



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

**Held in the Council Chambers, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway
11:00 on 11 March 2014**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Councillor John Mackay (Chairperson)
Councillor Phillip McLean
Councillor Alasdair MacLeod
Councillor Uisdean Robertson
Councillor Ronald Mackinnon
Councillor Robbie MacRae
Councillor Kenneth MacLeod
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr David Smart

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries Division)

Mr Graham Laidlaw
Mr Douglas Ellis

HITRANS

Mr Randal Robertson
Mrs Katy Cunningham

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr David McGibbon
Mr Martin Dorchester
Mr Brian Fulton
Mr David Cannon
Mr Robert Morrison

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart
Ms Gillian Bruton

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Angus Smith
Mr Peter Read

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTIA)

Mr Ian Fordham

Mr Donald MacArthur

OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP

Ms Gail Robertson
Mr David Wood

FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Mr D.R. MacLeod

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Archie Campbell

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Mackay welcomed everyone to the meeting

ITEM 1: Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the 7 May 2013 meeting was approved as a true reflection of the meeting

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

No items raised under Matters Arising.

ITEM 3: Wi-Fi Update

David Cannon provided an update on CalMac's roll out of Wi-Fi technology on vessel. The report included details on the approach the company is taking to overcome technological issues to ensure customers get a reliable and consistent Wi-Fi signal that will be provided free of charge to passengers. Trials have been undertaken and procurement completed. Wi-Fi will be available on vessels and ports and will be phased in with large vessels first.

Members welcomed this programme that will be a very useful additional product.

ITEM 4: Homecoming 2014 – Ticketing Offer

David Cannon gave a PowerPoint presentation on Homecoming Scotland 2014. The update included details of major events that will take place in 2014 including the Ryder Cup and Commonwealth Games. David provided a marketing plan overview of these Events and detailed the ticketing offer delivered in conjunction with Visit Scotland.

ITEM 5: MV Loch Seaforth Timetable Consultation

Ranald Robertson provided a verbal report on MV Loch Seaforth

Timetable Consultation advising the Ferries Task Group meeting held its first meeting earlier in the day and a key issue raised was the lack of consultation on timetabling of the MV Loch Seaforth particularly that no consultation had taken place through the proper procedure of the Ferry User Group and the Comhairle.

Iain Mackinnon added the Ferry User Group is the best medium for consultation and should be used to ensure key stakeholders are engaged in the process. Iain added that a productive meeting was held between the Comhairle and CalMac the previous day and this has helped clarify a number of concerns regarding the Loch Seaforth timetable.

Brian Fulton responded to assure a considerable amount of work is underway at present particularly in terms of infrastructure works. The latest plan will see the MV Loch Seaforth enter service on 8th September with the plan in terms of timetabling being that the existing summer schedule will be operated. There will be an opportunity for a proper consultation on future timetabling to take place.

Iain MacKinnon welcomed this commitment and highlighted that stakeholders are concerned that there might be significant capacity constraints next summer should a single vessel operation mean a reduction in the number of timetabled passenger journeys. Martin Dorchester agreed that while the MV Loch Seaforth will offer significantly more capacity when compared to the MV Isle of Lewis it was important to engage openly on timetabling and the question of capacity. Should a case be made there might be an opportunity to retain MV Isle of Lewis on the route if a business case existed for that.

Graham Laidlaw agreed that timetabling needed to be looked at in detail and highlighted the considerable investment made by the Scottish Government in the new ferry and harbour infrastructure at both Stornoway and Ullapool.

ITEM 6: OHTIA Booking Availability Research – Summer 2013

Donald McArthur provided a report on the OHTIA Booking System Analysis in 2013 and updated on plans for a similar exercise in 2014.

There followed a discussion on the research findings and how OHTIA, HITRANS, CnES and CalMac can work together on the results of this analysis and throughout the 2014 period.

ITEM 7: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Ferry Task Group Update

Iain Mackinnon provided a verbal update on the inaugural meeting of the task group held earlier today.

There followed a short discussion on the role and composition of the Task Group where it was agreed to extend an invitation to the Federation of Small Businesses to join the Group.

- ITEM 8: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update**
Robert Morrison, Regional Manager introduced himself to the group. Robert reported on routes within the 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 2013 – February 2014.
- ITEM 9: Ferry User Group Meeting Scheduling – Spring / Late Summer**
Ranald Robertson provided verbal report on scheduling of these meetings and when they should be scheduled in the future. Ranald stressed that the Agenda should be generated by the membership of this group and highlighted how welcome it was that CalMac provided two useful reports on the Agenda today on key projects that would be of interest to the wider membership. Future meetings should be scheduled to take place at the appropriate time for timetable consultation and HITRANS will work with CalMac to ensure meetings are scheduled at the appropriate time.
- ITEM 10: AOCB**
An issue was raised regarding the lack of a contingency plan in the event of a lift breakdown that meant disabled passengers had a particular difficulty in getting between the car deck and passenger lounges.
Martin Dorchester responded that assistance should be in place for those passengers. There is an access number for those who need assistance. Assistance should be offered as this is standard routine. Martin agreed that CalMac will investigate the specifics of this incident.