

Item:

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**HEBRIDES FERRY STAKEHOLDER GROUP  
(Barra, the Uists, Lewis and Harris)**

Minute of Meeting held virtually through Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 10 January 2023 at 10.00am.

<p>IN ATTENDANCE</p>	<p><b>COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR</b> Cllr. Uisdean Robertson (Chair) Cllr. Kenneth J Maclean Cllr. Iain M Macleod Cllr. Grant Fulton Cllr. Duncan Macinnes MBE Mr Kenneth Morrison Ms Shona Hadwen (Clerk) Mrs Fiona Maciver</p> <p><b>TRANSPORT SCOTLAND</b> Ms Alison Wills Ms Margaret McGunnigal Ms Laura Smith Mr Paul Flynn Mr Calum Donnelly Ms Karen Fury Mr Brian Gordon Ms Marie Garvie Mr Paul Linhart-Macaskill</p> <p><b>CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD (CALMAC)</b> Mr Robert Morrison Mr Finlay Macrae Mr Don McKillop Ms Demi Wylie Mr Andrew MacNair Mr Darrell Broom Ms Fiona Galbraith Ms Donna Lockhart</p> <p><b>FERRIES COMMUNITIES BOARD</b> Mr Angus Campbell Ms Rhoda Campbell</p> <p><b>CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD. (CMAL)</b> Mr Brian Fulton Mr Chris Fisher</p> <p><b>HITRANS</b> Mr Neil Macrae Mr Ranald Robertson</p> <p><b>THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL</b> No attendees</p> <p><b>HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)</b> Ms Joanna Peteranna</p> <p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP</b> Ms Gail Robertson</p>
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	<p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM</b> Mr Alan Graham</p> <p><b>ULLAPOOL HARBOUR TRUST</b> Mr Kevin Peach</p>
APOLOGIES	Cllr. Susan Thomson, Vice Chair (CNES); Cllr. Mustapha Hocine (CNES); Mr Laurence Kenney (Transport Scotland); Mr Richard Hadfield (Transport Scotland); Mr Kevin Hobbs (CMAL); Cllr Calum Munro (Highland Council); Andrew Maciver (Highland Council); Alex Macleod (Stornoway Port Authority); Ker Corbett (Scottish Citylink)

1	Minute of Meeting held on 15 June 2022	The Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022 was <b>approved</b> subject to the following amendment regarding item 11 on page 12 of the minutes and in relation to the Ullapool Port Authority. The contract awarded to RJ Macleod was for an eight-month period, not a six-month period as stated in the draft minutes. The project is due to end in May 2023.
2	Matters Arising – Action Tracker	<p>With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022, HITRANs submitted the Action Tracker detailing updates on the action points for all the Ferry Stakeholder Groups. There were currently 13 actions for the Hebrides FSG, 6 of which had been completed.</p> <p>Finlay Macrae of CalMac, provided an update on all outstanding actions. Kenny Morrison of CNES also gave an update on a meeting due with CMAL to discuss the Sound of Harris and is expecting progress within the next month. The outstanding action for Transport Scotland would be followed up by Paul Flynn following discussion with Caroline Connelly.</p> <p><b>It was agreed:</b></p> <p><b>(1) to note the Action Tracker update;</b></p> <p><b>(2) Ranald Robertson would update on the outstanding Hebrides FSG actions and circulate to members</b></p>
3	Caledonian MacBrayne Operational, Commercial and Performance Update covering (CFL)	<p>With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022, CalMac, submitted an operational and performance report which addressed the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marketing</li> <li>2. Timetable Integration and Consultation Update</li> <li>3. Socio-Economic Report</li> <li>4. Ar Turas Update</li> <li>5. Route updates</li> </ol> <p>The update on the marketing and commercial side of the business highlighted the Digital Refresh project stating that work continued with the new Ar Turas e-booking system creating a much-improved online experience for customers. Work also continued with the repositioning of the CalMac brand and the delivery of the new brand guidelines which had been signed off from the Court of Lord Lyon.</p> <p>There was currently a recruitment campaign running to fill over 500 vacancies that was specifically targeting job seekers in the local communities served. James Bailey had been newly appointed as Head of Retail and a key focus would be to work proactively to support local suppliers across the network.</p> <p>The Report intimated that CFL were currently at 97% CHFS contracts commitments complete.</p> <p>In reference to timetabling the Report intimated that the summer 2023 timetable would be published in late January and bookings would open on a phased approach with phase 1 covering the period 31 March – 4 June. Winter consultation forms had been issued on 20 December 2022 with a deadline for responses of 1 February 2023.</p>

Further updates were also provided on the CalMac Community Fund, Sponsorship Programme and Youth and Philanthropy Initiative.

A further update was provided on each of the Hebrides area routes.

Concerns were raised by several members of the group in relation to very late publishing of the summer timetables and around the knock-on effect for local tourist businesses who had reported that bookings for the summer were down on the previous year. Assurance was given by Brian Gordon that Transport Scotland were in communication with the transport minister, to ensure the timetables for the period end March to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were released by the end of January 2023 with the issue of the timetable for the rest of the summer months being released as soon as possible after that. Ministers still to agree this.

Fiona Galbraith of CalMac provided information on outage percentages since June 2022 on the Hebrides Ferry Fleet with explanations given around some of the more prominent routes: Loch Seaforth generally maintained a high number of passengers, some of the Hebrides outages were transferred via the freight ferry, The Lord of the Isles had a 2.5 week outage due to a faulty sprinkler system.

Members asked if there was a way to change the way figures are reported. Finlay Macrae agreed that it was time to change, and they are in the process of developing a new programme which would enable figures to be adapted to what is required.

Linda Cunningham, Corporate Policy Officer at CNES raised a query regarding reliability, stating that CalMac is not penalised for cancellations and delays which result from defined 'Relief Events' – it is contended that relief of lifeline services elsewhere, and knock-on delays from previous sailings (apart from if due to adverse weather) should not be included as Relief Events. Relief of lifeline services elsewhere leaves the impacted network route without a vessel as there are no spare vessels to act as resilience in the fleet. Finlay Macrae responded by saying that they are defined as relief events within the contract.

Communication – several issues were raised regarding communication. Customers access information through different media platforms and the messages put out by CalMac across all platforms, particularly around service disruption and ferry diversions. The information needs to be immediate and clear, particularly around the reasons why ferries are being diverted (weather windows).

**Action: Fiona Galbraith to go back to the Service Updates Team with feedback and communication also to be discussed at Customer Steering Group.**

Resilience – Brian Gordon intimated that Transport Scotland were looking at several options to improve resilience and consistency in the service with requests being prioritised.

**Action: Brian Gordon to take forward the ongoing concern of resilience in the service, particularly concerns around the Sound of Harris, with Transport Scotland.**

Concerns were raised around the high level of cancellations recently on the Ardmhor – Eriskay route. Fiona Galbraith stated that these were mostly due to adverse weather conditions.

A discussion was held around the passage time of the Loch Seaforth, it was taking on average, ten minutes longer per journey. Laura Smith of Transport Scotland explained that this was due to "hull growth". This is the term used to describe a build-up of marine growth on the hull of the vessel. The vessel is cleaned regularly, but the build-up continues. The Loch Seaforth is particularly prone to this, and this may be to do with short passage times, or that it sits in Ullapool overnight for two or more hours at a time. The Loch Seaforth is operating at full speed but it still not keeping up with the schedule.

		<p>It may be necessary to look at a slight adjustment in the timings on the timetables to reflect what is happening. There was concern that businesses are modelled around the current timetables, so it is important that information is accurate.</p> <p><b>Action: Finlay Macrae agreed to get feedback for the group in relation to the marine growth issue.</b></p> <p>Angus Campbell of the Ferries Community Board asked about the use of the Arrow as a resilience option. Finlay Macrae confirmed that it is there as a resilience option and can be used to cover Ullapool – Stornoway, Lochmaddy – Ullapool and Lochboisdale.</p> <p>Fiona Galbraith gave an update on the upcoming Lochmaddy – Ullapool sailings which are due to start on 16 January 2023. Depending on conditions, some days the ferry may get there earlier, some days later. There may be a crossing of services in Lochbroom, and local office hours may be extended to cope with the additional ferry traffic. All Harbour Masters have been consulted with regards to the new timetable and every mitigation has been put in place to ensure passage times are achievable.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Hebrides Area Update.</b></p>
4	Project Neptune Consultation	<p>A Report was submitted providing background information on Project Neptune and stating that the objective of the review was to provide Ministers with strategic framework of options of the CHFS network. The Report provided a diagram showing the overview of the current structure of the CHFS network which was delivered primarily by three parties: Transport Scotland; CMAL; and CLF. The Report further provided an overview of the report structure, benchmarking, options for consideration, preliminary evaluation and community engagement.</p> <p>The Report stated that Ministers had appointed Angus Campbell, Chair of the Ferries Community Board to lead engagement with local communities on Project Neptune to allow communities to provide input to the future direction of the governance and delivery of lifeline ferry services. The Report details the aims of engagement and the scope of the consultation.</p> <p>Angus Campbell, Chair of the Ferries Community Board provided an update on Community Engagement Process and how this would work in practice. From the end of January 2023, he would be conducting face-to-face engagement meetings, starting in Arran, Cumbrae and Bute. The whole network would be covered, and he would spend two days in each location. If required, he could also conduct online meetings, but these would be in addition to the face-to-face option, not in isolation. He was keen to request the need for full encouragement of local communities to put their views across.</p> <p>Angus Campbell opened the floor to questions. Randal Robertson of HITRANS offered the assistance of the Ferry Stakeholder Group to assist with the project. Angus Campbell stated that he had already drafted 5-6 key questions which would form the basis of the community engagement sessions, he was waiting for approval of these from Transport Scotland. Cllr. Macneil raised a question about historic meetings between hauliers and CALMAC which had fallen away. Finlay Macrae of CALMAC stated that they closely monitored issues regarding “key accounts” and addressed these but agreed it was good to meet with hauliers on a one-to-one basis to discuss their individual needs.</p> <p>Angus Campbell finished by giving a timeline of events for the project. The aim was to have all feedback in by the end of March 2023 with a report being produced by end of April 2023 which would be presented to Scottish Ministers.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the update.</b></p>
5	Transport Scotland Update/including ICP Update	<p>With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022 an update was provided on the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP). The Report stated that priority had been given to preparing a draft of the Long Term Plan for Vessels and Ports and an advanced draft had been shared with key stakeholders with a view to undertaking a public consultation in early 2023. The working draft was available to view on the Transport Scotland Website. Following additional staff being sought from across Transport Scotland, the refreshed</p>

		<p>community needs assessments were commenced in late 2022 with the first community needs assessment contract for Cowel and Rosneath being awarded to Stantec. A programme of subsequent community needs assessments was currently being developed to be carried out during 2023.</p> <p>Several discussions on the ICP with key stakeholders had taken place since March 2022 along side engagement with the Ferries Community Board and ferry committees. The Report detailed the following next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to consult on the long term investment plan in early 2023.</li> <li>• With additional resources now in place, work on other components of ICP could be taken forward and accelerated during 2023.</li> <li>• Internal discussion on how to align work on ICP with other major projects: CHFS3 procurement and the follow-up top Project Neptune.</li> </ul> <p>Brian Gordon of Transport Scotland gave an overview of the ICP and that full public consultation was due to commence in February 2023.</p> <p>Brian Gordon acknowledged the concerns about the late issue of the summer timetables and intimated that every effort was being made to have these online by the end of January. He also spoke about the default increase of fares due in May 2023, which normally would be at the May CPI rate. Transport Scotland were looking at all options to avoid this. Correspondence had been received from the Deputy First Minister about maintaining rail fares in Scotland at 2022 levels. Members commented that there should be no disparity between any mode of public transport when it came to decisions around increasing fares.</p> <p>Gail Robertson of the Outer Hebrides Commerce Group commented that the late publication of the summer timetables was having a knock-on effect on bookings as customers would be looking at making alternative plans for their summer holidays and so, with the late decision on what fares would be from June 2023 onwards, would also have a negative impact on the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Brian Gordon took these points on board and confirmed he is in dialogue with Scottish Ministers regarding these issues.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Transport Scotland update.</b></p>
6	CMAL Update (including New Ferries for the Little Minch)	<p>With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022, Brian Fulton gave a verbal update on the submitted report providing an overview of the overall vessel projects and port infrastructure projects, including new initiatives.</p> <p>Of particular interest was the signing of the contract for two replacement vessels for the Little Minch (formerly Uig triangle) route. These will be built in Turkey by Cemre and will be largely based on the 1092/1093 vessels currently being built for the Islay routes.</p> <p>Alan Graham of Outer Hebrides Tourism asked about the replacement for the Lord of the Isles on the Mallaig-Lochboisdale route. Brian Fulton confirmed that there is no disposal plan for old vessels and that they would be kept for resilience purposes.</p> <p>Angus Campbell asked about having a dedicated replacement on the Stornoway – Ullapool route for the freight ferry service. Brian Fulton confirmed that whilst CMAL had been keen to purchase the Arrow, it was sold to another provider as it was their right, in the contract, to be able to purchase it.</p> <p>Cllr. Macneil asked if CMAL were considering the purchase of the Pentalina. Brian Fulton stated that they would not be purchasing the Pentalina, but that CalMac are in discussions with Pentland Ferries regarding its chartering.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the CMAL Update.</b></p>
7	Other Providers Update	<p>With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022, verbal updates were provided as follows:</p>

		<p><u>Stornoway Port Authority</u> Kenneth Morrison, Harbour Master, gave an update on the Deep-Water Terminal project. The Port Authority issues monthly updates on its progress.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Stornoway Port Authority Update.</b></p> <p><u>Ullapool Harbour Trust</u> Kevin Peach from UHT gave an update on their readiness for the Uig ferry redirection. With regards to the Ullapool Harbour Development Project, the project is ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Ullapool Harbour Trust Update.</b></p> <p><u>Comhairle nan Eilean Siar</u> Kenneth Morrison, Harbour Master, gave an update on the following: Lochmaddy Pier – should be completed by mid-May. Working with CMAL regarding the replacement of the Waiting Room heating system.</p> <p>Joanna Peteranna of HIE asked if there would need to be any further adjustments at either Uig or Lochmaddy piers in relation to the new vessels. Vessels would fit but if adjustments were required these would be made to the vessel rather than the quayside.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Update.</b></p> <p><u>The Highland Council</u> Highland Council submitted a report in connection with the Uig Pier Development. The report stated that the planned outage has been reduced from 24 weeks to 14 weeks and will be split over two periods, helping to reduce disruption to communities during the works. The first outage will commence on 16 January 2023 until 13 March 2023, and the second outage will commence on 30 October 2023 until 11 December 2023. CalMac have confirmed their service continuity plans to maintain ferry services. Neil Macrae of HITRANS asked if a passenger only service had been include as part of the closure.</p> <p><b>Action: Finlay Macrae to take this forward as an option as part of the second closure phase.</b></p> <p><b>It was agreed to note The Highland Council Update.</b></p> <p><u>Mallaig Harbour Authority</u> Ranald Robertson agreed to get an update from the Mallaig Harbour Authority.</p> <p><b>Action: Ranald Robertson to share an update from the Mallaig Harbour Authority.</b></p>
8	Communities Board Update	<p>With reference to item 12 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 June 2022, Joanna Peteranna of the Ferries Community Board provided a verbal update.</p> <p>The Board meets every three months and has close communication with Transport Scotland, CMAL and CalMac. It feeds into the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP), the Small Vessel Replacement Programme (SVRP) and CalMac. It has an emphasis on the criticality of ferries in island life.</p> <p>There are current vacancies on the Board, interviews are being held at the end of January 2023. Four members of the Board are assisting with Project Neptune.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Communities Board Update.</b></p>
9	Scottish Islands Passport Update	<p>Sarah Compton-Bishop, Scottish Islands Passport Project Manager submitted a Report providing an update on the Scottish Islands Passport Project. The Report stated that ‘Meet the Makers’, the first in the series of islands travelogues had been launched in the run up to Christmas 2022 and the next travelogue ‘Shaping Our Islands’ was due to be released in Spring 2023. The Report provided updates on the digital app and website stating that there continued to be a growth in app activity with over 11,000 app downloads and nearly 65,000</p>

		<p>unique sessions as of October 2022. The Report further provided an update on engagement and partnership working, marketing and funding.</p> <p>Neil Macrae of HITRANS gave a verbal update. Whilst over 11,000 have downloaded the app, the data has not yet been looked at in any detail.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the Report.</b></p>
10	Confirm Pre-agreed Date of Next Meeting	It was agreed that the next meeting of the Hebrides Ferry Stakeholder Group would take place in Stornoway on Tuesday 6 June 2023, time to be confirmed.