

To: Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive Argyll & Bute Council; Aileen Morton, Argyll & Bute Council Leader

CC: Every A&B Councillor; A&B Council Infrastructure and Harbours Management; CalMac Management including Chief Exec; Transport Scotland Ferries Department; Paul Wheelhouse MSP (Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands); Michael Matheson MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity); Michael Russell MSP (Argyll and Bute constituency MSP)

21/01/2019

Dear Mr Sneddon and Mrs Morton,

We, on behalf of Mull Community Council, Mull & Iona Community Trust, Iona Community Council and the Mull and Iona Ferry Committee are writing to emphasise the community's unanimity and determination that a commitment to 'interim' improvements to Craignure Pier is made urgently. Argyll and Bute Council have been aware since publication of the first Ferries Plan in 2012, of CalMac's need to berth a major vessel at Craignure pier overnight. The vessel currently allocated to replace the under-sized MV Coruisk as from the summer of 2020 is the MV Hebrides. In order to maintain the 2-vessel summer service, it is therefore essential that Craignure pier is ready to accept the MV Isle of Mull or the MV Hebrides overnight just 15 months from now.

We are therefore writing to insist that all necessary decisions concerning interim investment (as identified in the current STAG report into Craignure Pier) are made by Council, CMAL or Transport Scotland as appropriate without any further delay. Should Craignure Pier not be ready in time for the arrival of the MV Hebrides, it would be a complete failure of planning and management on the part of Argyll & Bute Council, for which there could be no excuse. Craignure Pier has been neglected by the Council over many years, netting up to £1.4 million in pier dues annually, yet stumbling on with unrepaired fenders, a bodged-together second-hand passenger access system and an ageing linkspan still with no date for refurbishment. The situation has now reached a critical crisis point, demonstrated by evident nervousness on the part of CalMac's Masters and increasing cancellations. Craignure Pier is hugely profitable for the Council and is deserving of this urgent investment without compromising other projects.

The need for improvements to enable the Ferries Plan has been well flagged for 6 years, yet no material action has been taken by the Council. We now have no option but to plainly point out the Council's responsibility or risk a transport crisis on our islands. Please be on notice that the communities of Mull and Iona are insistent this work goes ahead, are well informed of the issues, and strongly represented on this matter by our organisations. Several interim options have been identified in the recent STAG report, and we have already made individual representations urging progress with them. Whatever interim option is chosen, it MUST be completed within 14 months, and it MUST allow the Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan to be rolled out to the Oban-Craignure route as planned.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Billy McClymont, Convenor Mull Community Council
Shiona Ruhemann, Convenor Iona Community Council
Moray Finch, General Manager Mull & Iona Community Trust
Elizabeth Ferguson, Chair Mull & Iona Ferry Committee