



THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

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

**Held at The Caladh Inn, Stornoway
14:30 18 August 2009**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Cllr Donald Manford (Chairperson)
Cllr Morag Munro
Cllr John Mackay
Mr Donald McRae
Mr Kenny Morrison

HITRANS

Mr Ranald Robertson

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr Phil Preston
Mr David Cannon
Mr Lawrie Sinclair

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Ms Lorna Spencer

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (FERRIES DIVISION)

Mr Brian Wither

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Torquil MacLeod

ULLAPOOL HARBOUR TRUST

Mr Kevin Peach

ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION (RHA)

Mr Donald MacLeod

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTA)

Mr Ian Fordham

CONFEDERATION OF TRANSPORT (CPT)

Mr Mike Dean

APOLOGIES: Mr Dave Duthie
Mr David Taylor
Mrs Mary Ann Campbell
Mr Cameron Kemp

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Manford welcomed members to the meeting

The Chair asked members if they had a view on the presence of press and public at future meetings.

Phil Preston responded that information given to these meetings is at times commercially sensitive and it might restrict the openness of information sharing if the meetings were held in public. In his view it is important that open debate takes place at the meeting and that it provides a platform for aspirational options to be considered that if reported on may be misconstrued as proposals.

Lawrie Sinclair supported Phil's comments.

A general discussion followed with the consensus of the membership agreeing that meeting debate would be curtailed if they were held in public with press present. It was agreed that meetings should remain in private and the minutes will be posted on the HITRANS website for public information purposes.

ITEM 1: Minute of Meeting 16 April 2009

The minute of the 16 April 2009 meeting was **approved** with a single amendment to show OHTA representative as Neil Campbell

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

Item 8: Ian Fordham asked for an update on the issue of the arrival of the ferry in Lochmaddy on a Sunday not providing adequate time for passengers to catch the ferry from Berneray to Leverburgh.

Phil Preston responded that the departure from Berneray has been put back to allow connection in the next timetable change.

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 have been undertaken and results are being fed into the various comprehensive work packages. Consultants have been engaged to do various pieces of work and draft reports should have been provided by 1st September. Whatever conclusions come out of these will be fed into draft strategy. The draft strategy is due to be completed by the end of the year and Scottish Government hope to make this available for public consultation early in 2010.

The Chair asked if STAG appraisals would need to be conducted, if so how long would this take.

Lorna Spencer confirmed STAGs are already being conducted on various routes and that the STAG process would normally take 9 months to 1 year to complete, but this depends on the consultants and the issues being reviewed through STAG.

ITEM 4: RET – Update on pilot scheme and monitoring arrangements

Brian Wither reported that the first monitoring report is now available on the Scottish Government website. Reporting shows that traffic is up on all the routes involved in the pilot, but it is too early to say if the upturn is due to RET.

Brian advised of stakeholders meetings held in May, details are also on Scottish Government website, with survey results etc.

Brian emphasised the importance of measuring the success of RET and the important role business feedback can provide in this process; there is a link on the Scottish Government website to the Business survey and it would be helpful if as many businesses as possible complete this survey.

A general group discussion of RET followed.

ITEM 5: CFL Regional Update

Phil Preston reported on behalf of the two Regional Managers whose area is covered by the Group. Operational Service updates for the period to the end of July 2009 for the Western Isles ferry services, performance reports and statistics were issued prior to meeting.

Phil reported that following various meetings on the network, requests for additional sailings have been taken back to the Government a number of positive changes have been agreed

Morag Munro responded to express her support for the additional Tarbert sailing which will be well received by passengers.

Donald McRae asked about the waiting list queuing system being operated across the network on a first come first served basis which may have the potential to work against local passengers who may not always know as far ahead that they need to travel and who would not normally arrive at the terminal much beyond the check in period.

Phil explained the reasons for the change which provide a consistent approach to waiting list traffic across the network. At most ports it is difficult to pick out particular cars and as the layout of the marshalling area prevents this approach. Therefore it is the only possible solution that can be applied across the whole network.

Lawrie supported Phil's comments, adding that this system is also best in the interests of staff safety as staff could be the subject of verbal abuse from people who were not shipped not understanding why other people arriving at the terminal after they had arrived were travelling ahead of them.

The Chair thanks Phil for his explanation which had given him a better understanding on the reasons for the new system being introduced.

ITEM 6: Cearcall na Gaidhlig

Due to time restrictions this item was not discussed, Ranald Robertson agreed to circulate the planned presentation to the group and include a progress update as an item for a future meeting.

ITEM 7: Stornoway to Ullapool Vessel Study Update

Lorna Spencer reported that the STAG study is nearing completion and CMAL expected recommendations in next few weeks. A number of objectives have been set, these came from discussions held locally and STAG now looks at all options to meet those objectives. The next stage is the appraisal stage of evaluating options against specific criteria set with the time sensitive factor being the need to replace MV Muirneag by 2013. Lorna added that funding for ports and harbours infrastructure is available to CMAL, and they will lobby the Government for more money if this is necessary. The Scottish Government are aware of the situation. Once STAG has been prepared and presented to the Government CMAL are happy in principle to provide the Group with a background report on findings.

Lorna will seek approval from the Scottish Government to circulate a background report to the group after the STAG has been submitted.

ITEM 8: Public Transport Update

Mike Dean provided a public transport update focussed on bus and coach services. Mike reported that the service to Ullapool for the Sunday sailing has been a success.

Morag Munro asked about a Uig-Inverness as there have been number of complaints on Invergarry changeover.

Ranald Robertson responded that this was raised at a previous meeting and was passed to Highland Council for consideration of investment to improve interchange facilities at Invergarry.

Mike advised of other options to avoid Invergarry changeover, the first coach of the day to leave Inverness at 9am can't be held back as would need to held back for over an hour and numbers coming off ferry and travelling by coach do not warrant holding back this service.

Morag responded that people don't travel through Uig to Inverness as there is no connection, but would go via Ullapool.

Ranald asked Mike if the service could be funded by Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar would Scottish Citylink consider introducing the link suggested by Cllr Munro?

Mike confirmed that Scottish Citylink do already operate a number of journeys supported by Councils and would be happy to provide a price for this option.

Due to time constraints Chair asked this to be raised at another date and would close meeting to allow those travelling by air to catch their flights back.

ITEM 9: AOCB

Due to time restrictions no items were raised under AOCB

ITEM 10: Date of Next Meeting

No date set for next meeting