



**Draft Minute of Ferry Users Group Meeting
Skye and Lochaber**

**Held at The Alexander Hotel, Fort William
10:00 20 August 2009**

IN ATTENDANCE

HITRANS

Mr Randal Robertson

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Cllr Brian Murphy (Chairperson)

Cllr Allan Henderson

Cllr Michael Foxley

Mr Cameron Kemp

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (FERRIES DIVISION)

Mr Brian Wither

CALEDONIAN FERRIES LTD (CFL)

Mr Phil Preston

Mr David Cannon

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart

HIE

Mr Scott Dingwall

CONFEDERATION OF TRANSPORT (CPT)

Mr Mike Dean

APOLOGIES:

Cllr John Laing

Cllr Michael Foxley

Cllr Roy Pedersen

Ms Judith Ainsley

Mr David Taylor

Mr Donnie Oliphant

Mr Robert Muir

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Brian Murphy welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining that he would Chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr John Laing, the regular chair of this meeting

ITEM 1: Minute of Meeting 17 February 2009

The minute was approved as a correct reflection of the meeting.

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

Item 5: Michael Foxley sought an update on the request for additional sailings from Kilchoan to Tobermory. Phil Preston advised that this will happen from the coming winter schedule. Michael welcomed the news of the extra sailings.

ITEM 3: Scottish Government Ferry Review

Brian Wither provided an update on the Scottish Ferry Review advising that the first round of consultation has been completed. Various surveys completed and being fed into the various comprehensive work packages. Consultants have been engaged to do various pieces of work and the Government are expecting draft reports by 1st of September. Whatever conclusions come out of these will be fed into the draft strategy. The draft strategy is due to be returned to officials at the end of the year and will go out to consultation early next year. The interim report will be made available on the Scottish Government website.

Allan Henderson asked if any consideration is being given to the Mallaig to Lochboisdale proposal. Brian responded the Government are taking an open approach to the Review and this option will feature.

Michael Foxley supported the this and agreed that the route should be included in the draft strategy and the on-going consultation, adding that it was important that the consultation was as inclusive as possible.

There followed a general discussion on the review

ITEM 4: Rassay Ferry Terminal Update by Highland Council

Cameron Kemp advised the group that good progress has been made over the summer, with completion expected at the end of 2009

ITEM 5: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

On behalf of the Regional Manager, Phil Preston provided the operational service update on the Lochaber and Skye area to the end of July 2009, performance reports and statistics were issued prior to meeting.

In addition to this Phil advised the group of plans to improve a number of services in the winter timetable.

Michael Foxley welcomed the changes that are being made and requested that Mull Statistics be included in this group.

On behalf of Cllr Roy Pedersen Cameron Kemp asked if actual passenger figures could be provided rather than percentage change. Phil advised they couldn't provide this information; Brian Wither offered to provide figures, those who require them should contact Brian directly.

Phil Preston confirmed all RET routes are up by approximately 15%, with a big increase in cars and motorhomes which is causing some unrest in the Western Isles. Phil suggested it is still too early to say if this is the result of RET as some growth could be expected as a result of the strength of the Euro and those holidaying at home due to the recession. Without doubt there are capacity issues and this will need to be fed into ferries review.

ITEM 6: Public Transport Operational Update

Mike Dean provided the group with operational update. Mike reported of Citylink's intention to add additional services to accommodate additional Uig ferry sailings on Wednesday and Friday evenings but this will be subject to the normal 70 period for registration of new journeys with the office of the Traffic Commissioner before they are implemented.

ITEM 7: AOCB

Ranald Robertson provided a presentation on Cearcaill na Gaidhlig. Ranald advised that the project sponsors are investigating ERDF funding opportunities for the future development and expansion of the project.

Allan Henderson supported this initiative, adding that it is important to recognise that the project will need long term commitment in terms of finance and support to achieve its targets.

Michael Foxley added his support, adding that it is a great idea, bigger and bolder than anything that has gone before, and Highland Council should be supporting this.

ITEM 8: Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed date of next meeting 4 February 2009, venue to be confirmed.