

From: Joe Reade <joe@islandbakery.scot>
Sent: 10 February 2020 15:07
To: CalMac Area Manager
Cc: Other local CalMac Management, Key CalMac contacts.

Subject: Oban - Craignure cancelled today.
Hi [REDACTED] (copied to [REDACTED] if you are not about)

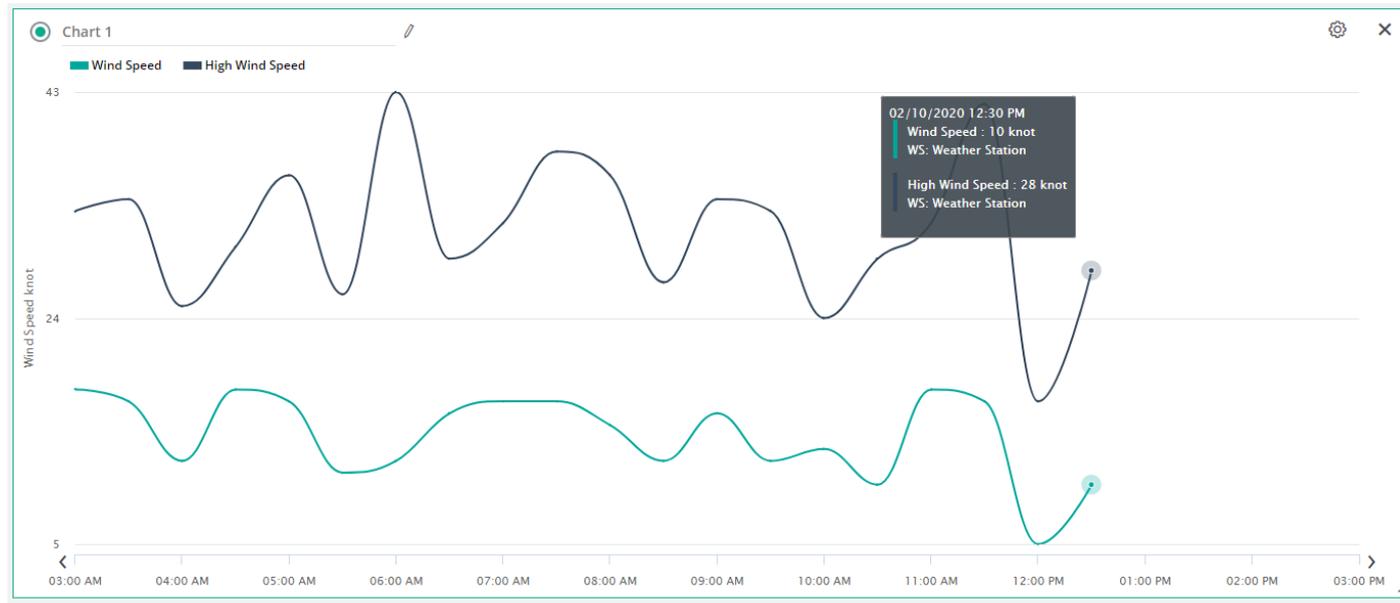
All of today's Oban-Craignure sailings have been cancelled, based on yesterday's weather forecast. Several folk have contacted me to complain that the IOM is not sailing in conditions that seem well within her capabilities. One of the complainants is a CalMac employee, embarrassed that the service is not running. Lochaline-Fishnish, Tobermory-Kilchoan and Oban- Lismore are all running. The Oban bay webcam (<https://mullandionaferrycommittee.org/oban-webcam/>) shows fairly benign conditions, and craft of all sizes are traversing the bay. At Craignure, our weather station is currently recording sustained speeds of just 10 knots, and gusts of 28 (graph below).

Windfinder is predicting pretty steady conditions for the remainder of the day, with windspeeds at Lochaline (the closest forecast location, but with a very different aspect to Craignure) of 24 – 29 knots (picture of that below also) I think given the observed conditions, it would be fair to ask the Master to revisit the decision made yesterday afternoon, in light of the conditions now apparent. A Westerly classed as 'strong breeze', and port conditions at each end much less than this does seem a very low threshold for cancellation. If this is the threshold, then we cannot expect any service until Wednesday, since tomorrow's forecast is similar.

I've copied in Robbie Drummond and [REDACTED] for their info, since this seems to be a particularly noteworthy example of a long-standing and regular conversation topic with them.

(regarding our weather station – we do not currently publish the output because it is on top of the PAS and affected by the ferry when berthed. When there is no ferry like today, the measurements are good.)

Best regards
Joe



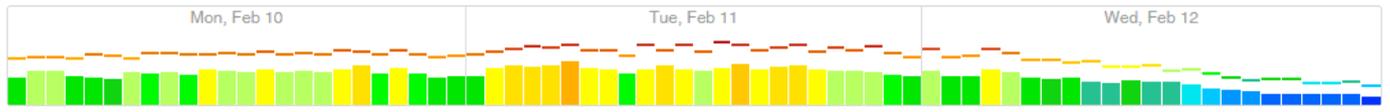
Forecast display:

Tables

Bird's-eye

Print this forecast

Embed this forecast



Last update: 13:12 local time

What is the superforecast?

How are tides calculated?

Show night hours

Local date

Monday, Feb 10

Local time	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Wind direction	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤	➤
Wind speed (kts)	23	24	22	26	25	24	26	24	25	24	26	29	23	27	23
Wind gusts (max kts)	37	37	36	36	37	36	38	36	37	36	39	38	36	39	36
Cloud cover	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁
Precipitation type	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Precipitation (mm / h)	0.4	0.4	0.1	1.3	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	1.1	0.2	0.1	1
Air temperature (°C)	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
Feels like (°C)	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2
Relative humidity (%)	70	67	71	76	80	74	68	65	66	85	85	92	93	89	91
Air pressure (hPa)	975	975	975	975	975	975	975	974	974	974	973	973	973	974	975
Tide type	📈	📉	📉	📉	📉	📉	📈	📈	📈	📈	📈	📈	📈	📈	📉
Time	06:31						13:05						19:04		
Tide height (m)	4.9	4.4	3.7	2.7	1.7	1	0.7	0.9	1.6	2.6	3.7	4.5	4.8	4.6	4



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee
www.mullandionaferrycommittee.org
 Joe Reade, Chair.
joe@islandbakery.scot

From: CalMac Marine Manager
Sent: 10 February 2020 17:06
To: Joe Reade <joe@islandbakery.scot>
Cc: Key CalMac Management
Subject: RE: Oban - Craignure cancelled today.

Good Afternoon Joe,
 [REDACTED] is currently out of office so I am responding to you in his absence.
 As you are probably aware it is the Master's decision whether to sail or not to sail to ensure the safety of the passengers, crew, vessel and the environment.
 Looking at the weather forecast for today and the information you have provided below, I have to concur that the Master has made the correct judgement call. I can also assure you that the Master will constantly be reviewing the weather forecast and all available information to him throughout the day to continually reassess the situation.
 The graph you have provided below shows gusts of up to 43 knots were recorded, this translates on the Beaufort Scale as a force 9 (Strong / Severe Gale).
 The weather forecast provided also shows gusts of up to 39 knots throughout the day, which equates to a force 8 (Gale / Fresh gale).
 It is worth noting that the weather conditions experienced in Oban today have also had a part to play, it is not just the weather in Craignure that we have to contend with. Whilst smaller vessels, less affected by windage may be able to operate, the Major Vessels such as the Isle of Mull have to contend with considerable windage effects making berthing and unberthing challenging.

Please be assured the Master of the Vessel will continue to monitor the weather forecast and will sail when he deems it is safe to do so for the passengers, crew, vessel and environment.

Best Regards



Marine Manager
Calmac Ferries Ltd
Gourock
PA19 1QP

From: Joe Reade <joe@islandbakery.scot>

Sent: 10 February 2020 18:32

To: CalMac Marine Manager>

Cc: Ferry Committee members; Key CalMac managers

Subject: RE: Oban - Craignure cancelled today.

Dear 

Thanks for coming back to me. We all understand that the Master has absolute authority on whether to sail or not; that is not at question. What appears to have happened however, is that a decision to cancel an entire day of sailing was made on the basis of a weather forecast some 20 hours or so prior to some of the affected sailings; the observed conditions are not as severe as might have been predicted, and therefore a request that the decision be re-assessed in light of observed conditions is reasonable and does not infer any compromise of the Master's authority.

On a point of detail – our weather station recorded gusts of 43 knots at 6am and 42 knots at 11:30am. The vessel was not timetabled to be at sea at 6am. I referenced the latest wind speed, which was considerably lighter, and reflected a downward trend through the day.

The crossing is just 45 minutes in normal circumstances. The point I am trying to make here is that an entire day's sailings were cancelled, and no attempt was made to cross when conditions eased, nor were departure times adjusted as conditions changed. Blanket cancellation of the whole day's sailings seems an extreme and hyper-cautious reaction.

I imagine you and your Masters would agree that the sea state and wind conditions on the crossing are not the limiting issue – this is a 90m vessel making a short crossing through sheltered inshore waters. The difficulty arises when approaching or leaving the piers, when the vessels are vulnerable to gusts of wind during slow-speed manoeuvres. A reasonable strategy in these circumstances might be to wait off the pier and move in to berth with caution when circumstances allow... or at least attempt a sailing so that conditions at the pier could be assessed first hand.

I'm not so naive as to imagine that these decisions are always easy, particularly when taken on the bridge rather than at a desk. But on the other hand I'm also sure that not all Masters will have the same skills, confidence and experience – I imagine it is one of the tasks of your department to try to manage those varying skill levels, and improve, guide and assist where appropriate. Based on today's example, it is reasonable to question whether the best decisions were made in the interests of service delivery, and whether it might not have been appropriate to re-visit them.

I have sailed regularly on the MV Isle of Mull since it's very first day in service (as have many of our committee members). I have made the crossing between Oban and Craignure in all conditions on that vessel. It's performance was consistently more reliable during the 90s and 00's, and in conditions that matched or exceeded today's. Since 2006/7 however, there has been a progressive increase in the vessel's vulnerability to high winds. This is an objective fact. (see below).

If you agree that a Westerly of around 24 knots is enough to cancel the Oban-Craignure service, then we can expect our service to become much more fragile in future.

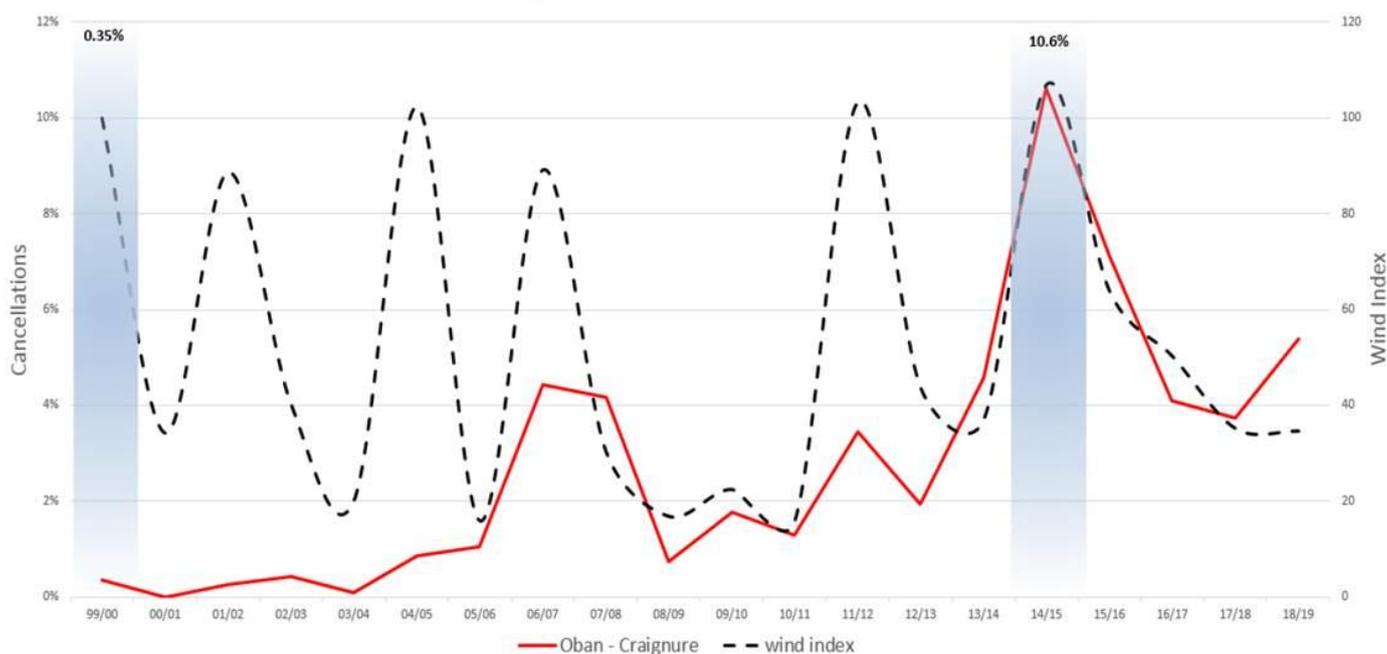
As a committee, we have been trying to convey the dissatisfaction of islanders with the winter reliability of our service for several years now. We have supported all of our arguments with data and objective facts. It is incredibly frustrating that the response we have received at all levels to these measured and fair arguments has been almost entirely defensive, without acceptance even of the demonstrable facts.

What would be very welcome from CalMac would be a little more introspection on the subject of weather reliability; a little more acceptance that the observations of islanders who have a lifetime of experience here have some validity; and a little more weight put onto the scales in favour of service delivery versus crossing comfort.

Best regards,

Joe.

Oban - Craignure Cancellations versus wind index



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee
www.mullandionaferrycommittee.org
Joe Reade, Chair.
joe@islandbakery.scot

To: Joe Reade, Chair of MIFC.

From: Robbie Drummond, Managing Director Caledonian MacBrayne.

Cc: Ferry Committee members; Key CalMac managers

Sent: 11 February 2020 15:14

Subject: RE: Oban - Craignure cancelled today.

Dear Joe,

my colleague [REDACTED] has responded in full to your enquiry. We have experienced major and extended disruption right across our network, and we do appreciate the difficulties it causes for our passengers. However, under no circumstances would we hang about off-shore waiting for a gap in the wind to berth, nor would we "attempt" a berthing. This would not be safe for passengers or our crew, and would risk damaging the vessel. The Master has to be sure he can berth before he departs. You are correct that the issue is berthing, but a heavy contact could remove the vessel from service for an extended period.

We have shared in detail the depth of training of our Masters and the support framework they have available to them. We have also shared our 11 years of audited statistics (from 2006 when the service was contracted) which show that there has been no material change to weather reliability, despite evidence that that depth and direction of storm weather has increased.

We are happy to work in partnership with the Committee on improving the service, but I can assure you that we are not going to change our stance on this matter. Seeking to influence our Masters to sail is and will continue to be against the law.

Regards

Robbie

Robbie Drummond

Managing Director, CalMac Ferries Ltd

From: Joe Reade <joe@islandbakery.scot>

Date: Wednesday, 12 February 2020 at 00:07

To: Robbie Drummond, Managing Director Caledonian MacBrayne.

Cc: Ferry Committee members; Key CalMac managers; Key Transport Scotland contacts; Paul Wheelhouse, Islands Minister; Michael Russell, Argyll & Bute MSP

Subject: RE: Oban - Caignure cancelled today.

Dear Robbie

Our job is to represent the users, for whom the decline in winter reliability is one of their key concerns. You can see the depth of their concern in our Users' Survey from last year here - <https://mullandionaferrycommittee.org/ferry-survey-2019/> . We've given this to you before but it might be useful to point you to it again. This issue is of real concern to your passengers; those we represent. If cancellations arise where we feel fair questioning is due, we will therefore continue to pose those questions in a balanced, objective and professional manner.

We have not made any personal criticism of any of your Masters; we have not ever asked or suggested that you over-rule a Master's judgement on a particular sailing and we will never do so. However, there is no profession (particularly those on whom the public rely for their safety) that is not open to review or scrutiny in order to ensure that those professionals are making balanced decisions and work to the best practices. To make a comparison – It would of course be utterly wrong for a clinical manager to enter an operating theatre and instruct a surgeon on how to perform a hip replacement. However, it would be absolutely appropriate for a manager to track clinical outcomes of that surgery, to determine (for example) which prostheses statistically perform the best, or whether particular surgeons have outcomes that are outside the expected norms. By monitoring – and then putting in place corrective actions or support that ensures the best outcome for patients, the manager is doing his job of managing, and does so without undermining the clinical expertise of the surgeon.

So - what we are clearly questioning is not the Master, but the management regime in which he works, and the circumstances or influences that are leading to outcomes that are outside the expected norms. We're questioning the management, not the professional being managed. So, it would help this conversation (which will probably recur) if we can please exchange views on the subject of reliability without having it suggested that we are asking you to break the law or that we are seeking to influence Masters' decisions as they make them. We are asking your team to monitor, review and support Masters so that we get the best outcome for passengers, both in terms of safety and service delivery.

We are also of course questioning the equipment that your Masters' have to work with. That means the piers, but also the vessels. For example, [REDACTED] says "the Major Vessels such as the Isle of Mull have to contend with considerable windage effects making berthing and unberthing challenging." This is an observation that local users have been complaining of for years – CalMac major vessels, with their very high crewing levels; un-necessarily high passenger carrying capacity and live-aboard crewing regimes have become ever taller and 'slab sided', making them increasingly vulnerable to high wind. The strategic choices that are leading these ferry designs are desperately in need of re-evaluation, and one major reason is the effect they are having on your ability to deliver service in higher winds. It would be far more productive if we could engage on a discussion of those choices, and find a solution – rather than arguing over whether the service is deteriorating or not. It would be productive and positive if our observations about reliability could lead to an open and informed exchange of views over what the ferry design strategy should be. Notable here for example is the comparison of the MV Alfred (low superstructure, catamaran) that for two days has maintained a service across the Pentland Firth (albeit amended) whilst the MV Hamnavoe (High superstructure, monohull) has remained in port for two days, unable to cross the same stretch of water in the same conditions.

On the matter of what is or is not objectively and empirically true, I am afraid that we remain unconvinced by your data. When it comes to measuring the performance of ships or services in the context of weather, the arbitrary CHFS contract date is not relevant. When we put together our detailed and robust evidence demonstrating how over a twenty year period performance was changing using your own data, we had a response that arbitrarily selected a much shorter time frame for which there was no robust justification. The company presentation may not have set out with this intention, but the apparent objective was to discredit the evidence basis of our well-founded concerns. On top of that, we, the customers, were presented with 'customer insight feedback' that sought to tell us that we, the customers, were in-fact satisfied. You and your company regularly express the view that the communities you serve are central, important and respected. I am certain that when you express that sentiment you are completely sincere – so please, when there is an opportunity to demonstrate that concern and respect - as there is on this crucial subject of reliability - please think about how you will be perceived if your efforts are focussed on discrediting your users' evidence. We need you to please engage in an open, honest and productive manner on the subject that demonstrates respect for us and our case.

In that spirit of sincerity, respect and concern for the communities you serve, I would also ask you whether the assertion that “ [there is] evidence that that depth and direction of storm weather has increased” matches with the Met Office data we have presented to you, or indeed any Met Office data. Never has the company in any correspondence, nor in the lengthy presentation of last year, ever offered any analysis of weather records, nor presented any rigorous evidence of increasing incidence of high winds. Your presentation of cancellation statistics was completely devoid of the critical context of weather. Whereas our presentation carefully drew upon specific and highly relevant Met Office data that showed there was no evidence of deteriorating wind conditions . If you have evidence that the “depth and direction of storm weather” has appreciably changed such that it has a bearing on the ability of your vessels to sail, please present it so that we can consider it. (both presentations of last year are still available to view here: <https://mullandionaferrycommittee.org/2019/08/20/winter-is-coming-cancellations-update/>)

We are also very happy and willing to work with you to improve services. I have found you to be a sincere, diligent, and hard-working guy. We were all very appreciative of the time you took to visit our committee on two recent occasions – you could very easily have delegated such consultative work to someone more junior, and I think it spoke highly of your accessibility and personal commitment that you made that effort. On many issues we have and continue to work collaboratively toward common goals – most particularly the much needed improvements to Craignure Pier. That co-operation is now yielding significant physical improvements that will address some of the causes of cancellation that you have identified. Likewise, I am also hopeful that your teams will find the imaginative solutions needed to make the Island Focussed Service that we are seeking possible; and that you will agree to release the Specifications of Operational Requirements that I have requested under FOI. Progress on those issues would be very welcome further manifestations of a willingness to work with us in partnership.

But on this subject of reliability we will continue to speak assertively, and point to failings wherever we fairly believe them to be. We will all be delighted when the need to write at quite such length, just to establish the facts, can at least be replaced with discussion of the solutions.

I have taken the liberty of adding a few people onto the cc list of this email so that key stakeholders are aware of our view on this essential topic.

With best regards

Joe Reade



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee

www.mullandionaferrycommittee.org

Joe Reade, Chair.

joe@islandbakery.co.uk

From: Michael Russell MSP

Date: Thursday, 13th February 2020

Solutions are what is required. Your analysis seems very sharp and well based and it will be interesting to see what response you get. I hope it is solutions based.

Regards

Michael