



**FERRY USERS GROUP
(Barra, South and North Uist, Harris, Lewis)**

**Minute of meeting held in The Chamber, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar,
Stornoway 10:00 28 October 2015.**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Councillor John Mackay (Chairperson)
Councillor Uisdean Robertson
Councillor Phillip McLean
Councillor Ronald Mackinnon
Councillor Catherine MacDonald
Councillor Kenneth MacLeod
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr David Smart

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries)

Mr Richard Hadfield

HITRANS

Mr Randal Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr Eric Smith
Mr Mathew Harrison

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)

Ms Rachel Mackenzie

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Tom Docherty

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Alex Macleod

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTIA)

Mr Ian Fordham
Mr Donald McArthur

OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP

Mr David Wood

FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Mr D.R. MacLeod

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Phillip McLean
Councillor George Farlow
Mr Kevin Peach
Mr Fraser Smith

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor John Mackay welcomed Members to the meeting and this was followed by a round table of introductions.

MINUTE

Minute 27th January 2015 approved.

Iain MacKinnon noted that a number of members of this group are part of the CHFS Procurement Reference Review Panel but there is no involvement in the bidding process or award of tender. The Comhairle had taken legal advice that concluded there is no conflict of interest in Councillors attending both groups/ panel.

ITEM 1

Operational FUG Meeting

a) Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan

Richard Hadfield provided the group with a verbal presentation on Transport Scotland's Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan (VRDP), summarising key points of the plan. The VRDP and summary document were provided prior to meeting. Richard directed the group to the Transport Scotland website where all information on the VRDP can be accessed.

General discussion followed. Including the following items raised by the membership.

Cllr Uisdean Robertson expressed disappointment with lack of community engagement with regard to the

proposal for a new vessel to be deployed on the Uig-Lochmaddy and Uig – Tarbert services.

Richard advised that engagement will take place with communities. The VRDP also indicates that the planned 100metre shared vessel will not provide a long term solution for the routes and a STAG study is likely to be required to determine longer term deployment on both routes within the wider context of services to, from and within the Outer Hebrides.

Ian Fordham asked if information on the demand for the additional MV Isle of Lewis sailings from summer 2015 has featured in deployment plans for summer 2016 and asked if the results of the analysis of these will be released.

Richard Hadfield advised that assessment of these sailings is still in progress with the work being led by Transport Scotland's Analytical Services team. Richard hopes to share the results of this with key stakeholders once the analysis is complete.

b) CalMac Summer 2016 Timetable Discussion

Mathew Harrison outlined proposed timetable changes for summer 2016. He advised that the Minister has announced a range of timetable enhancements. CFL consultation is underway. To date the proposals appear to be well received.

There followed a lengthy discussion with a number of significant concerns aired regarding the consultation process to date. Reference was made to previous commitments that the Ferry User Group Memberships would be included in the consultation and that key sectors including Tourism have not had sight of the 2016 timetable proposal particularly in respect to Stornoway to Ullapool.

ACTION – The Group recorded the broad welcome for key aspects of the 2016 Summer timetable including the introduction of the summer Lochboisdale – Mallaig

service and improved Barra – Oban timetable. The Group also recorded a concern that MV Loch Seaforth deployed on the timetable sent previously may not offer sufficient capacity on Stornoway – Ullapool.

ACTION – The Membership asked that all future timetable consultation include specific reference to the Ferry User Group by sending to HITRANS as the secretariat of these. HITRANS agreed to capture any comments on the current timetables if CFL could now send complete timetables for all Western Isles routes.

ACTION: Matthew Harrison to send timetables to RR for circulation to these groups. Matthew hopes to have final timetables published by Christmas.

c) Performance Reporting

Eric Smith reported on the performance statistics circulated prior to meeting. Eric added that reporting is based on the summer timetable

d) Public Transport Update

Ranald Robertson provided an update on behalf of Fraser Smith, Scottish Citylink. Fraser provided this by email as he was unable to attend the meeting. Fraser is keen to work with CalMac and other partners on service planning for summer 2016 but was concerned that no consultation had taken place with Scottish Citylink at that time. Fraser suggested an early meeting with partners could be held in Stornoway to plan Summer 2016 timetables to avoid a repeat of the issues experienced in summer 2015.

e) CalMac Operational Update

Matthew Harrison reported that there is an issue with weight and length of some coaches particularly those longer triaxle coaches. A decision may need to be made to either restrict access to routes by triaxle coaches or change vessel or harbour infrastructure to permit them universally.

Donald Manford was concerned at a suggestion to restrict island markets from benefitting from a key segment of the tourism market if our ferries cannot

accommodate a type of vehicle that could become the market norm.

Ranald Robertson agreed to engage with CFL, CMAL and local authorities to better understand the issue and its implications.

Matthew Harrison reported that as a result of traffic management issues in Ullapool CFL had agreed to increase check in times from 45 minutes to 1 hour in response to a request from the Ullapool Port Manager that they take this action. Consequently the decision has been taken by CFL to extend check in time to 1 hour at Stornoway as well to ensure consistency and avoid customer confusion.

The Chair and a number of members of the group expressed strong reservations at this decision highlighting that the journey time benefits of a newer faster ferry had been entirely cancelled out as a result of this decision. CFL were asked to revisit this decision and a suggestion that check in times should be shortened rather than extended.

Iain MacKinnon noted that no discussion appears to have taken place with stakeholders on the Stornoway side of the Minch and if there is a traffic management issue this would equally rest with the trunk roads authority. Input should be sought from Transport Scotland in their role as that authority and perhaps a meeting under the chairmanship of Transport Scotland's Chief Executive could move things towards a logical solution.

Action: Richard Hadfield agreed to follow up with key stakeholders and Iain MacKinnon would try to convene a meeting of the Stornoway – Ullapool Stakeholder Group to discuss the issues and allow all parties to input to the solution.

f) Pier Improvements Ardmhor/Eriskay

Cllr Donald Manford gave a verbal report on the issues experienced by tri axle coaches on the Sound of Barra service. It was agreed that this issue had been covered in the earlier discussion under item 1(e) and Cllr Manford

through the Chair thanked HITRANS for agreeing to look into this matter further.

g) Ferry User Group Meetings 2016

Ranald Robertson introduced the proposed meeting dates for 2016 Ferry User Group Meetings. Ranald suggested meetings should coincide with draft timetables being produced to allow the groups input.

It was noted that the proposed February date clashes with a Council meeting. It was agreed to change February meeting date to that proposed for the Clyde Group 24th February 2016 and 26th October 2016 agreed as the Hebrides FUG meeting dates.

Presentation

CHFS Procurement update from Transport Scotland

Alan Malone provided background on the CHFS retendering and updated on the procurement process for the new Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services Contract which will commence in 2016.

Bidder Engagement Session

Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries Limited

Representatives of CalMac's Bid Team provided a presentation on their CHFS bid followed by a question and answer session

Serco Caledonian Ferries Ltd

Representatives of Serco Caledonian Ltd were also invited to participate in the Bidder Engagement Session but elected not to.