



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

**Held in the Council Chambers, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway
11:00 on 26 June 2014**

IN ATTENDANCE

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR (CnES)

Councillor Uisdean Robertson (Chairperson)
Councillor Phillip McLean
Councillor Kenneth MacLeod
Councillor Ronald Mackinnon
Mr Iain Mackinnon
Mr David Smart

PRESENT

Councillor Rae Mackenzie
Councillor Charles Nicholson
Councillor Kenneth Murray

HITRANS

Mr Neil MacRae
Mrs Katy Cunningham

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND (Ferries Division)

Mr Richard Hadfield by telecon
Mr Paul Linhart-MacAskill by telecon

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED (CalMac)

Mr David Cannon by telecon
Mr Bill Main by telecon
Mr Robert Morrison
Mr Finlay MacRae

CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD (CMAL)

Mr Andrew Flockhart

STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY

Ms Jane MacIver

ULLAPOOL HARBOUR TRUST

Kevin Peach

OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM ASSOCIATION (OHTIA)

Mr Ian Fordham

Mr Donald McArthur

OUTER HEBRIDES COMMUNITY GROUP (OHCG)

Ms Gail Robertson
Mr David Wood

FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Mr D.R. MacLeod

VISIT SCOTLAND

Mr Alan MacKenzie

APOLOGIES:

Mr Ranald Robertson
Councillor John Mackay
Councillor Catherine MacDonald
Councillor Donald Manford

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Uisdean Robertson welcomed all to the meeting. Round table introductions and those joining by teleconference.

ITEM 1:

Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the 11 March 2014 meeting was approved as a true reflection of meeting.

ITEM 2:

Matters Arising

No items raised.

ITEM 3:

Loch Seaforth / Winter Timetable Consultation

Robert Morrison introduced the proposed timetable (circulated prior to the meeting) for the MV Loch Seaforth (LS) on her arrival. Iain Mackinnon raised a number of concerns with the summer timetable including capability to undertake four sailings per day and need for consulting with stakeholders.

Robert Morrison reported that there will be further engagement and consultation with this group and other stakeholders. Current priority was to introduce the new vessel on proposed timetable, then trial and test prior to consulting on any potential timetable changes or additional services. CalMac were confident that LS would be able to cope with anticipated demand.

Robert confirmed the Isle of Lewis will remain crewed and on station with introduction of LS and will be there as a back-up and will remain on standby with no date set for its removal.

Cllr Nicholson, on behalf of the sports council, asked if the Saturday timetable could be reviewed to allow sports teams to travel over to mainland and back on same day. Robert Morrison confirmed Cal Mac will consider this request.

Further discussion on Loch Seaforth and proposed timetables followed including; concern that LS would have insufficient capacity to cope with existing demand let alone future growth; local community desire for a dedicated freight vessel for Summer 2015; discussion on the future of the Clipper Ranger and suitability of the Isle of Lewis as contingency due to restrictions with mezzanine deck and for carriage of Dangerous Goods.

Kevin Peach and Jane MacIver provided updates on the ongoing construction work to upgrade Ullapool and Stornoway Harbours and welcomed additional funding provided by Transport Scotland. Cal Mac also thanked both ports for their engagement and assistance during this period.

The following actions were agreed:-

ACTIONS

- CalMac to provide proposed timetables for consultation
- CalMac to confirm check in time and when booking for new timetable would commence for operation of Loch Seaforth.
- CalMac to undertake consultation with public transport operators and connections with new timetable for Loch Seaforth.
- CalMac to provide evidence used for forecasting future demand, capacity of freight vessel and its average usage.
- CalMac to review request made to improve Saturday timetable to better accommodate school and sport groups attending events on the mainland.
- CalMac to review proposal for additional Sunday sailings

The second part of this item could not be covered as draft Winter 2014/15 timetables for the Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra, Uig – Tarbert, Uig – Lochmaddy, Oban – Castlebay, Oban – Lochboisdale and Mallaig – Lochboisdale services were not produced for Members to consider.

ITEM 4: OHTIA Booking Availability Research – Summer 2014 Update
Donald McArthur provided an update report on the OHTIA Booking System Summer 2014 Analysis. Comparisons with 2013 research shows increase from previous years with for example the Tarbert to Uig sailing unavailable to book on line up to August, and all Hebrides routes demonstrating similar constraints.

There followed a discussion on the research findings and how OHTIA, HITRANS, CnES and CalMac can work together on the results of this analysis and look to resolve capacity and demand issues.

Item 5: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Ferry Task Group Update
Iain Mackinnon provided update on the Ferry Task Group, advising he attended a productive meeting with the Transport Minister, Keith Brown, on 12th June. Key outcome from the meeting was a need to work with partners to provide evidence base for forecasting future demand with a Working Group established to oversee this work. Iain Mackinnon also confirmed that the group will be making a very strong representation to Scottish Ministers with a letter going out in the very near future that would highlight current community concerns.

Item 6: Caledonian MacBrayne Operational Update
Robert Morrison, Area Operations Manager provided the group with performance reports for routes within the FUG area including information on reliability and punctuality of routes for the period 1 March – May 2014.

Concerns were raised over the reliability of the Mallaig to Lochboisdale service and enquiries about how the success of the pilot would be assessed. The need to for engagement throughout the pilot rather than just at the end was highlighted.

Members raised concerns over the unsuitability of the MV Finlaggan as cover for the MV Hebrides on the Uig – Lochmaddy/Tarbert service this winter. Gail Robertson highlighted that representations to Cal Mac on operational issues affecting hauliers needed to be addressed. Cal Mac confirmed that they would address these concerns moving forward.

Item 7: AOCB
It was suggested the Ferries Task Force meeting be held before lunch and the Ferry Users Group after and that meetings be held more regularly than twice a year.

Richard Hadfield confirmed TS happy to move to every 3-4 months if required.

Agreed meetings will be called to fit in with proposed timetables consultation with as much notice given as possible.