



THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

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

**Held at The Bridge Centre, Stornoway
11:30 16 April 2009**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CNES)

Councillor Donald John MacSween (Chair)
Councillor Morag Munro
Councillor John Mackay
Mr Donald McRae

HITRANS

Mr Ranald Robertson

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED

Mr Phil Preston
Mr David Cannon
Mr David Taylor
Mrs Mary Ann Campbell

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (FERRIES DIVISION)

Mrs Judith Ainsley

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Torquil MacLeod

HIE OUTER HEBRIDES

Ms Anne MacAuley

ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr Donald MacLeod

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION

Mr Neil Campbell

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Donald Manford
Mr Dave Duthie
Mr Murdo Gray, CNES
Mr Mike Dean, Scottish Citylink

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Donald John MacSween welcomed all to the meeting advising in the absence of regular chair Donald Manford he would Chair this meeting of the Group.

ITEM 1: Minute of Meeting 18 September 2008

The minute of the 18 September 2008 meeting was **approved**.

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

Item 2: Ranald Robertson advised the Highland Council have added the bus stop at Uig Pier to their bus shelter waiting list. Hopefully this will result in a new shelter being installed in 2009.

Item 9: Phil Preston confirmed CalMac are pleased with the newly completed Terminal Building at Lochmaddy Pier which is a great improvement for passengers and staff.

ITEM 3: Scottish Government Ferry Review

Judith Ainsley introduced herself to the group advising she is heading up the Scottish Government's Scottish Ferries Review. Judith provided the group with a handout. Judith outlined objectives of review and that the Government is looking to support economic development of island and peninsular communities. Ferry links are vital to these communities both in economic and social term.

All publicly funded ferries are being considered in the review and no potential domestic routes will be excluded.

Judith advised the group that the proposed timetable of the Review has been delayed as a results of the EC investigation. Results are now expected to be produced after the conclusion of this investigation in September. The draft strategy is now expected to be produced towards the end of this year with the final strategy completed by next spring.

ITEM 4: RET – Update on Pilot Scheme

Ranald Robertson advised that RET was included on the agenda of the meeting as this is such a critical issue to the group. Ranald then handed over to Phil Preston to update members of the impact the company has seen since the pilot scheme began in October.

Phil Preston advised that it is still early days in the pilot but signs look promising in terms of traffic growth on a number of crossings. The original format of the pilot has been subject to some alteration as things come to light for example livestock carriage, also a new system to include tax exempt vehicles.

Phil advised that Halcrow are carrying out the analysis of RET on behalf of Scottish Government and the company is happy to leave the detailed analysis to them and will support this process through the supply of data. A meeting is scheduled in May where Halcrow will provide the first interim

report on RET. Carryings on Stornoway, Oban and Tarbert routes have seen significant growth.

Anne MacAuley added that the May meeting is a meeting of the steering group. It is important that business take advantage of the consultation element of Halcrow's work and feed into the exercise.

Judith Ainsley confirmed it is important to Government that they get feedback from the business community both for the RET monitoring and also for the Ferry Review. At present Halcrow have produced a sizeable interim report and are now working to scale this down to a meaningful and digestible scale in time for the meeting in May.

The Chair asked whether there was any potential for an underspend in the RET budget which would allow it to extend to include the Sound of Barra and Sound of Harris service as well?

Judith responded to say there is no likelihood of any underspend across any of the current budgets allocated to support the Scottish ferry network.

The Chair responded to say that this is a shame and that the Comhairle would continue to make a case for this.

A general group discussion of RET followed.

ITEM 5: CFL Regional post tender update

Mary Ann Campbell and David Taylor provided the group with the Operational Service update for the period to the end of January 2009 for the Western Isles Ferry Services.

ITEM 6: Public Transport Update

Members were informed there was nothing to report in relation to this item with the Chair advising that there is currently a pretty good transport system across the Western Isles.

ITEM 7: Stornoway to Ullapool Vessel Study – Update from CMAL

Andrew Flockhart advised the group that MVA Consultancy is holding a stakeholder meeting and will then deliver the final output on future options for the Stornoway to Ullapool route vessel provision. Andrew agreed that CMAL would provide an update on the outcome of the study to the next meeting and suggested members might also wish to keep an eye on the CMAL website until this time as this is regularly updated.

ITEM 8: AOCB

Neil Campbell advised that as a result of a timetable change the arrival of the ferry in Lochmaddy on a Sunday does not give adequate time for passengers to catch the ferry from Berneray to Leverburgh.

David Taylor explained why the timing change had been made and agreed to keep this issue in mind as the next set of timetable changes are being developed.

Morag Munro raised a request to have daily Tarbert sailing Monday to Saturday throughout the winter or at least an additional Wednesday or Friday sailing?

David Taylor responded he will include this request for consideration in the next phase of timetable planning discussions.

ITEM 9:

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Tarbert on Tuesday 18th August 2009, 12:00.