



Argyll Ferry Users Group

A&B Council, Whitegates Office, Lochgilphead,

1430, Thursday 8th September 2016

PRESENT:

Neil MacRae, HITRANS
Cllr Alistair MacDougall (Chair), Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Robin Currie, Argyll and Bute Council
Alan Millar, Argyll and Bute Council
Cllr Ronnie MacKinnon, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Neil Goldsmith, Argyll and Isles Tourism Co-op
Drew Collier, Caledonian MacBrayne
Graeme MacFarlane, Caledonian MacBrayne
Demi Wylie, Caledonian MacBrayne
Ross Moran, Caledonian MacBrayne
Jim Porteous, Islay Community Council
William MacFarlane, Islay Community Council
Brian Gordon Transport Scotland
Paul Flynn, Transport Scotland
Kevin Hobbs, CMAL
Jane MacLeod, Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce
Stewart MacIennan, Road Haulage Association
Ruaraidh Wilson, West Coast Motors

APOLOGIES

Cllr Donald Manford, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Ian Gillies, Tiree & Coll Community Council
John MacAskill, Tiree Community Council
Cllr Elaine Robertson – A&B Council
Iain Mackinnon – CnES
Ker Corbett - Scottish Citylink / CPT
Des Bradley, Abellio ScotRail
Pippa Milne, Argyll and Bute Council
Moya Ingram, Argyll and Bute Council
David Adam McGilp, VisitScotland

Cllr MacIntyre welcomed Members to the meeting and invited a round of introductions.

1. Minute of meeting of 23 February 2016

Cllr Currie highlighted that a request for Kintyre Services to be considered as part of the Argyll Ferry User Group Meeting as well as the Clyde had not been captured. Neil MacRae said that this would be addressed for the next meeting. Otherwise the Minute was agreed as an accurate reflection of the discussion.

2. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

Ferry cancellations and communication – Drew Collier to circulate on behalf of CalMac following this meeting.

Freight Ferry Fares Review – Brian Gordon said that an economic impact analysis of the options was being undertaken with a meeting of the Working Group arranged following completion of this work. There is a commitment for a new policy to be introduced during the term of the new CHFS contract.

3. CalMac Summer 2017 Timetable Proposals

Drew Collier provided a summary of the information in the Summer 2017 timetable pack. A timeline for the closure of the consultation would be circulated with impact assessments and financial implications fed through to Transport Scotland.

Neal Goldsmith said that the tight timeline given for consulting on the winter and summer timetables had been unacceptably short. Drew Collier said that he appreciated that this but that the objective in future was to move towards consulting on timetables two years in advance.

Cllr Currie indicated that Islay's comments on the proposals had been updated since a meeting with Simon Richmond. Jim Porteous highlighted that while extra sailings were provided to Islay on a Thursday and Friday, the preference was for Fridays and Saturdays as Saturday was a busier day.

4. CalMac Ferries Limited presentation on the new CHFS Contract starting 1 October

Drew Collier presented on some of the headline details of the new CHFS contract. The presentation covered:

ITT Parameters

- Fares set by Transport Scotland
- Routes and timetables set by TS and based on Summer 2015 for pricing purposes.
- Must use CMAL vessels
- Fixed price contract

Key High Level Changes to the new contract

- New Harbour Operating Agreement
- Tightly defined reporting arrangements
- Performance regime against KPIs.
- Introduction of Smart Ticketing
- New transport integration arrangements
- New accessibility and environmental requirements
- Detailed stakeholder relationship structure
- Operator responsible for vessel maintenance obligations..

Bid Summary

- Aim to meet the needs of communities, customer, stakeholder, sister agencies and Scottish Ministers
- Deliver long term subsidy reduction by growing revenue and operational improvements.
- Will continue to create long term social and economic value.

7 themes that underpin the outcomes for service

- Safety
- Value for money
- Developing sustainable communities
- Being a socially responsible employer.
- Improving customer service.
- Enduring commitment to environmental sustainability.
- Managing change effectively.

Improving customer service

- £6M investment in on board and port improvements to passenger areas.
- Daily management of demand for deck space to improve capacity.
 - o New terms and conditions to discourage no shows.
- Improve Quality of customer travel information at ports and on vessels – particularly during disruption.
- Appoint Transport Integration Manager to work with other providers on timetable connections.
- Innovative approach to smart ticketing.

Engaging and developing sustainable communities

- Appointed Brian Fulton as Director of Communities
- Create a Communities Board with the commitment to have this up and running by October 2017.
- Consult local and national user groups.
- Maximise procurement opportunities for SMEs.
- 80% target for local fresh produce (From 50% today)
- Continue to provide opportunities for direct local employment including apprentices.

Other points

- No compulsory redundancy policy.
- Build on status as a
- Appoint Environment Manager
- Have Transport Integration Manager appointed by 1 October.

Key points from the subsequent group discussion included:

Request that specified Key Performance Indicators be made public. Drew Collier said that this should be possible with the exception of those that included commercially confidential information.

Members requested more information on the role of the Communities Board and the relationship between the Board, FUG's and the Islands Transport Forum.

There was also discussion around what demand management measures CalMac may deliver and whether there could be scope to include varying fares. Transport Scotland confirmed price was not a tool available. Graham MacFarlane said that options being considered include elimination of multiple bookings, introducing a no show charge, impact from haulier block bookings being dropped. Discussions with hauliers about impact and practicalities around implementing some of these policies had already begun with timetable of implementing a new policy within 12 months.

Members also requested an update on the detail of proposals for ticketing and booking. Cal Mac acknowledged that there were currently inefficiencies in the current system which they were looking to address in the new contract.

Cllr Currie asked why more discounts couldn't be offered in winter months to stimulate demand. Transport Scotland confirmed that this option wasn't available within the current fares structure and would require a Ministerial decision to make such a change.

5. Transport Scotland Presentation on the Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan

Brian Gordon presented on the Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan. The presentation provided an update on key findings from the 2015 VRDP.

Background

- Independent demand forecasting exercise.
- Introduced in phases to represent changes around the network.
- Annual basis and looks at July/August.

Key Assumptions

- Based on current timetables.
- Previous demand increases.
- Point at which demand reaches 70% across the week.

Two demand/capacity models have been developed to assist with this decision making process, one for major routes the other for minor.

VDRP 2014 Recommendations

- 2 new vessels needed.
- Identified Ardrossan – Brodick and Uig to Lochmaddy / Uig to Tarbert
- MV Hebrides redeployed to Oban
- MV Isle of Lewis to move to Oban to Craignure
- Recognised medium term vessel provision for Islay.

Progress to date on VRDP 2014

- 2 new vessels in build at FML.
- Deployment of MV Isle of Lewis to Oban to Craignure could not proceed. Discussions with ABC ongoing.
- Shoreside infrastructure requirements are being assessed and addressed.

Major Route Model Outputs

- Oban to Craignure remains the most critically capacity constrained route.

Medium / Minor Route Model Outputs

- Mallaig to Armadale is the most critically capacity constrained route.

RET Impacts

- All model re-runs have incorporated up to date RET increases.
- For Arran routes a distinct second year uplift is emerging.

Arran routes post RET

- Ardrossan – Brodick year 1 pax up 5% cars 40% year 2 7% and 10%
- Lochranza to Claonaig

Emerging conclusions

- Oban to Craignure remains a challenge
- New vessels will help.
- Analysis and decision needed on Islay
- Further assessment on Uig – Lochmaddy / Tarbert and Stornoway – Ullapool
- Other priorities include Mallaig – Armadale and Sound of Harris.
- Review all options for additional capacity.
- Public finances remain tight.

Next steps

- Ferry User Group meeting presentations.
- Finalisation of 2015 report
- Presentation to Councils and RTPs
- Submission to Ministers for approval and publication.

Key points from subsequent discussion included:

Need to better understand un-met demand. Request for communities to be consulted on VRDP assumptions for their area.

Importance of port side considerations including passenger access at Craignure.

Need for short and long term solution for Islay

Neil MacRae indicated that Cllr Donald Manford had tabled a number of questions via email following the cancellation of his ferry which he would forward to Cal Mac and Transport Scotland so that they could provide a response. These included the timescales for the replacement of MV Isle of Lewis.

6. Performance and Operational Report

Ross Moran provided the CalMac Operational and Performance Update for each route highlighting key trends for each route and network wide. He confirmed that CalMac would begin publishing daily and seasonal timetable performance statistics on their website.

William MacFarlane highlighted major impact on Islay during the summer peak as a result of the reduced timetable following the MV Hebridean Isles being damaged in a collision with the Kennacraig Pier. Drew Collier said that there had been lessons learned but said that they were affected by difficulties in sourcing a second crew. Micheal Russell MSP is calling a ferry summit on Islay on October 17th to discuss the various issues.

Cllr Currie highlighted that RET has had a minimal impact on fares to Islay in comparison to other islands such as Mull.

7. Ferry Availability Study

Neil MacRae provided a short verbal update on the Ferry Availability Study which seeks to capture the availability to book online on reservable sailings focussing on a number of routes in the HITRANS area.

The research is conducted by Outer Hebrides Tourism who initiated the work voluntarily with a single route focus on Stornoway to Ullapool a number of years ago. HITRANS in partnership with CnES and Argyll & Bute Council has supported expansion of this work to include additional routes including Lochboisdale to Mallaig and Armadale to Mallaig from Summer 2016.

8. Public Transport Update

Neil MacRae tabled a ScotRail update on behalf of Des Bradley who could not make the meeting.

A request was made for bus connections to be included in the Cal Mac timetable booklet as Rail services are currently. Cal Mac indicated that this was being considered but that they also needed to ensure timetables were easy to understand.

Members also raised reports that passengers had not been able to board Citylink services to Glasgow at Rest and Be Thankful because the vehicle hadn't been able to stop and at Kennacarig on occasion where the coach was full by this stage in the journey. Ruairidh Wilson said he was aware of problems with the suitability of the turning circle at the Rest but would investigate. A duplicate service was provided on busy journeys from Ardrishaig but he highlighted need for passengers to book the service in advance so that the operator could provide additional capacity where possible.

9. AOCB

Drew Collier said that he was aware of various masterplans looking at transport issues in and around the harbour in Oban and requested that relevant parties share their work to ensure there wasn't any overlap.

Action: Neil MacRae to share contact details of colleague at HITRANS who presented on Oban Hub development proposals at previous Ferry User Group in Oban.

10. Date of future meetings

Action - The date of the next two meetings will be proposed by CalMac Ferries Limited to align with key consultation dates and these will be circulated by HITRANS to the

Membership as soon as possible. It was agreed that Tarbert would be a suitable venue for the next meeting.