



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

**Held at Held QinetiQ, Balivanich, Benbecula
11:00 3 July 2007**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CNES)

Councillor Donald Manford
Councillor Norman MacDonald
Councillor Morag Munro
Councillor John Mackay
Mr Murdo Gray, Depute Director, Technical Services

HITRANS

Mr Dave Duthie, Director
Mr Randal Robertson, Programme Manager

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Mr Sam MacNaughton, Head of Transport and Infrastructure

CALEDONIAN FERRIES LTD (CFL)

Mr Ian Fox, Regional Manager

HIE INNSE GALL

Mr Donnie MacAulay, Area Director

ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr Donald MacLeod, MD, DR MacLeod

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms Sheila MacCormick, Secretary (UIST)

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Archie Campbell, CNES
Mr David Taylor, CFL
Ms Mary Ann Campbell, CFL
Mr Grenville Johnston, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL)
Mr Kenny MacKenzie, Ullapool Harbour Trust
Mr Torquil MacLeod, Stornoway Port Authority
Mr Mike Dean, Citylink

ITEM 1: Appointment of Chair

Dave Duthie welcomed all to the meeting, highlighting this and all future meetings would be chaired by HITRANS representative, who would be Councillor Donald Manford.

The Chair explained background to TIER 1, to bring forum together of communities and CFL

ITEM 2: Minute of Meeting 24 April 2007

The minute of the 24th April 2007 meeting was agreed to be correct and representative of the discussion. **Minute approved.**

ITEM 2.1

HIE Innse Gall will raise the issue of a business community representative at the forthcoming meeting of the Local Economic Forum (LEF). The decision on whether an additional representative should sit on the group on behalf of the LEF will be taken at the LEF meeting.

ITEM 2.2

Norman MacDonald raised his concern that in establishing a Tier 2 committee it could be made up largely of people who are not representative of the communities served by the ferry network, or directly affected, by ferry services. Representatives who sit on this level on behalf of an organisation must have a genuine stake in the ferry network.

ACTION:

Dave Duthie agreed to develop a discussion paper on a structure for a Tier 2 committee to present to a future HITRANS meeting. This would take on board the comments of the need for representation from the communities served by CFL and Northlink Ferries.

ITEM 2.3

Ian Fox advised that there is a need to raise public awareness on the changing situation in terms of the provision and delivery of ferry services as we move towards a service operating company delivering a clearly defined network. This also has resulted in the need for new arrangements on consulting with communities and the processes for delivering any changes. It is important that some publicity is taken forward to educate people on the new consultative arrangements and the company's obligation to run a defined service contract.

ITEM 2.4

Norman MacDonald asked if the Scottish Executive had relaxed its stance on the performance regime.

Ian Fox advised that the company has had some success in negotiating exemptions in the event of something necessitating a delay in sailing.

Norman MacDonald suggested that the group, as a Tier 1 FUG should add their representations to support this common sense position.

ITEM 3: Minute of HITRANS Partnership Meeting 18 May 2007

Dave Duthie reported on minute of HITRANS Partnership meeting of 18 May, highlighting Agenda Item 2: Ferry Users Consultation Arrangements, decision taken by HITRANS board that:-

CFL Management to limit representation to one Senior Manager and relevant Regional Manager/s. Additional management may attend if a

particular issue warrants this and that HITRANS must be notified ahead of the meeting.

HITRANS to provide clerical support with minute to be published to HITRANS website.

Donald Manford suggested it is important CMAL be represented at these groups

ITEM 4: CFL Winter 2007 Timetables

Dave Duthie advised 2007 timetables fixed, could only input winter 2008. Ian Fox confirmed this, only a few enhancements allowed.

ITEM 4.1 Murdo Gray raised the following issues:

- a.) Lochboisdale Community Council asked Ian Fox if the company would come to meet them. Ian responded that the company had met Storas Uibhist and were a little unsure who to meet the Estate or the Community Council. The Chair suggested the elected representative, in this case the Community Council, should be the first point of contact for the company.
- b.) A number of representations have been received by CNES asking that the last sailing from Ullapool to Stornoway be retimed to better serve groups travelling from the island to the mainland to access sport and leisure activities. This would leave Ullapool at approximately 1930 for arrival in Stornoway at 2210.
- c.) On behalf of Archie Campbell and Berneray Community Council Murdo Gray related that during the summer on the Sound of Harris crossing the Sunday service from Leverburgh to Berneray just misses a connection with the 1600 sailing from Lochmaddy. The suggestion is to sail 30 minutes earlier from Leverburgh to facilitate this connection.

Ian Fox was aware of the issue raised as item b.) (see above) but, as yet an answer had not been relayed to him. On the surface Ian agreed that the request was not unreasonable but he would check within the company. A decision will be required within a few weeks to ensure this goes into the timetable.

ACTION: Ian Fox agreed to check the feasibility of changing the timetable as per item c.) above with a view to including this from summer 2008.

ITEM 4.2 D R MacLeod suggested for ease of reference of members of the group the timetables should be marked if "no change" has been made since the equivalent timetable period the previous year.

ITEM 4.3 Morag Munro raised the issue that there is a need for daily (Monday to Saturday) services between Tarbert and Uig. This would have a crewing cost implication in running the service but could be done without impacting on other areas.

It was agreed that this request would be supported by the group.

Dave Duthie suggested the case of this service enhancement could be referred to HIE who are considering researching opportunities for service development.

ITEM 4.4 Morag Munro asked if any progress had been made in the restriction on daylight hours working on the Sound of Harris. Ian Fox advised that there was nothing new to report at present but the company was working on it with the MCA.

Murdo Gray reported that depth soundings were being taken by CNES in the Sound.

ITEM 4.5 Sheila MacCormick asked if there was any possibility of establishing an early morning service from the Uists to the mainland to cater for demand from people travelling to work on the mainland from Uist.

Morag Munro suggested this would be possible by retiming the current Sunday placing journey from Tarbert to Lochmaddy on Saturday night (after the 1945 arrival in Tarbert) and departing Lochmaddy to Tarbert on Monday morning in time for the 0730 departure from Tarbert to Uig. These timings were previously operated by the company.

ACTION: Ian Fox agreed to get a reply to the Group from the company in relation to the request made to retime positioning journeys as detailed above.

ITEM 4.6 Ian Fox related the details of the compulsory variant tender bid that required CFL to submit proposals for a Mallaig to Lochboisdale service and the impact this would have on the rest of the fleet and network. The timetable submitted included an option for a 1020 arrival in Mallaig returning to Lochboisdale at 1430. In between these times, the ferry would provide additional sailings between Mallaig and Armadale. This would require a new vessel to be procured and additional crewing.

ITEM 4.7 Donnie MacAulay asked if the company had resolved issues of onward connectivity/linkage between journeys that require Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra travel.

Donald Manford responded to advise of the complicated nature and knock on effect of changing any timetable as a result of the variety of onward connections being made. The ideal solution would be to increase the crossings on the Sound of Barra and lengthen the operational day of the Sound of Harris crossing to enable more crossings.

ITEM 5: Draft Terms of Reference

The Chair advised the draft terms included in the papers were for reference and information only, and that they were to go before the HITRANS board for approval. Any issues/comments to be returned in writing to HITRANS within two weeks to allow the board to consider making any changes as a result of representations from Group members.

ITEM 6: AOCB

The Chair suggested a meeting be arranged with the Minister at a future date to discuss various issues.

ITEM 6.1

The Chair reiterated the need to have CMAL present at future meetings. CMAL absence was noted.

ITEM 7: Date of Next Meeting

Meetings to be held on a six monthly basis, given that we are in the process of major change in the running of our ferry network the next meeting should take place in October.