



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

Minute of Meeting held online through Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 10.30am.

<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	
	<b>COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR</b> Cllr. Uisdean Robertson (Chair) Cllr. Iain A Macneil Cllr. Duncan Macinnes MBE Cllr Iain M Macleod Cllr Kenny M Macleod Mrs Linda Cunningham Mrs Shona Hadwen (Clerk) Mrs Fiona Maciver
	<b>TRANSPORT SCOTLAND</b> Mr Brian Gordon Mr Mark Hoskins Ms Emma Neary Ms Margaret McGunnigal Mr Paul Flynn Ms Alison Willis Mr Graham Patrick Ms Juste Kalinauskaite Ms Isabella Monteith Mr Paul Flynn Mr Barry McElwee Mr John Harvey
	<b>CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD (CALMAC)</b> Mr Finlay Macrae Dr Murray Doyle Ms Elaine Crossan Mr Robert Morrison
	<b>FERRIES COMMUNITIES BOARD</b> Mr Angus Campbell
	<b>CALEDONIAN MARITIME ASSETS LTD. (CMAL)</b> Ms Blair Moglia Mr Chris Fisher Mr Brian Fulton
	<b>HITRANS</b> Mr Neil Macrae Mr Ranald Robertson Ms Clare Harper
	<b>THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL</b> No attendees

	<p><b>HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE)</b> Mr Nicolas Sobey</p> <p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES COMMERCE GROUP</b> Ms Gail Robertson</p> <p><b>CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT</b> Mr Ker Corbett (Scottish Citylink)</p> <p><b>OUTER HEBRIDES TOURISM</b> Mr Alan Graham Mr Sarah Maclean</p> <p><b>ULLAPOOL HARBOUR TRUST</b> Mr Kevin Peach</p> <p><b>STORNOWAY PORT AUTHORITY</b> Mr Alex Macleod</p>
APOLOGIES	Cllr Calum Munro (Highland Council) Mr Mustapha Hocine (CnES) Ms Joanna Peteranna (HIE) Mr Martin Reid (RHA) Mr David Summers (Highland Council)

Minute of Meeting 1 The Minute of Meeting of 4 June 2024 was **approved**.  
of 4 June 2024

Matters Arising – 2 With reference to item 2 of the Minute of Meeting of 4 June 2024, HITRANS submitted the Action Tracker detailing updates on the action points for all Ferry Stakeholders Groups.

Updates on the following actions were provided at the meeting:

**Action 2 – Deck Utilisation** – discussion was held around the various issues affecting deck capacity. Areas of concern noted were:

- System showing no availability but when vehicles turn up to ferry, there are spaces available;
- New booking system does not immediately show space available due to cancellations or vehicle having made an earlier sailing;
- Increase in the number of cars requiring easy access to the lifts;
- Customers having to phone back to CalMac to check if bookings have become available;
- Vehicle Number Plate Recognition – doesn't always predict correct length/weight of car;
- Booking of HGVs onto the ferry required much more room than the size of the vehicle;
- Lack of capacity/booking options available for bicycles at point of booking.

Finlay Macrae, CalMac, noted that the situation was not ideal, but that work was being done to ensure the system accurately reflected the picture on the ground. Dr Murray Doyle, CalMac, informed members that space on the deck may be as a result of the ferry having reached its dead weight capacity, as opposed to vehicle capacity. Dead weight is the overall weight of the vessel. The e-booking system applied the same approach to all vessels rather than being individual to each vessel. CalMac are currently working towards solutions for each vessel with some already in place (Coll & Tiree). It was hoped that the rest of the fleet would be active by summer 2025.

It was also noted that cars requiring lift access tended to be bigger and needed more space around the vehicle to enable mobility impaired, young children and older adults to be able to exit the vehicle safely. This impacted the number of vehicles able to be booked on the vessel. Also for consideration was the size of cars which are much bigger now than before.

With regards to HGVs, they require extra space on the deck due to their length, width and height. A calculation of 1.6 x the length is applied to ensure adequate space surrounds the vehicle.

It was noted that CalMac were looking at options for the booking of cycles onto the ferries. It was recognised that cycles are complex as some are of very high value and owners may not want their cycles just tied up with other cycles. This was a piece of work that needed to be looked at in more detail.

It was also noted that options were being looked at with CalMac around a standby/waiting list option whereby customers did not have to keep ringing back to check if space had become available.

It was difficult to give timelines when these issues may be resolved as CalMac had to work with eDea in relation to the e-booking system, and CalMac were not their only customers.

Elaine Crossan, CalMac informed members that in terms of customer service, they looked at figures weekly, which included numbers of individuals seeking parking near to lifts, although it didn't state reasons why. In discussion it was asked about the criteria for gaining parking near to a lift, if any. It was agreed that this was something that could be looked at.

**Action 3** – regarding Ar Turas. Transport Scotland are to meet with CalMac in the next week, this will be the first meeting to discuss current position of the booking system. Transport Scotland continue to work closely with CalMac and the Community Board on the regional score cards.

**Action 4** – regarding CHFS3 – there is a desire from Unions to have an in-person stakeholder event. Transport Scotland are keen to adopt a directorate approach to these meetings with both Ferries Community Board and the Ferries Stakeholder Groups in attendance, in order to address as many questions as possible at the one time and have a joined-up approach at future stakeholder events. Dates of meetings will be publicised in the local communities.

**Action 5** – regarding upgrade options at Lochboisdale – consultation event taking place today – 3 December 2024.

**Action 6** – Passenger Access System (PAS) in Stornoway. Alex Macleod of Stornoway Port Authority informed members that the issue of the faulty PAS was complex to resolve with a decision to remove it and go with an alternative solution due to be made shortly. At the moment, passengers had to use the car deck to embark and disembark the ferry. This is the same system as in place in other areas, it is just more of a hindrance in Stornoway due to the volumes of passengers.

There was no doubt that this was causing a huge amount of frustration to passengers, but until a solution was found, the safest way for passengers to go on and off the ferry was via the car deck.

The Chair thanked members for their updates.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Caledonian MacBrayne Operational, Commercial and Performance Update covering (CFL) 3 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 4 June 2024 Finlay Macrae (FM) of CalMac provided information on the activities of CalMac over the last period.

#### **Marketing**

The Autumn/Winter phase of the 'Every Journey Starts a Story' campaign was now live across all channels. Work was currently being undertaken on the next phase of the Digital Migration Campaign launched over the summer and would focus on promoting the launch of the new app and website. CalMac continued to support and engage with local island business and would add attractions to the website to increase visibility.

#### **Improving every journey**

**Ports** – The Port Exchange Project was focusing on improving customer touchpoints at each stage of the journey. At the ports, starting with Port Ellen and the new development at Uig, clear signage and wayfinding would be installed to help passengers navigate easily, including welcome signs, clear directions to ticketing, waiting areas, and boarding points. Accessible features like Braille signage would also be added at Uig.

**Vessels** - On board the vessels, such as the MV Glen Sannox and MV Isle of Islay, similar upgrades were being made. The Sannox signage was being installed in October, including clear internal signage to guide passengers to key areas like seating, shopping, and dining. Visual markers would help passengers move around easily and ensure accessible wayfinding for all passengers.

#### **Insight**

The customer experiences measurement platform went fully live on 15 April. Internally known as RADAR the platform facilitates the Real time measurement and reporting of Customer Experience and feedback. Results were published via self-

serve dashboards for each location, vessel and area, enabling CFL to recognise the core drivers and themes of OSAT (Overall satisfaction with Service CalMac provides), Trust and Ease allowing for timely targeted interventions and champions local ownership and solutions. Positive result were already being seen in many areas.

In addition to customer experience measurement the team had also undertaken several rounds of Brand Tracking working with an external agency to understand Brand Health and reputation plus benchmarking these scores against other Transport providers operating in Scotland.

#### **Insight Analytics and data science**

CalMac had undertaken a product led insight strategy to support the business plan and ensure resources were targeted and aligned to areas where they can drive meaningful improvements. The dashboard rapidly summarised the volume of bookings, total passengers and physical resources (deck space) affected. It assessed impacted bookings on priority and allowed for different deployment scenarios to be modelled and evaluated with ease. The tool also provided a forward look on utilisation, enabled internal teams to proactively monitor and manage locked sailings and availability. Therefore, both speeding up the process of moving impacted customers and traffic and supports the clear communication of decisions regarding deployment plans with communities affected. Other insight products included route overview and profiles to help understand booking types, customer sentiment and behaviours on each route and how they vary between routes, local insight dashboards and channel scorecards.

#### **Customer Experience**

The new website and customer app were launched on 26 November. As well as a more modern, fresher feel, it included more precise information and a more intuitive layout that was easier to navigate. The website was also optimised for mobile and offered a modern digital experience on the move. The new app also offered more information as well as the opportunity to sign up for push notifications for service updates on specific routes.

Internal processes had reviewed and streamlined to work as one team to support customers. CalMac were pleased to note that, despite recent disruptions, there had been a gradual increase in customer satisfaction scores in this area in recent months. The average customer satisfaction score with onboard retail for the period was 80% and represented a 3% increase for the same period last year.

#### **Route Performance**

All route performance was now available on the website.

#### **Block Bookings Terms and Conditions and utilisation monitoring**

Terms and conditions for block bookings were currently being reviewed to explore how they can be updated to better serve everyone moving forward.

The Summer 2025 timetables were due to be release in the coming weeks and careful consideration would be given for the best approach to implement any changes, ensuring they align with legal requirements during an ongoing timetable period. Work to enhance the tools for monitoring block bookings and their effective

utilisation, ensuring a smoother experience for all. Was being undertaken. Once these plans were finalised there would be a detailed consultation with all customers to gather feedback and ensure the updates meet everyone's needs.

### **Enhanced Engagement Programme**

An update on progress of the Enhanced Engagement Programme was provided:

- Five Depute Area Managers (DAMs) and two Area Managers (AMs) onboarded on 7–8 November and provided with a two-day company induction.
- New starts now undergoing a comprehensive 6 month training programme and transitioning into Operations, with an Operational in-role date of 16 December targeted for AMs and DAMs.
- Recruitment activities for remaining roles (2 x AMs and 1 x DAM) continuing. Roles live between 13 – 27 November. Psychometric testing and assessment centres to be utilised to effect again. CalMac aiming to have all roles filled by early 2025.

The Report provided a table detailing the geographical regions, area boundaries and Operations teams and detailed the key success outcomes that the Enhanced Engagement Programme would deliver.

### **Vessel deployments Winter 2024-25 and route prioritisation**

- The Summer timetable would commence on 28 March 2025
- Deployment plan had been based on assumption that MV Caledonian Isles would not be available during the winter timetable.
- Deployment would be amended once entry into service of new vessels was confirmed.

The Report provided details of the routes, dates and vessel deployments. These dates remained at risk of disruption or cancellation and an update would be provided in January 2025.

### **Vessel arrivals and changes from 2025 onwards**

The Report detailed the delivery dates for each of the new vessels and indicated that they would enter into service four weeks after delivery with the exception of Glen Rosa and Glen Sannox which would be six and half weeks and the four Islay Class Vessels which would be six weeks. Transport Scotland had approved the principle retaining a spare resilience vessel. Thereafter, vessel disposals would be considered as new vessels entered the fleet.

### **eBooking continuing programme of development and vessel Capacity Analysis**

- The Business Intelligence team undertook a program of vessel co-ordinates review across the fleet and were utilising specialist external expertise in the field.
- In recent months CalMac have reviewed MVs Loch Alainn, Loch Portain and Isle of Lewis. The problem was due to the Single Coefficient issue, and there was a proposed solution found.

- Previously the co-ordinates for the MV Hebrides and MV Lord of the Isles had been reviewed, and these vessels' co-ordinates were working well. CalMac continue to review MV's Clansman and Loch Seaforth, which was taking longer.
- The single coefficient had been a source of vessels co-ordinates inaccuracies, leading to under and over-booking. CalMac were discussing options with eDea for changed co-efficient with analysis around introducing a 'width' parameter alongside GLM and HLM.
- CalMac were continually revising and improving capacity management of some vehicle types: motorbikes / LGVLow; and also capacity issues around vehicles requesting lift access

In discussion it was noted that it was appreciated to get the information in report format prior to the meeting.

Some queries were raised in relation to the new booking system and why it asks for car details first, before the route choice is made. This is tied to how the system takes information in. Feedback is coming in around this and will go back to eDea.

It was noted that having route performance available on the website was good, and data around route growth would be available. At the moment it was only available as an Area Summary due to low volumes on some routes.

It was further noted that some of the information on the website and new App was different. CalMac control both of these, so it was hoped that this could be a quick fix.

In discussion it was noted that in relation to the Little Minch Timetabling, the consultation seemed to be going well, a number of options were provided for the potential pattern of timetables and at the moment, option 3 seemed to be the most favoured choice. All agreed that it was positive that the community had been asked for feedback first, prior to a decision being made.

A question was asked in relation to the option of a Lochmaddy-Ullapool sailing, as this had proved popular during the closure of Uig pier in January 2024. It was noted that the core services would be looked at first and then there may be an option to look at alternatives. If this happened, it would be costed as a Lochmaddy to Ullapool fare and not Lochmaddy to Uig as before.

The Chair thanked CalMac for their update and members for their contributions to the discussion.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

In September, Transport Scotland published an independent analysis report, a summary report and initial responses to feedback received in relation to the consultation. The majority of respondents thought that the key themes of the Strategic Approach paper captured the main aspects of transport connectivity for island and peninsula communities.

The finalised Island Connectivity Plan (ICP) Vision and Priorities, alongside the Vessels and Ports Plan, will provide shared and recognised direction to ferry operators and vessel owners responsible for the delivery of CHFS and NIFS. The feedback provided is being used to finalise the Strategic Approach and the Vessels and Ports Plan and will also inform the development of the remaining elements of the ICP, including work on ferry fares and integration, Community Needs Assessments and the Islands Communities Impact Assessment.

The commissioning of further community needs assessments was currently in planning, with priority being given to studies where outputs will inform the business cases for existing or pipeline vessel and/or port projects.

#### **Ferry Fares Policy**

The Fair Fares Review ferry fares recommendations were included in the draft ICP Strategic Approach paper for consultation, and included 4 short-term proposals:

- Retain RET for island residents and consider fares for non-islanders, particularly vehicle fares during the summer timetable period;
- Review and update the RET formulae as a key element of the above work;
- Provide free foot passenger travel on inter-island ferries for under 22-year old island residents within the Outer Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland Island groups; and
- Extend the existing National Ferry Concessionary Scheme to under-22 year old island residents.

There were also proposals for the medium to longer term to revisit the Freight Fares Review and consider dynamic pricing.

Transport Scotland continue to work with Ministers to refine the proposals in light of the consultation responses ahead of the final ICP.

#### **Onward and Connecting Travel (OCT)**

Transport Scotland are working to improve the integration of the ferry networks with the wider transport system. This will focus on improved connectivity for those accessing the ferries without taking a private vehicle on board. There will be an increased focus on the needs of those using public, shared and active travel modes as part of ferry journeys – giving a more equitable and attractive service for these users.

#### **Low Carbon**

Transport Scotland are increasing their work on the potential routes for ferry operations to decarbonise, in line with the wider Scottish Government Net Zero

timescale. Staff time is now being free up from other priorities, with an initial focus being to feed into the next Scottish Government Climate Change Plan.

#### **Investment in New Vessels**

It was noted that on 20 November 2024, MV Glen Sannox was officially transferred to its new owners, Caledonia Maritime Assets Limited. The MV Glen Sannox will play a crucial role in strengthening the fleet and supporting vital lifeline services for island communities. CalMac require six and a half weeks for operational readiness, including annual recertification activities and it is expected that the vessel will enter service in January 2025 on the Troon to Brodick route.

The four new major vessels for Islay and the Little Minch routes are now under construction with delivery expected throughout 2025. Extensive harbour and infrastructure upgrades will be completed before their introduction into service.

#### **Little Minch Infrastructure Programme**

Transport Scotland continue to work with project partners to ensure the overall delivery of the Little Minch Infrastructure Programme. Acknowledging that works at Uig port remain live with both Tarbert (Harris) and Lochmaddy (South Uist) having been successfully completed. The Uig marine works are expected to be completed by end of December 2024, with the landside completion expected to be late Spring 2025.

The programme works have been instrumental in replacing life expired infrastructure and will support the deployment of the two new vessels to the route.

Transport Scotland are working closely with CalMac to develop timetables for the route, as well as engaging with the local community. Further timetable work is required, and a public consultation event will be arranged in the future.

In discussion it was welcomed that Transport Scotland were engaging with local communities in relation to the future CHFS3 contract. Disappointment was expressed that Local Authorities had not been invited to give feedback, and a request for future interaction with Local Authorities was made.

It was also noted that the CHFS2 consultation had involved representatives from all organisations including Local Authorities and it was reassuring to note that the Ferries Community Board also had a level of input. For noting, it was mentioned that consultations are more beneficial when asking people what they want, rather than telling them what is going to happen.

The Chair thanked Transport Scotland for their update and members for their contributions to the discussion.

#### **It was agreed to note the Report.**

**Vessels:** Islay vessels 1 & 2 at the Cemre Shipyard in Turkey were progressing well but were suffering some delays to the supply of goods due to the Houthi insurgency in the Red Sea. Little Minch vessels 3 & 4 also in Cemre were progressing well. Updates on milestone dates were provided within the body of the Report.

Updates were also provided on the MV Glen Sannox and the MV Glen Rosa.

The Small Vessel Replacement Programme was announced in July 2024 and this phase has returned to CMAL for assessment alongside an independent assessor. There were 13 expressions of interest, and this was narrowed down to 6 companies. In November and December 2024, each of the companies will be visited by Kevin Hobbs and Jim Anderson for further assessment and compliance – this is ongoing and will be completed by 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Information was provided on the Mallaig/Lochboisdale Vessel Replacement Programme and key dates for the programme. Information was also provided on the MV Caledonian Isles which is in drydock and has been subject to significant steelwork replacements and updates as to repair timescales would be provided when available. The Hebridean Isles is being tendered for recycling and CMAL were currently trying to finalise a recycling yard which was proving to be complicated by the desire to retain a number of critical spares.

**Port Infrastructure:** Updates were provided on the various port infrastructure projects. The following were highlighted:

The Gaasay Terminal Development –the Outline Business Case for the new development was still to be approved. A structural assessment of the existing pier at Lochboisdale had been completed and was currently under consideration in respect of any requirements for interim works.

The Mallaig/Lochboisdale vessel replacement programme was underway with concept design Consultants (LMG Marin of Norway) having completed their work package. The business case for the project was underway and was being prepared for presentation to Transport Scotland (TS) by Q1 2025. Given wider pressures on public funding, there was currently no funding allocated for future stages of this project and the funding position was extremely challenging. This may impact the planned timeline to take forward to procurement. CMAL continued to work with TS to find a solution.

The Chair thanked CMAL for their Report.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Other Infrastructure Providers Update	6	With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 4 June 2024, updates were provided on various ports around the Hebrides.
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**Stornoway Port Authority** – no further information to update members on other than information on the Passenger Access System which had been shared earlier in the meeting.

**Ullapool Harbour Trust** – an update was provided on the proposed Luggage Van which would transfer luggage on and off the Stornoway-Ullapool ferry and vice versa. A further update was provided during the course of the meeting stating that this proposal may not happen. Neil Macrae, HITRANS would get back in touch with Kevin Peach with an update and members would be informed separately by email with an update.

**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar** – no representative from CnES was available, an update would be provided separately.

**The Highland Council** – a Report was submitted with an update on the activities at Uig Harbour since the last meeting.

The recent winter Storm Ashley has damaged roof panels in the newly installed covered walkway. The Highland Council were in discussions with the Contractor and supplier of the covered walkway to establish why the roof panels failed and the options to ensure a robust solution. The minibus service at Uig harbour will continue to be operated between the ferry terminal and the ferry for users who require this service until the new terminal building is completed, this is estimated to be in May 2025.

In discussion it was noted that the PAS system remained faulty, and discussions were ongoing with the insurer.

It was also noted that the proposed use of the old terminal building would be shared with members once this information became available.

The Chair thanked members for their updates.

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

Communities Board 7  
Update With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 4 June 2024 a Report was submitted with an update on the activities of the Board since the last meeting.

The Report reflected the concern of the Ferries Community Board (FCB) with the lack of progress made in the past six months in terms of collaborative working with CalMac and Transport Scotland. As a result, the FCB are in the process of looking at their ways of working and their relationships with the decision-makers in ferry provision.

The Report went on to highlight some of the positives that had occurred in the previous six months:

- good engagement with partners and the public at recent meeting in Stornoway;
- appointment of a permanent CEO;
- re-instatement of a Director of Community Engagement;
- introduction of depute Area Managers;
- handover of the Glen Sannox,
- moving forward of the SVRP; and
- growing links with the Young Islanders' Network

The Report also highlighted some areas of concern:

- no progress on the format and necessary changes in the new CHFS3 contract;
- lack of accountability to local communities;
- disappointment at the imposition of another fares increase;
- continued frustration with the new ticketing system; and
- reporting statistics evidence that the service has not improved with the new ticketing system.

Angus Campbell, Chair of the FCB notified members that they were losing three members from the Board. It was noted that there was a lack of local people on the Board, with little or no recognition that island knowledge means anything.

The Chair thanked Angus Campbell for his report and update.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Confirm Pre-agreed	8	The next meeting was scheduled to take place on <b>Tuesday 3 June 2025 at 10:00am in Stornoway and via MS Teams.</b>
Date of Next		
Meeting		