

27/01/2019

Mr McClymont

Thank you for your letter received by e mail below in connection with the above project.

Officers from our Marine Operation Team have been working in partnership with Transport Scotland and Calmac to identify and progress a sustainable solution that provides a pier suitable for the future operation of 2 vessels on the route. The STAG appraisal for Craignure pier has recently been completed, a significant milestone in the project and officers will be arranging to engage with the community on the findings of that report.

It is important to note that the STAG does not in itself generate the preferred solution. This piece of work will provide the evidence upon which identification of the solution will be based and community consultation will also inform the final decision.

You raise a number of points which I feel it important to address.

The Ferries Plan of 2012 identified Transport Scotland's intention to deploy a second vessel onto the Oban to Craignure route, which was a welcomed commitment. However it was not until 2014 when the first Vessel Replacement and Deployment Report (VRDR) was issued that Transport Scotland indicated which vessel they had in mind. Officers from the council have been working in partnership with Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac since then to identify a suitable solution.

After the 2014 VRDR was issued it quickly became evident to all the partners that it would be impossible to complete the significant work that would be required to accommodate a larger vessel by 2016. Projects, such as the upgrade or replacement of Craignure pier cost tens of millions of pounds a require a substantial lead in period before they reach construction. Broadly speaking, marine civil engineering projects of this type require marine surveys, STAG appraisal, public consultation, design work, outline and final businesses cases. All of which take time.

Officers from the council meet with colleagues from Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac on a regular basis and it is through this collaboration that the project has progressed to its current stage. This approach is important as all partners need to support the investment decisions going forward, not least to ensure that the solutions are fit for purpose but also because funding in effect is routed from Transport Scotland via pier dues paid by Calmac. In making this size of investment the council will also need to be reassured that decisions on vessel deployment are settled for the longer term and that they support the investment to be made.

Consideration has been given to undertaking works which would allow vessels to berth at the southern berth overnight. The cost of these would run into millions of pounds and would likely require significant works to strengthen the structure should dredging be required as this may undermine the structural integrity of the existing pier. None of the partners working on the project believe this would offer value for money when it is likely that the pier will have to be replaced given that the pier is reaching the end of its design life. That aside it would not be feasible to undertake the works in the time frame that you have set out.

I understand the concerns of the local community and the desire to deliver a solution as soon as possible. I would like to reiterate that officers of the council have been working with Transport Scotland and other partners to do just that. Officers will continue to that and the quickest and best solution will come from continued collaboration with those partners and the community.

I trust the above information is helpful in clarifying the current position and process that all of the relevant partners are engaged in.

Best Regards

Cleland Sneddon

Chief Executive

Argyll and Bute Council

Kilmory

Lochgilphead

Argyll & Bute