



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

**Held at The Harris Hotel, Tarbert, Isle of Harris
12:00 19 February 2010**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Cllr Donald Manford (Chairperson)
Cllr Morag Munro
Cllr John Mackay
Cllr Archie Campbell
Mr Donald McRae

HITRANS

Mr Randal Robertson

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CaIMac)

Mr David Cannon
Ms Mary-Ann Campbell
Mr David Taylor

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Mr Torquil MacLeod

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTA)

Mr Ian Fordham

CONFEDERATION OF TRANSPORT (CPT)

Mr Mike Dean

APOLOGIES:

Mr Lawrie Sinclair
Mr Phil Preston
Mr Kevin Peach
Mr Cameron Kemp
Ms Judith Ainsley

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Manford welcomed members to the meeting

ITEM 1: Minute of Meeting 18 August 2010

The minute of the 18 August 2010 meeting was **approved**

ITEM 2: Matters Arising

Item 8: Invergarry interchange update.

Morag Munro advised the group she had held a meeting with Mike Dean earlier in the day in which she had suggested some potential timetable changes to improve integration between coaches and ferries at Uig. Mike had advised that he was open to looking at some alterations but often there could be a knock on effect with missed connections at other places including Sconser for Raasay sailings. Morag had agreed with Mike that any changes should not impact on other sailings. Mike Dean suggested that better interchange facilities at Invergarry would improve the situation for travel to Inverness. Ranald Robertson explained that the matter of improved interchange facilities at Invergarry have been raised with Transport Scotland in the past and a difficulty is the need for infrastructure on the trunk road to conform with strict criteria set down in the "Design Manual for Roads and Bridges" but HITRANS was working with Transport Scotland on a project called "Roads for All" that may see more fit for purpose guidance issued for works on trunk roads in rural areas.

Action: The request for improved interchange facilities at Invergarry would be sent to Transport Scotland with a view to initiating a site meeting with Transport Scotland and Mike Dean.

ITEM 3: RET – Scottish Government update on pilot scheme and monitoring arrangements

Ranald Robertson circulated a paper provided by Judith Ainsley, Scottish Government Ferries Division who was unable to attend the meeting.

Ranald highlighted the key points contained in the document including the significant growth recorded on RET Pilot scheme routes. What is clear is the revenue benefits and more importantly the wider economic benefits to these routes as a result of the growth in traffic.

Ian Fordham agreed and added that statistics show the biggest increase outwith the high season which indicates that vessels were already nearing capacity in the busier months but RET was clearly extending the tourist season.

A general group discussion of RET followed.

ITEM 4: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update

Regional Managers David Taylor and Mary-Ann Campbell reported on routes within their area and provided the group with performance reports providing information on reliability and punctuality of routes covered

within the group area for the period 1st August 2009 to end of January 2010.

The Chair requested that the Castlebay and Lochboisdale route be included in statistics and performance reports.

David responded he would take this back to Ian Fox, regional manager for Lochboisdale who could supply the necessary report. It was agreed that Ian should be invited to future meetings of the Hebrides Group to report on this service.

Ian Fordham asked if there are likely to be extra sailings for 'Hebfest' after Saturday night.

David responded that hotels view Sunday as main travel day. If he could have more information it might be possible to have an additional midday sailing.

ITEM 5: Cearcall na Gaidhlig

Ranald Robertson presented a power point presentation on the Cearcall na Gaidhlig, to provide the group with an update on the project.

The presentation advised that CalMac and Visit Scotland have given significant assistance in promoting the rings and music has been freely provided by Runrig for videos to accompany the journeys.

Ranald reported on 2010 plans for the project which will aim to consolidate the project in advance of a European funding bid.

ITEM 6: Public Transport Update

Mike Dean provided a public transport update focussed on bus and coach services. Mike reported one rumour had been circulating that Stagecoach was to withdraw their 61 service, but Highland Council have now agreed to continue funding that service for the summer period at least.

A change in Sunday sailing times into Uig has required a timetable change to be implemented for coach connections.

Mike also reported that he is in discussion with ScotRail regarding Kyle and Uig connections and that he has been asked to tweak a coach time, but cannot do this for the forthcoming timetable as it has already been registered.

Mike reported summer timetable Glasgow service increased to 7 times a day into Oban and 8 out, from 24th May – 23 October. Support has been received from Argyll and Bute Council which allowed the Dundee to Oban service to continue.

Mike advised if late sailing into Ullapool, Citylink will put on extra coach to accommodate this.

ITEM 7: Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar Referral of Issues for Attention of HITRANS/FUG

The Chair advised the group that a complaint has been referred to the Hebrides Ferry User Group from one of the Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar members for South Uist and Barra ward regarding cancelled sailings from Castlebay to Lochboisdale in December 2009. This matter will be the subject of a public meeting organised by Lochboisdale Community

Council to which HITRANS, Scottish Government and CalMac representatives have been invited.

David Cannon said there is a concern in Lochboisdale, but would have more information after the meeting with the community where it was hoped a mutual understanding will be reached.

Ranald Robertson responded that dialogue is still open and it is hoped that the meeting in South Uist will help address the issues raised by the community.

The Chair responded to advise that since RTPs took over the functions of the SSAC and CalMac Users Consultative Committee no formal complaints have been submitted to the Ferry User Groups so this is an interesting first test of the groups. HITRANS will also need to publish a formal process for complaint handling.

Ranald agreed with the Chair's comments that a formal procedure must be laid down, this needs to be subject to a paper that is agreed with the operator and Scottish Government.

ITEM 8: AOCB

No items raised under AOCB

ITEM 9: Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed next meeting be held Tuesday 15th June, at Stornoway.