of individually tailored itineraries taking in attractions/locations of choice, and are often too detailed for the visitors needs. The portal provided as an output from the project would build and exploit existing data resources and introduce the opportunity for user feedback on trips to be generated within the content.

Bruce Marshall asked if the web portal will include Argyll ferries.

Ranald Robertson confirmed the portal will cover services by all ferry operators in Scotland and HITRANS will welcome input from anyone.

Action: When the project is more advanced a presentation would be welcomed by the group.

ITEM 5: Milk Transportations Costs by Ferry – update by Argyll and Bute Council

Len Scoullar provided an update advising that the Bute Creamery has closed with little prospect of this being re-opened. Much of the blame for this has been laid at the door of First Milk.

ITEM 6 : Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

Robbie Brown provided the group with performance with information on reliability and punctuality of routes covered within the group area for the period April-September 2011. Performance reports and statistics were issued prior to meeting.

Robbie Brown also added the following verbal report to expand on the detail included in the performance statistics:

A STAG exercise has been completed on the requirements for new berthing facilities and linkspan at Brodick. It is understood that CMAL have funding in place with a start date of 2013 and completion in 2014.

No meeting has been held for 3 years of the Cumbrae Tier 0 Ferry User Group but Robbie has been told the community is happy with the service they are getting from Calmac Ferries Limited.

ITEM 7: Argyll Ferries

a) Argyll Ferries Consultation Arrangements

Bruce Marshall advised he attended public meeting held last night at Dunoon. Reporting that meeting was feisty attended by approximately 400 people, with 5 on the table.

The main issues raised – sailings cancelled at short notice, no covered walkway, woman and children being sick on some sailings, connectivity.

Argyll Ferries insist the vessels are seaworthy, and well equipped to cope with conditions. Speed is restricted to 12 knots. They are providing 6-12 midnight service which is far superior to what they had before and will be good for Dunoon.

Service in place after election and this timescale was far too tight. Suggestion of pontoons was raised and thinks this is the way forward at both ends, not just Dunoon. Using gangway at the moment but vessels need to reverse with vessels going up and down, Argyll and Bute Council very keen to have pontoons and will ask the Government to pay for this.

Argyll Ferries Operating Report

Report was provided ahead of meeting by Alasdair Henderson who was unable to attend meeting. Contained within the report Alasdair reported:

“The introduction of the service has not been without its difficulties:

The initial timings of the sailings operated by Argyll Flyer in relation to train connections were tight, and this led to complaints that passengers were unable to make the connection. This situation was aggravated by the Clydeport’s insistence on a 12 knot speed limit, although the ship is capable of 19 knots. With the agreement of Transport Scotland a revised

timetable was introduced on 3rd October, and that connection issues have now been resolved.

Mechanical reliability has fallen short of what we and our customers expect. To the end of September out of a total of 5314 sailings 2.0 % were cancelled for technical reasons. This has mainly been due to electronic control "fly by wire" issues with Argyll Flyer. Specialist engineers from Europe together with our own technicians have carried out a programme of improvements, and Argyll Flyer is undergoing a minor refit during week commencing 21st November, which should resolve any outstanding issues. MV Ali Cat has also just completed her annual refit."

ITEM 8: Public Transport Operational Update

Ranald Robertson presented the following information which Des Bradley, ScotRail emailed by way of a rail update to the Group:

"Network Rail's renovation of Gourock station (renovation of the platforms and seawall / demolition of redundant buildings / new canopy on platforms 2&3 / new cycle shelter / refurbishment of north wall with glazed sections included / covered walkway to the ferry terminal) is on schedule to be complete in December 2011

Work is ongoing with Transport Scotland on developing proposals for making use of the infrastructure improvements between Glasgow and Paisley (originally part of the GARL project) and options will become clearer later in the year

As part of their winter preparations, SPT are encouraging people to sign up for free travel alerts - details at www.scotrail.co.uk/wintertravel "

Brian Tennant reported on new traffic management arrangements that Inverclyde Council have planned at Gourock Interchange. SPT are objecting to the current design proposals as they will have a negative effect on bus access in the area. SPT are keen to work with the Council on agreeing revised traffic management plans in the area.

The second round of tenders on the Kilcreggan ferry are due back soon and it is hoped that three prices will be returned. Kilcreggan-Gourock is a must, Kilcreggan to Helensburgh is a desirable and Kilcreggan to Blairmore is a nice to have but this last must be on a commercial basis. There is a potential opportunity to include the route in an initial smart card ticketing pilot project.

Bus contracts in Arran are being re-tendered presently. This should be completed next year. An issue that is becoming critical is the introduction of DDA wheelchair access requirement required by:

Midibus – Jan 2015

Standard single decker – Jan 2016

Double decker – Jan 2017

Action: The Group will seek an update on plans for upgrading roads in Arran from NAC.

Brian Tennant advised that he is looking at the concept of a Clyde Waterbus. He has developed timetable options for such a service linking Clydebank, Braehead, Glasgow Science Centre

ITEM9: Smal Ferries Project Update provided by CMAL

Andrew Flockhart was unable to attend the meeting but provided the following update by email:

"the Small Ferry / hybrid project is well documented on the CMAL web site and Group members can access information on the project there. The first route on which the hybrid ferry design will be deployed is Sconser – Raasay, and the second route is likely to be Gigha – Tayinloan."

ITEM 10: AOCB

Len Scoullar asked if there would be a possibility to have a Variable Message Board installed in the vicinity of Port Bannatyne providing advance warning to motorists to disruption to the Colintrave ferry. This would save significant unnecessary vehicle miles.

Len Scoullar asked if there is scope for close working with CalMac on agreeing reduced rates for schools group travel as the cost of fares is pushing groups to stop travelling due to budget cuts.

Robbie Brown agreed to take these issues back for discussion with his colleagues.

Bruce asked that the group write formally to CalMac asking that the future publications of the Explore magazine will include the Argyll Ferries service.

Action: HITRANS will write to CalMac with a copy to the Minister and Mike Russell MSP formally asking that the Argyll Ferries services are included in the Explore publication. This letter should be addressed to Archie Robertson of David MacBrayne Ltd.

ITEM 9: Date of Next Meeting

No date set, but agreed next meeting will be held on a Friday to coincide with the consultation on the Draft Scottish Ferry Plan.