



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

Minute of Meeting held in the Council HQ, Stornoway and online through Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 11 June 2025 at 10.00am.

IN ATTENDANCE	<p>COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR Cllr. Uisdean Robertson (Chair) Cllr. Iain A Macneil Cllr Iain M Macleod Cllr Mustapha Hocine Cllr Kenny M Macleod Mr Calum Mackenzie Mrs Linda Cunningham Mrs Shona Hadwen (Clerk) Mrs Fiona Maciver</p> <p>TRANSPORT SCOTLAND Mr Brian Gordon Mr Mark Hoskins Ms Margaret McGunnigal Ms Isabella Monteith</p> <p>CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD (CALMAC) Mr Finlay Macrae Mr Michael Scobbie Ms Elaine Crossan Mr David Hamill Mr Ian Graham Ms Jane McKellar</p> <p>FERRIES COMMUNITIES BOARD Mr Angus Campbell</p> <p>CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD. (CMAL) Mr Chris Fisher</p> <p>HITRANS Mr Neil Macrae Mr Ranald Robertson</p> <p>HIGHLAND COUNCIL</p> <p>HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE) Mr Nicolas Sobey</p> <p>OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP Ms Gail Robertson</p> <p>CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT</p>
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	<p>OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM</p> <p>ULLAPOOL HARBOUR TRUST Mr Kevin Peach</p> <p>STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY Mr Alex Macleod</p>
APOLOGIES	<p>Cllr Duncan Macinnes MBE (CnES)</p> <p>Sarah Maclean (Outer Hebrides Tourism)</p> <p>Mr Douglas Ellis (Transport Scotland)</p>

Minute of Meeting 1 The Minute of Meeting held on Monday 5 December 2024 was **approved**.
held on Monday 5
December 2024

Matters Arising – 2 With reference to item 2 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024, HITRANS
Action Tracker submitted the Action Tracker detailing updates on the action points for all Ferry
Stakeholder Groups.

Updates in the following actions were provided at the meeting:

Action 1 – HITRANS to write to Cabinet Secretary on behalf of the Chairs of each FSG to express dissatisfaction at the way communities and stakeholders are being consulted on CHFS 3.

Update: A copy of response from the Cabinet Secretary was attached with papers and issued to HFSG members.

Caledonian 3 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024 Caledonian
MacBrayne submitted a Report providing an operational, commercial and
Operational, performance update which covered marketing/customer experience, and timetable
Commercial and integration and consultation. An update on the following Caledonian MacBrayne
Performance routes was also provided in the Report:
Update

- Ullapool to Stornoway
- Tarbert to Uig
- Lochmaddy to Uig
- Lochboisdale to Mallaig
- Castlebay to Oban
- Berneray to Leverburgh
- Ardmhor to Eriskay

Appendix 2 to the Report detailed the planned deployment of major vessels and small vessels for 2025-2026.

Elaine Crossan, Cal Mac delivered a presentation to the Group in relation to RADAR and Insight into Action. The presentation gave an overview of the RADAR platform

and how the customer experience was measured and provided details of the Insight into Action Ecosystem and driving improvements to customer experience through local ownership and actions.

It was agreed to note the Report and Presentation.

Action – Cal Mac to provide an update on arrangements for the annual meeting for Hauliers

CHFS 3 Transport
Scotland / Cal Mac

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With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024, Mark Hoskins, Transport Scotland delivered a presentation to the Group in relation to the CHFS 3 Contract. On 8 May 2025 Cabinet Secretary confirmed her intention to Direct Award the next CHFS3 contract to CFL. 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”. Transport Scotland 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.

The presentation also gave an overview of the key differences between CHFS2 and CHFS3.

It was agreed to note the presentation.

Action – HITRANS to collate questions from each FSG on CHFS3 and submit to Transport Scotland so that they can provide responses for sharing with FSGs and including in FAQ on CHFS 3 webpage on Transport Scotland website.

Little Minch
Timetable
consultation

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The Little Minch Timetables Consultation Response produced by HITRANS had been circulated to the Group. The consultation paper considered the case for three sailings per day by new vessels between Uig and Tarbert and between Uig and Lochmaddy during the summer timetable. The research had comprised of:

- Desk research, including the review of the specimen draft timetables produced by CalMac.
- Consultation with a range of businesses and other organisations based in Uist or Harris or operating in one of those areas. Most consultees were based in Uist.

The response went into details on the following areas:

- Previous growth on the Uig-Tarbert-Lochmaddy route from increased capacity
- Freight – particularly on the Lochmaddy service and for exports from Uist
- Visitor Trips – showing increased visitor timings on the 3 sailings per day option
- Residents’ Travel – 3 sailings per day timetable would also increase the time on the mainland for residents’ trips

- Underemployed Assets – would extend the times the ferries would be in service, meaning later sailing times
- Ongoing and Future Developments – the response detailed the current and future development opportunities on the islands that would benefit from 3 sailings per day, and this would also enhance future developments proposed on all islands.

The response went on to summarise the case for the 3 sailings per day timetable and concluded that the 3 sailings timetable aligns with the objectives of the Outer Hebrides Tourism Strategy and the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership's Regional Economic Strategy. It represented a major opportunity to grow the ferry traffic and support the islands served, by providing the timetable that businesses, residents and visitors need.

It was agreed to note the consultation response.

Transport Scotland 6
Update inc. ICP

With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024 Brian Gordon submitted a Report providing an update on the final Island Connectivity Plan (ICP) Strategic Approach and Vessels and Ports Plan which had been published on 2 May 2025. The Report stated that preparatory work for commissioning Community Needs Assessments (CNAs) for communities in the Oban area was underway with the aim to award a consultancy contract in the next 1-2 months once internal approvals had been secured. The timescale had slipped since the previous update due to prioritising completion of the published papers and SEA. The published ICP Strategic Approach outlined key areas of integration work, and a more detailed programme was being developed which would be an ongoing and evolving activity, rather than a piece of work with a defined end-date.

The Report further stated that the ICP Strategic Approach committed to:

- Work towards implementing islander and non-islander fares across both CHFS and NIFS networks.
- Retain RET as the fares structure for islanders, with non-islanders paying higher fares to contribute more to the cost of ferries and encourage visitors to travel as foot passengers or at quieter periods.
- Carry out further work to consider the application of islander and non-islander fares, including potential dynamic or seasonal pricing to encourage travel at quieter times.
- Consider changes to how the RET formula will be applied on longer routes, previously capped fares, and the application of RET to vehicles over 5m in length including motorhomes and caravans.
- Introduce free foot passenger travel for under 22 year old islanders on inter-island ferry routes within Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides on 1 April 2025.
- Extend the existing ferry concessionary scheme - which provides 4 journeys to or from the mainland each year for 16–18-year-old islanders - up to and including 21-year-olds in late June 2025

The Report gave further details on progress on Integration (Onward and Connecting Travel) and Low Carbon and Environmental Impact.

It was agreed to note the update.

Action – Transport Scotland to confirm if any resilience vessels will be shared with the Northern Isles network / contract

Action – Transport Scotland to provide update on communication strategy for CHFS 3

Action – Cal Mac to be invited to the Road Casualty Reduction Group

Ferries Community Board Update 7

With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024 the Ferries Community Board (FCB) submitted a Report providing details of the Board's recent activities and meetings. The Report noted that the FCB:

- Welcomed the further movement towards equality for under 22 travel but continues to request that equality for all our young people.
- Continued 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.
- Continued to ask for island representation on boards and the recognition of the knowledge and experience they will bring to decision making.

The Report stated that the FCB was presently going through a recruitment process for new members and the outcome would be known by the end of June.

It was agreed to note the update.

CMAL Update 8

With reference to item 5 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024 CMAL submitted a Report providing an update on vessels projects, port infrastructure projects and project stakeholder engagement. The Report stated that there were several project stakeholder engagements and communications in progress, including:

- Oban 1 Berth Infrastructure Engagement;
- Tiree Terminal Development Works;
- Port Ellen Terminal Development Marine License Application;
- NIFS Freighter Flex Community Engagement; and
- Uig Terminal Communications

It was agreed to note the updates.

Other Infrastructure Providers Update 9

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 December 2024, updates were provided on various ports around the Hebrides.

Stornoway Port Authority

Alex Macleod, Chief Executive of Stornoway Port Authority gave an update on the Passenger Access System (PAS) which has been out of order for 18 months. Legal issues are ongoing, but it was hoped to have a solution shortly.

Ullapool Harbour Trust

Mr Kevin Peach of Ullapool Harbour Trust provided an update on the success of the luggage van. The service was proving so popular that a bigger van was now required. The linkspan was scheduled for its service in July, it had hoped to have this done pre-season, but it had been difficult to arrange.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Ferry Terminal Operations – CNES continued to liaise closely with CalMac Ferries to ensure that services operate as smoothly and safely as possible. This coordination remained essential in managing both scheduled and unscheduled demands at ports.

Unmanned waiting rooms continued to generate some concern. The Comhairle was reviewing potential measures to improve oversight and ensure these facilities remained clean, safe, and used appropriately. Work has begun to improve the condition and presentation of waiting rooms on inter-island ferry routes, with repainting completed at the Ardmaree waiting room in Berneray during the week beginning 2nd June.

Cruise Ship Activity – Lochmaddy – There had been a noticeable renewal of small-scale cruise ship visits at Lochmaddy following essential infrastructure improvements. Scheduled Lochmaddy-Uig Service takes absolute priority and there were no disruptions to ferry operations. Continued cooperation and flexibility of CalMac staff ensures that cruise and ferry activities are integrated effectively without compromising service delivery.

Small Vessel Replacement Programme – Phase 2 – Early-stage planning was underway. The introduction of new vessels under this programme would require significant shore-side infrastructure works to support safe and efficient operations. The works were being led by CMAL. CNES remains engaged in the planning process and will continue to provide updates.

Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code Compliance - Work was ongoing to ensure CNES operations continue to meet the standards set out in the recently updated Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC). As part of this process, several issues have been identified regarding crew accommodation arrangements for the Sound of Harris ferry, where temporary use of motorhomes at the pier had raised concerns. The Comhairle was currently working with CalMac Ferries to explore appropriate solutions.

Drop Trailer Process – Lochmaddy–Uig Service – CNES are committed to identifying and progressing practical improvements that benefit ferry users and support efficient port operations and have been exploring the potential introduction of a drop trailer process. Discussions have been held with CalMac for their consideration.

Shore Power – Lochmaddy – in preparation for the introduction of the MV Claymore and MV Lochmor on the Little Minch route, CNES are progressing plans to install shore power at Lochmaddy. Working closely with CMAL and intend to procure the required infrastructure, through their procurement framework and aim to have shore power system in place ahead of the vessel’s entry to into service.

The Highland Council

An update was provided on the Uig Harbour redevelopment project that formed a key part in the Little Minch Routes upgrade. The main civil infrastructure works at Uig Ferry Terminal were now complete. Contractual discussions were continuing with the contractor regarding storm damage caused to the walkway shelter.

Following concerns from property owners and Uig Community Council regarding damage to their properties, wave climate and new solid wall berthing structure, a post construction study had been commissioned to assess the wave modelling and review potential mitigation.

The contract for the Uig Harbour new terminal building was awarded to Robertson Construction Group on 7 March 2024. Construction commenced on 24 June 2024 with the revised completion date now programmed for 20 June 2025. Site progress photos were provided in the Report.

It was agreed to note the updates and reports from the infrastructure providers.

Western Isles 10
Health and
Transport Action
Plan

The Western Isles Health and Transport Action Plan was circulated to the Group presenting findings and recommendations following discussions of the Western Isles Transport and Health Working Group. The remit of the Working Group was to “consider the immediate issues and opportunities which have been identified across the Western Isles in relation to health services and transport, making recommendations for action and to foster relationships to improve the integration of transport provision for health services and consider alternatives” The Action Plan included an evidence summary and, in light of the evidence, made eighteen recommendations. The recommended Actions were set out in the document stating the lead and supporting partners and timescale for each action.

A meeting between representatives from each Local Authority and Health Board areas was to be organised to discuss the difficulties to access healthcare in the highlands.

It was agreed to note the Western Isles Health and Transport Action Plan.

Date of Next 11
Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 9 December 2025 at 10am via MS TEAMS.