

Item:

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Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group

Friday, 24th January 2020

Present:

Cllr Len Scoullar, Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)
Cllr Jim Anderson, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Anne Horn, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr John Armour, Argyll and Bute Council
Steven Neilson, Argyll and Bute Council
Alan McCabe, Transport Scotland
Michael Keen, Transport Scotland
Caroline Connelly, Transport Scotland
Kevin Hobbs, CMAL
Don McKillop, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Andrew McNair, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Don McKillop, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Robert Morrison, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Marc Stevenson, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Robin Scorthorne, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Tommy Gore, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Demi Wylie, Calmac Ferries Limited (CFL)
Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries
David Herriot, CalMac Communities Board
Ranald Robertson, HITRANS
Willie Lynch, Cowal Transport Forum
Bill Calderwood, Arran Ferry Committee
Jim Porteous, Islay Community Council
Jim Martin, Campbeltown Supplies
Brian Abbot, Islay Ferry Committee
Allan Comrie, SPT

Apologies:

Cllr Ellen McMaster, North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Chris McEleny, Inverclyde Council
Cllr Alan Reid, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Robin Currie, Argyll and Bute Council
Gordon Ross, Western Ferries
Islay McEachern, Islay Community Council
Gordon Smith, Visit Scotland
Ker Corbett, Scottish Citylink

1. Minute of 10 June 2019

Minute approved as an accurate note of discussion.

2. Matters Arising

Ranald Robertson reported that the letter from the Ferry Stakeholder Group (FSG) to the Minister for Islands was sent to the Minister. In addition to this a subsequent letter was sent by the Chair in respect to the Gourock linkspan and a copy of that response was circulated with the meeting papers.

3. Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan (VRDP)

Caroline Connelly updated on VRDP.

- Ministers are considering the final draft which points to a need for an increased fleet of major vessels built to fit with current infrastructure.
- Publication date expected to be published by the end of March.
- Current STAG appraisals will input to the report.

Items raised were:

- Need for Harbour investment

Action – The Secretariat will write to Transport Scotland to note the Group's support for the VRDP to be released and that this should be accompanied by the publication of a clear Vessel Strategy. The FSG underlined the need that this process be subject to Community Engagement, Agreement and Support.

4. National Transport Strategy NTS 2 / Strategic Transport Projects Report (STPR) Update

Caroline Connelly updated on NTS 2 and STPR 2.

NTS draft published in July for consultation that closed on 23 October.
Final NTS will be published on 30th January. This will be followed by a delivery plan that correlates with other plans including the Islands Plan.
A summary of consultation responses is available on the Scottish Government website.

Concern was raised on the Islands Plan engagement and the degree of input that people living and experiencing island life are not feeding into the process.

STPR is currently being scoped with input through Regional Working Groups.

5. Ferries Plan 2

Caroline Connelly reported that Ferries Plan 2 has been committed to in the NTS. Ferries Plan 2 is being scoped but will include:

- Fares Policy
- Vessel and Harbour Investment Plan

Ferries Plan 2 needs to be in place by 2022 but key parts will be released before this.

Members expressed a desire to input to the process and have as early sight as possible of the draft scope.

The Ferries Plan was recognised as having been a very positive step forward on ferries policy and a huge step forward on the services being delivered to communities.

Members felt that there needs to be decisive action towards urgent action on vessel replacement rather than waiting for 2022 before decisions can be made. Members also noted the need that vessel planning should incorporate a full and transparent process that ensures socio economic opportunity analysis is fully incorporated in the process via STAG and Transport Economic Efficiency Analysis.

Caroline Connelly reassured that vessel replacement planning has a separate life of its own alongside VRDP.

6. Caledonian MacBrayne Operational and Performance Presentation

Robert Morrison introduced the item which would have input from colleagues.

Andrew McNair provided the Commercial and Marketing update. This presentation covered:

- Contact Centre
 - Won CCA award
 - New Beacon system introduced to get information circulated more quickly on service events within CFL.
- Current Ticketing System
- Online Sales Mechanism for Tours introduced with 150k sales made
- Increased tours sales with 35% year on year increase for a snapshot of sales in June.
- Summer STV Campaign
 - Increased focus on research.
- Joint Marketing with DMOs
 - Carron Tobin of Argyll Tourism Collective has led a very strong partnership approach on the West Coast Waters project which will be showcased in the Year of Coasts and Water 2020
 - CFL are very open to working in partnership with local stakeholders and DMOs to deliver support for sympathetic local projects.
- Support for local events / Community Fund

Don McKillop provided the operational and performance for the north of the FSG area report covering the following key points:

- Islay growth

Finlay MacRae provided the operational and performance update for the Clyde Area. The key points noted included:

- Improved operational performance on the Cambeltown route and resultant volume growth.
- Reductions in coach bookings which is believed to represent a move away from hotels accepting large group bookings on a discounted basis.

Concerns at the ongoing poor performance of the Gourock – Dunoon town centres service were expressed with blame attributed for the failure of Ministers to provide new and more appropriate vessels on the route.

Transport Scotland confirmed that the investment in the Town Centres service in terms of vessels and infrastructure is being taken forward and it is estimated that new vessels will take three years from the point that design stage is reached and that point is not quite there yet.

The Western Ferries proposal for a freight service to Islay was noted and it was agreed that Western Ferries would look to meet with the Islay Ferry Committee.

Transport Scotland underlined they have confirmed that they will neither help nor hinder the Western Ferries service and it is important that this commercial opportunity is developed by Western Ferries.

Concerns were raised about the ability of our network to cope with forecast CV growth to Islay to meet production increases in the whisky industry.

Campbeltown representatives welcomed the very positive performance that has been achieved from the reliable service that was delivered in 2019 on the Campbeltown to Ardrossan route.

The key points on the performance statistics were:

| Route Name | Passengers | Cars | Coaches | CVs |
|-------------------------------|------------|------|---------|------|
| Ardrossan - Brodick | 2% | 6% | 9% | -1% |
| Ardrossan - Campbeltown | 31% | 30% | -40% | 27% |
| Claonaig - Lochranza | 3% | 5% | -4% | -30% |
| Colintraive - Rhubodach | -3% | 0% | -3% | -6% |
| Gourock - Dunoon | 3% | | | |
| Kennacraig - Islay | 4% | 3% | 13% | 4% |
| Kennacraig - Islay/C'say/Oban | 5% | 6% | -7% | 2% |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Largs - Cumbrae Slip | -3% | 2% | -4% | -8% |
| Tarbert LF - Portavadie | 6% | 3% | -45% | 10% |
| Tayinloan - Gigha | 2% | 11% | -70% | 22% |
| Wemyss Bay - Rothesay | -1% | 1% | -8% | 1% |

Demi Wylie updated on the timetable development process. Demi summarised responses received as:

- Cowal Transport Forum have asked for increase operation by MV Coruisk.
- Cowal Transport Forum have asked for changes to re-fit period and for Coruisk to provide a second ferry during dry dock periods of AliCat and Argyll Flyer.
- Consultation on a new timetable on Tarbert to Potavadie is underway.
- Longstanding request for a Claonaig to Lochranza service are being considered and discussed with other partners including CMAL.
- CFL are looking at a timetable that moves the majority of Finlaggan sailings to Port Askaig.
- Refit vessel deployment for Islay to be considered.

Members suggested relocation of one of the four spare Loch Class vessels that currently berth at Sandbank in the winter to an alternative port to enable a short turnaround deployment of additional capacity to Lochranza when the Brodick route is disrupted.

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- Joint Marketing with DMOs
 - Carron Tobin of Argyll Tourism Collective has led a very strong partnership approach on the West Coast Waters project which will be showcased in the Year of Coasts and Water 2020
 - Also with the Argyll Tourism Collective plans have been worked up to promote Kintyre and Cowal.
 - CFL are very open to working in partnership with local stakeholders and DMOs to deliver support for sympathetic local projects.
- Support for local events / Community Fund

Robin Scorthorne and Marc Stevenson provided an update on Ar Turas – the replacement booking and reservations system – to the Group which covered:

- The Vision for Ar Turas
 - A programme to deliver a modern booking, ticketing and travel experience for our customers and staff
 - Standardised, accessible and digitally enabled
 - Maximise available bookable space
 - Deliver customer insight allowing better understanding of those customers
 - Use market leading software to help standardise and simplify CFL processes in line with best practice
 - It will help make buying CalMac travel easy.
- Investment Objectives
 - Deliver enhanced customer experience for passengers
 - Deliver enhanced vessel capacity management.
 - Enhance insight for both CalMac and TS from appropriate customer information
 - Improve operational efficiency.
- Team Structure
 - Senior responsible officer at CFL – Robbie Drummond
 - Senior responsible officer at TS – Graham Laidlaw
 - Programme Manager – Robin Scorthorne
- The Plan
 - Currently in Procurement phase at the pre tender release stage.
 - Procurement expected to run to mid 2020
 - Implementation Phase 1 – COTS, Ticketing and Reservations Implementation to take 12 months to Summer 2021
 - Implementation Phase 2 – ITSO to be complete early 2022

There followed a group discussion on the enhanced capability offered by the system.

Alistair McLundie provided an update on Western Ferries operations. Key points covered were:

- Financial year to March 2019, total 32,400 sailings 58 cancellations in total.
- This figure is circa 500 sailings more than scheduled due to additional sailings provided at peak times.
- Not included are the 56 out of hours, free of charge, emergency blue light ambulance crossings.
- Service provision January 2019 to October 2019, 27,000 sailings scheduled but only 6 cancellations.

When CFL services are off in the past there has been a system of reimbursement in place (example given of Wemyss Bay disruption) that CFL can give to their displaced customers and this has not operated in recent disruption events which has caused upset for affected

customers. It was agreed that Tommy Gore (Area Manager Clyde, CFL) and Alistair McLundie would meet and seek to resolve this issue.

7. Ports, Harbours and Infrastructure Update

a. CMAL

Kevin Hobbs provided the CMAL update which covered:

- Gourock Linkspan Failure
 - o CFL confirmed that the option of using Dunoon as an alternative diversionary port is being investigated.
- Masterplan for Gourock, Dunoon and Kilcreggan is being taken forward.
- Port Ellen land reclamation project is being looked at.
- Kennacraig passenger terminal improvement and option to extend the port is also under consideration.
- A German Naval Architecture practice has been appointed to design the new Islay vessel. A deeper drafted vessel would be more efficient and therefore dredging of each port is being progressed at a cost of £2.5M per port but with savings of that magnitude each year.
- A full asset survey and audit will be undertaken on all CMAL facilities.

b. Argyll and Bute Council

Steven Neilson provided the Argyll and Bute Council update:

- ABC have undertaken work looking at opportunities to extend Port Askaig.
- Rothesay Harbour
- Port Askaig Resurfacing of Assembly Area would lead to a four day closure.

Action – Steven Neilson will liaise with colleagues on the feasibility of working with HIAL on developing an alternative approach to resurfacing works at Port Askaig.

8. Communities Board Update

David Herriot provided an update on behalf of the CalMac Communities Board. This covered:

- Lobbied for more resource to the CHFS ferry services.
- Lobbied in support for funding to be released for Ar Turas.
- Sought to maximise Ar Turas benefits.
- CB has represented community views on issues of service resilience.
- CB has created evidence to support investment.
- Been involved in responding to a number of consultation processes.
- Secured more clearly signed disabled seating on a number of routes.
- Encouraged and facilitated more local produce on vessels.

- Promote Community Fund.
- Sought reduced fares for school transport.
- Customer Service Group
- Pet Policy Update
- Working with CalMac on a socio economic study for value of ferries to their communities.
- Fleet Deployment and Resilience Sub Committee
- Angus Campbell will be giving evidence to the RECC

Currently undergoing a Community Board refresh which is intended to be a periodic process. This will be advertised soon.

Action – Transport Scotland will provide an update on the status of the school bus rate change proposal to the Secretariat for circulation to the Membership.

9. Scottish Islands Passport

Ranald Robertson presented a report updating on the Scottish Islands Passport project. The key update is the confirmation of LEADER funding and subsequent to this the appointment of Project Managers on a job share basis. Kirsten Gow and Sarah Compton-Bishop will be based in a new HITRANS office in Jura Service Point.

10. Programme for Government / Net Zero Update

Ranald Robertson presented a report detailing Programme for Government commitments on Net Zero. This expanded into current projects that could set out a roadmap for net zero in ferry services.

Ranald also presented verbally on the MF Ellen which is now in service in Denmark as a fully electric ferry. MV Ellen (the battery-electric ferry) has taken over from the diesel-powered MF Skjoldnæs to carry passengers and vehicles between Sjøby on Ærø island and Fynshav on Als island. Named Ellen, the electric ferry made its inaugural voyage on August 15 before going into service in September. Ellen has 59.5 x 12.8 m dimensions and a draft of 2.5 metre. She can sail up to 22 nautical miles, get up to 15.5 knots, carry about 30 vehicles and 200 passengers, and is expected to make up to seven return trips per day when she goes into service proper.

Robert Morrison added that CFL have now appointed a Carbon Reduction Manager to lead the company's work on managing environmental impact.

11. AOCB

Ranald Robertson noted the earlier circulation of a meeting feedback form setting out the rationale behind this and the importance in members completing this to ensure the FSG meetings meet the needs of the Membership. The survey can be completed electronically at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9LZ88BD>

12. Confirm Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 2 June 2020 in Lochgilphead.