

**Argyll, Lochaber, Skye, and Small Isles Ferry Stakeholder Group
(Oban, Colonsay, Mull, Iona, Lismore, Kerrera, South Uist, Barra, Skye, Small
Isles, Raasay, Coll & Tiree)**

Minute of Meeting held virtually through Microsoft Teams, on Thursday 5th June 2025 at 1000.

<p>IN ATTENDANCE</p>	<p>ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL Cllr Andrew Kain Scott Reid</p> <p>COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR Cllr. Iain A MacNeil</p> <p>THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL Cllr Drew Millar Cllr Kate Willis (chair) Murray Bain</p> <p>TRANSPORT SCOTLAND Mark Hoskins Paul Linhart-MacAskill Caitlin Allison Isabella Monteith Emma Neary</p> <p>CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD (CALMAC) Ian Graham David Hamill Finlay MacRae Terry Williams Elaine Crossan Stephen Wood Jane McKellar Caroline Black</p> <p>FERRIES COMMUNITIES BOARD Angus Campbell Gail Robertson</p> <p>CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD. (CMAL) Chris Fisher</p> <p>HITRANS Neil MacRae Ranald Robertson</p> <p>HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE) Ian Philip</p> <p>MALLAIG HARBOUR Jacqueline McDonell</p> <p>COLL COMMUNITY COUNCIL Kirsty MacFarlane</p>
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	<p>SLEAT TRANSPORT FORUM Paddy McKay Matt Simpkinson Martin Munsie Tim Shone</p> <p>SMALL ISLES COMMUNITY COUNCIL Camille Dressler</p> <p>TIREE COMMUNITY COUNCIL John MacAskill</p> <p>COLONSAY FERRY COMMITTEE David Hobhouse Richard Bentley</p> <p>CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT Ker Corbett (Scottish Citylink) Jeff McCormick (West Coast Motors)</p>
APOLOGIES	Ms Blair Moglia (CMAL), Mr Brian Fulton (CMAL); Cllr Willie Hume (ABC); Billy Neilson (Crofting Commission); David Summers (Highland Council); Richard Porteous (Highland Council); Cllr Iain MacLeod (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)

1	Minute of Meeting held on 5 th December 2024	The Minute of Meeting of 5 th December 2024 was approved .
2	Matters Arising – Action Tracker	<p>With reference to item 2 of the Minute of Meeting of 5th December 2024, HITRANS submitted the Action Tracker detailing updates on the action points for all the Ferry Stakeholder Groups.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the time stamp on the Cal Mac website had been sorted so users were aware at what time updates were provided.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the updated Action Tracker.</p>
3	CHFS 3 Update	<p>Mark Hoskins presented an update following confirmation of the direct award of the CHFS3 contract to Calmac Ferries Limited which the Cabinet Secretary confirmed to the Scottish Parliament on 8th May 2025. Mark's presentation noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A direct award brings changes and opportunities to improve the current operations. CalMac will no longer be delivering a commercial contract, it will be delivering a public service. • Whilst CalMac will continue to operate the services, the award will not be "business as usual". We are working to embed the improvements required to deliver a safe, reliable and affordable service, giving due consideration to the responses and requests of the local communities. <p>Key differences noted from CHFS 2 to CHFS 3 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Flexibility • Improved Reporting and monitoring reflecting passenger experience • Enhanced resilience and reliability of the ferry services • Improved KPI's managed through a new Benefits Realisation Plan • Improved Communications – Designated Area Operational Managers for each region working closely with Communities and Stakeholders

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Community Voice, Transparency and Accountability, through participation in new designated groups (Technology, Continuous improvement, Innovation). • Annual Business Plan and a five yearly Corporate Plan will be reviewed and approved by Scottish Ministers • Alignment of Contract year and Financial year to drive efficiency. <p>There followed a discussion with questions from Stakeholders. Questions raised related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer engagement and understanding the local needs form ferry services year round • Local accountability mechanisms • Accountability of Business Plans and Corporate Plans to communities before submission to Ministers. • Whether KPIs will be adequate. • Continued concern about complacency on performance. • Level of planned consultation and engagement with communities in advance of contract commencement. This is compounded by delays in the ICP Community Needs Assessment process. • Keen to understand what KPIs will be and how they are sense checked by communities • Concerns that the Timetable consultation process in the past has been characterised by communities submitting proposals that meet their needs but these requests often go unanswered and not implemented. • Concerns at how decisions are made on vessel redeployment in the long term being made without input or dialogue with the communities affected. • Repeated comment that the service has not been good in CHFS2. • Lifeline service should be defined to inform the contract and Transport Scotland noted that this will be looked at in relation to CHFS 3 taking on board the comment. • Pro-active approaches to marketing were encouraged to ensure confidence is restored for tourists travelling to our islands. Transport Scotland recognised that damage has affected island economies as a result of ferry disruption and have now launched an Islands Business Resilience fund whose focus and criteria is being developed but will include addressing this point for those affected communities. <p>Action - It was agreed that the Secretariat would collate a list of questions that Ferry Stakeholder Group members would like to submit to Scottish Government / Transport Scotland to better understand the detail of CHFS 3 which should be considered before finalisation of the contract to operate CHFS 3. The response would then be shared with FSG members before the new contract commences to enable a response or further engagement as necessary.</p> <p>Action - Transport Scotland to provide clarity on definition of 'lifeline' service within new contract following review</p> <p>On behalf of FSG Members the Chair thanked Mr Hoskins for his presentation to the Ferry Stakeholder Group.</p>
4	Caledonian MacBrayne Operational, Commercial and Performance Update covering (CFL)	<p>With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 5th December 2024 CalMac, submitted an operational report which addressed the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RADAR and Insight into Action 2. Improving Every Journey 3. Insights Analytics and Data Science 4. Centre of Excellence 5. Block Booking Terms and conditions and utilisation monitoring 6. Route Performance updates (available by weblink provided with papers) 7. Enhanced engagement model (Area Management Appointments)

		<p>8. eBooking programme of development and vessel capacity analysis</p> <p>Finlay MacRae introduced the report.</p> <p>Elaine Crossan provided a presentation on the Customer Experience Measurement platform (RADAR). RADAR is now live and provides analytics on customer behaviour and route by route updates. The presentation covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening posts for customer feedback • RADAR touchpoints and specific metrics • Driving customer experience improvement through local ownership and actions • Actionable feedback reporting resolving issues <p>Questions from the group on the presentation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How CFL manage customer feedback in a way that the customer recognises this is constructively considered rather than 'shouting into the void' as this perception risks the feedback not being given. • Need to improve flow of information gathered by Area Managers being on the network. • Communities Board noted that the representation on the Customer Steering Group has reflected frustration at the process and way this works. • Will the RADAR system help with building information on unmet demand and what service designs should look like into the future. Elaine responded to note that this deals with customer information so will not significantly capture unmet demand unless the customer still travels with Calmac when the experience can be captured to include if a preferred travel option was not available to the customer. <p>Finlay MacRae invited questions on the written report in terms of Operational and Service Delivery matters across the regional area.</p> <p>Discussion followed on Operational matters.</p> <p>Members noted the update and thanked Mr MacRae and Ms Crossan for the report and presentation.</p>
5	Transport Scotland Updates	<p>Paul Linhart-MacAskill provided members with an update from Transport Scotland. The report covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Needs Assessments • Ferry Fares Policy • Integration (Onward and Connecting Travel) • Low Carbon and Environmental Impact <p>There followed questions and discussion that covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance that Islands Community Needs Assessment is completed to include potential route change options (Lismore) before consideration of port investment at Oban becomes too advanced. • Paul confirmed that the CNA will include Air services and Ferry services where relevant. • Is the issue of Islander and Non-Islander Fares under RET progressing in a way that could support deck space polit initiatives?

		Members noted the update and thanked Mr Linhart-MacAskill for the report.
6	Ferries Community Board Update	<p>Angus Campbell presented an update on behalf of the Ferries Community Board which covered the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CalMac have appointed Robert Morrison as Community Engagement Director and he is our first line of contact with the operator. • The full Board met with Ms Hyslop in the Parliament with the main point of discussion the new contract arrangements. • The last board meeting in Tiree on the 7th March. This included the opportunity to meet local groups. The FCB Young Islander Network co-opted member lives on Tiree and he brought a strong young voice to discussions. Our next meeting is on the 6th June. • FCB Sub group held several meetings with Transport Scotland regarding CHFS 3 and particularly around reporting and accountability. Island Community needs should be the foundation of future planning in tandem with knowing the true demand for services. • FCB were represented at the Cabinet Secretary round table which was very useful and recognised as a productive part of future ways of working. • FCB welcomed the further movement towards equality for under 22 travel but continue to request that equality for all our young people. • FCB continue to keep up the pressure for the ticketing system to be fully operational and operate as intended. In particular the ability for the system to maximise deck space available for booking and provide the best opportunity for people to book and travel. • FCB strongly emphasised this point at a joint meeting with the DML board on 14th May. • The announcement of the award of the new contract was not the FCB's preferred option but it now gives certainty going forward. It does however emphasise the need to ensure the community voices are heard more effectively to bring better decision making and transparency in monitoring and accountability. • In parallel to this the FCB continue to ask for island representation on boards and the recognition of the knowledge and experience they will bring to decision making. • The FCB is presently going through a recruitment process for new members and the outcome will be known by the end of June. <p>Members noted the update and thanked Mr Campbell for the report.</p>
7	CMAL Update	<p>Chris Fisher introduced the CMAL update which was enclosed within the meeting papers. The report covered updates on infrastructure improvements relevant to ports within the area of the group and, vessel replacements and progress on the small vessel replacement plan. These included:</p> <p>CMAL Update - Vessels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MV Isle of Islay commenced Builder's Sea Trials in the Sea of Marmara on Thursday 22 May 2025. • MV Loch Indaal is progressing well, as are Hull 1100 (MV Lochmor) and Hull 1101 (MV Claymore). It is anticipated that MV Loch Indaal will be delivered early 2026 with the third and fourth vessels delivered at 3 - 6 months intervals respectively. • MV Glen Sannox entered service on 13th January 2025 and is performing well.

- MV Glen Rosa is scheduled for delivery in 2026 – Scottish Parliament was recently advised of delivery rescheduling through NZET Committee.
- The contract for seven new all-electric small vessels was awarded to Remontowa Shipbuilding S.A. on 28th March 2025. Hull Numbers are B621/1, B621/2, B621/3, B621/4, B621/5, B621/6 & B621/7. Steel cutting for vessel one is scheduled for November 2025.
- Vessel studies have commenced for phase two of the SVRP, replacing vessels on the Sound of Barra and Sound of Harris routes. Mallaig Armadale is currently included in SVRP Phase 2. Further consideration may be required due to the service needs of this route.
- Discussions are ongoing with the Highland Council Corran Ferry Project investigating potential collaboration with the SVRP phase two work.
- The outcome of the Mallaig-Lochboisdale (Lord of the Isles) replacement vessels business case has been endorsed by Transport Scotland's Investment Decision Making Board.
- MV Hebridean Isles is due to go to Denmark soon for disposal.
- MV Caledonian Isles has been floated out of the dry dock and is now moored alongside the quay at James Watt Dock. Alignment works on both shaft lines is progressing well. At present the plan for completion of works and sea and berthing trials for the vessel will allow for a phased return to service during the week commencing 9th June 2025.
- CMAL continue to scour the globe regarding 2nd hand tonnage but as stated it is not bearing fruit – the exception being the MV Loch Frisa.

Port Infrastructure

- Various fender repairs have been completed or are planned to be carried out in near future at Armadale, Colintrave, Gourrock, Kennacraig, Kilchoan, Lochboisdale, Tobermory & Tiree. Further fender repairs are required at Tiree Ferry Berth & Coll non-ferry berth after recent inspections.
- Bullhole at Fionnphort has trialled an off-grid lighting solution and has been completed successfully. A further trial of an off-grid wind turbine assisted lighting solution is planned to start at Gallanach over the summer period.
- Various building project works are progressing; at Tiree with the design of a new building due following overall decision on the traffic management project, a modular terminal building being designed for Kennacraig to coincide with traffic management works, and an extension of the existing building at Colintrave is planned.
- All linkspan statutory inspections are in date. Structural inspections of Castlebay, Lochboisdale, Tarbert (Harris), Mallaig and Armadale have been undertaken.
- All Passenger Access System (PAS) statutory inspections are in date. Argyll and Bute Council are assessing tender returns for design and build of a replacement PAS at Craignure. CMAL is continuing to maintain the existing PAS in a safe manner.
- For the new Islay vessel enabling works, works at Kennacraig are substantially complete except for shore power installation, remedial works at Colonsay are substantially complete with the contractor completing final tasks prior to demobilising by mid-June, and mooring aid winches have been installed at Port Askaig.
- At Uig, The Highland Council are continuing with the construction of the new terminal building. The local community has commenced and CMAL

		<p>are now progressing the consents and tender elements of the proposed demolition of the existing building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground investigation works for the Small Vessel Replacement Programme (SVRP) and the Gasay ferry terminal development are currently out to tender with a return date in early June. • Some of the shore power dates for SVRP phase one will be beyond or tight to the delivery of the vessels. We are working closely with SSEN to improve on these schedules. There may be a short gap in shore power availability which we will keep to a minimum with additional options for interim solutions also being investigated, should these be required <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and Future Project Engagement: There are several project stakeholder engagements and communications in progress. These include: • Oban 1 Berth Infrastructure Engagement: This project aims to upgrade the infrastructure at the Oban 1 linkspan and adjacent slipway to support the requirements for new vessels proposed for routes from this berth. These upgrades will ensure future resilience. Communications will soon be shared with the community regarding current analysis. • Tiree Terminal Development Works: This initiative seeks to enhance marshalling capacity, improve traffic management within CMAL's port boundary, and provide a new terminal building. Further community engagement sessions are being planned to update the community on the project's progress. • Port Ellen Terminal Development Marine License Application: In April, the project team issued community communications regarding the Port Ellen HRO. • Uig Terminal Communications: In April 2025, communication was provided to the community regarding the future of the existing CalMac ticket office and warehouse, which will no longer be necessary for ferry operations once they move to their new building. • The CMAL Board will be travelling to Oban/Mull soon and will be engaging with a series of different community stakeholders at both locations. • Brian Fulton will also be participating in the upcoming Ferries Community Board (FCB) interviews alongside the current FCB Chair to select the new members for the board. <p>Members noted the update and thanked Mr Fisher for the report.</p>
8	Other Ports and Infrastructure Updates	<p>Argyll and Bute Council</p> <p>Scott Reid provided a verbal update on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council covering the ports for which the Council has responsibility including Craginure which where plans were now at the Final Business Case stage, Iona Breakwater and Fionnphort. There were no questions from members.</p> <p>Highland Council</p> <p>Murray Bain provided a verbal update on proposals for the Corran Ferry and port side & charging infrastructure. Murray highlighted close collaboration with CMAL and their Small Vessel Replacement Programme (SVRP) There were no questions.</p> <p>Mallaig Port Authority</p>

		<p>Jacqueline McDonnell reported that a decision on next steps is awaited from Transport Scotland on the upgrading of the ferry berth at Mallaig. The do minimum quote received was for £30m which is not considered acceptable and the preference is to build a smaller version to what was set out in the Mallaig Harbour Masterplan in 2020. There were no questions.</p> <p>Members noted the updated and thanked Mr Reid, Mr Bain and Ms McDonell for their reports.</p>
9	Western Isles Health and Transport Action Plan	<p>Neil Macrae submitted a Report providing an overview of work being undertaken through the Western Isles Connectivity for Health Travel Working Group that the Cabinet Secretary had asked HITRANS to chair and report on in December 2024. The Report provided an update on the work of the Working Group and outlined the actions and next steps that had been identified by the Group and several other areas for consideration. Key early actions to the work set out in the report included the extension of the Urgent Medical Travel protocol to inter island ferries on the Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra. This was a welcome step taken early in the process by Transport Scotland and Calmac Ferries.</p> <p>Members noted the update and thanked Mr MacRae for the report.</p>
10	Scottish Islands Passport	<p>Neil MacRae introduced a report to update on progress made on the Scottish Islands Passport project. Key points of the report included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full set of 4 Travelogues launched and are on sale covering 72 islands. • Over 43,115 app downloads and 249,144 unique sessions at the end of March (up from 22k and 154k respectively for March 2024). • Stamps collected for each of the 72 islands covered by the app: 43,864 stamp unlocks to date with 29,718 people using the manual unlock option showing that the app is providing inspiration for island visits. • We now have data to compare across more than 3 years which shows a continual increase in monthly in location unlocks. • A number of marketing displays are now out of contract although will remain until providers find replacements including Inverness Airport, Glasgow Airport, CalMac ferries and Oban Ferry Terminal. • We have continual marketing on screens onboard Northlink ferries. • We are included on new HITRANS printed bus timetables. • At the end of March SIP started a campaign on new digital screens at Stornoway airport for 1 year. • The project this supported with funds from the RURALITIES Horizon Europe project. <p>Members noted the update and thanked Mr MacRae for the report.</p>
11	Confirm Pre-agreed Date of Next Meeting	<p>It was agreed that the next meeting of the Argyll, Lochaber, Skye and Small Isles Ferry Stakeholder Group would take place on Thursday 4th December 2025 at 1000. The meeting would be online only via Microsoft Teams.</p>