



**Minute of Hebrides Ferry Users Group Meeting
(Barra, South and North Uist, Harris, Lewis)**

**Held at the Bridge Community centre, Bayhead, Stornoway
11:00 on 11 May 2011**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Councillor Donald Manford (Chairperson)
Councillor Morag Munro
Mr David Smart

HITRANS

Mr Randal Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (FERRIES DIVISION)

Mr Douglas Ellis

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr Phil Preston
Mr David Cannon
Ms Mary-Ann Campbell
Mr David Taylor

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart

ULLAPOOL HARBOUR

Mr Kenny Mackenzie

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTA)

Mr Ian Fordham

APOLOGIES:

Councillor John Mackay
Councillor John Laing
Mr Donald MacRae
Mr Mike Dean
Mr Ian Fox

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Manford welcomed members to the meeting.

ITEM 1: Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the 22 June 2010 meeting was approved.

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

No items raised under Matters Arising.

ITEM 3: Assessment of the Impacts of Road Equivalent Tariff

Ranald Robertson presented the draft report for the group's information, reporting that the Scottish Government published the Halcrow draft report in March. Ranald outlined the stance taken in the various party manifestos on RET. The Group considered the estimated cost section in the report on how much rolling out RET to new routes will cost.

A general group discussion of RET followed. The discussion concluded that with this as the final report on the pilot we now need an evaluation on how this has impacted on the communities served by RET and the wide economic benefits the pilot has delivered.

Ian Fordham suggested the group invite Halcrow to present the study to a future meeting.

Douglas Ellis responded that would take this request back to Judith Ainsley and get back to HITRANS but that there would probably be a cost associated with this request.

General discussion on RET followed

ITEM 4 Stornoway to Ullapool Vessel Replacement Options

Ranald Robertson advised this item was added to agenda to reflect the recent discussion that has focussed on the issue. Andrew Flockhart was asked to update the group on the Stornoway to Ullapool replacement vessel options

Andrew Flockhart directed the group to a presentation on CMAL website, advising that consultation is still underway and that the Government is listening to views on the subject. The original findings (as laid out in the presentation) identified the best option being single larger, faster vessel, with a new optimum innovative design and a capacity at peak times of 600. The MV Muirneag will continue in service until 2013.

CMAL will be looking to raise funds for the new tonnage and once figures returned will present to Scottish Government. Consultation process will take place with a number of presentations, tourism etc, and will take comments on board when reporting back to Scottish Government. If the group have any issues please contact CMAL direct.

Douglas Ellis confirmed discussions are ongoing with CMAL. There are financial constraints, but no decision has been made yet whether one or two vessels, and looking to go to the Minister for a decision early summer.

Kenny Mackenzie added Ullapool Harbour Trustees are currently looking to purchase land to extend the marshalling area at Ullapool.

ITEM 5: Passenger Rights – EU Compensation Arrangements

Ranald Robertson introduced the report to provide members with information on the European Parliament Passenger Rights Legislation that will increase passengers' rights when using public transport, and summarised the new consumer protection as it will apply to passengers travelling by maritime and inland waterway transport with 12 or more passengers, very low numbers, and not clear on how this will impact on UK in 2012.

Phil Preston responded the extent of compensation is trying to take ferries in line with airlines, in particular, hotel accommodation if there are any delays, and this might be a problem on some of the more remote islands

Ranald Robertson added the EU passed a new regulation this year which will affect some bus routes, audible announcements may have to be made on buses on next stop and this may have an impact on council transport spending.

Members were asked to note the report

ITEM 6: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

Regional Managers David Taylor, Mary-Ann Campbell reported on routes within their area and provided the group with performance reports providing information on reliability and punctuality of routes covered within the group area for the period October to March 2011. Performance reports and statistics were issued prior to meeting.

David Taylor added:

Figures not huge, but increase in coaches, with coach operators excited about the next few years, 58 coaches booked for Barra for the summer.

Currently reviewing winter timetables, and will be going out to the various groups for consultation.

Chair added there has been a huge interest in the islands since the Highland Parish TV programme, as does any programmes on the islands, and would like to highlight importance and benefits of this to all parts of WI, not only Castlebay

Ian Fordham raised the issue of this high demand resulting in online bookings closed for most weekends happening earlier than previously

David Taylor confirmed this, also, more people are now aware of RET and this has also contributed to the rise of early bookings.

Morag Munro added that accommodation providers are advising people to book early,

Ian Fordham responded that people unable to book accommodation as sailings are booked up, with Saturday sailings being a particular problem

Phil Preston suggested housekeepers move changeover day

Ian Fordham thinks there could be a problem with moving changeover

Phil Preston asked Ian to send this information/statistics to him

Mary-Ann Campbell added:

Stats show very clearly a very bad winter was experienced across the network.

Putting forward proposal to extend summer timetable ahead of 2012 publications.

Introducing Sunday am sailing across the summer period

Saturday night sailing, difficult with cost implications, shift would be out of hours, with costs to bring on additional crew.

Phil Preston added there are a number of factors to be considered. This will also affect Mike Dean, who will have to provide buses to accommodate these additional sailings. Further adding a bit more work needs to be done on this one.

The Chair recommended to continue engaging on this to find what is wanted, by whom, and how many, a fuller figure required.

ITEM 7: Public Transport Update

Ranald advised Mike Dean, Citylink sends his apologies, that Mike had provided transport update by email.

Update presented by Ranald as follows:-

- there will be additional morning coach connections to coincide with the additional CalMac sailings between Stornoway and Ullapool on Sunday 17 July for the Hebridean Celtic Festival, on Sunday 21 August for the Rally Hebrides and on Sunday 23 October for the Royal National Mod.

David Smart reported no change to summer coach timetables. Changed timetable booklets due to financial constraints, and this has not been very successful. The council trying to encourage users to use website for coach timetables, and will keep this under review as younger people are happy to use electronic means to access information but a lot of older people are not website friendly.

ITEM 8:

AOCB

No items raised under AOCB

ITEM 9:

Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting 16 November 2011.