



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee Meeting

Thursday 6th October 2022, 7pm - 9pm

Members in attendance:

Joe Reade (Chair), David Galbraith, Andy Knight, Douglas Wilson, Ben Wilson, Moray Finch, Billy McClymont Stuart MacDougal and Heather Hill

Members joined via video conference:

Finlay MacDonald (Vice Chair), Keith Robbie, Pete Pinnington, Colin Morrison, Councillor Willie Hume, Geoff Adams, Chris James, Claire Simonetta and Hal Briggs (note taker)

JR opened the meeting at 7pm.

1. Apologies

John MacDonald, Sue Hawkes and Cllr Amanda Hampsey

2. Winter Timetables

2.1 This winter's process

JR confirmed that despite being late and rushed, the winter timetables process was more or less concluded. CalMac have still not committed to running the early morning ferry from Craignure to Oban, the Members all agreed that this is a very important sailing and agreement needs to be reached. JR will forward the outcome of the consultation on this matter once received.

The M&I Ferry Committee have been assured of a proper consultation period next year. JR stated that he expects to receive the summer consultation shortly. The outcome for Iona was particularly poor; the timetable is confusing and highly variable, but for car-driving Mull residents the new service is very positive (if they can get a space for their car).

2.2 Implications for summer 2023 and beyond

CalMac have indicated that the ferries will work to the 50/20-time schedule rather than 45/15, the Members all agreed that this will cause issues with other transport connections and reduces the island service significantly.

CalMac have justified the schedule change by quoting increased traffic and safety concerns. FM read out the email received quoting safety reasons; FM stated that it will be very hard to shift this decision.

JR will ask CalMac to provide the data to support this justification to be able to conduct some analysis and plans to challenge the decision where possible.

In summary the Members all agreed that a more joined up approach is required, in line with the Islands Connectivity Plan. It was also noted that the deteriorating public transport connections and ferry cycle times only enhanced the argument in favour of the high-frequency multi-vessel service we want to see. This has also been acknowledged by a key Transport Scotland official.

3. NZET Committee Ferries Inquiry

JR stated that the submission has not yet been completed, it will be completed in the next 2 weeks and a copy of the submission will be circulated to the Members.

4. Small Vessel Replacement Programme

JR stated that there are 3 reasons to be concerned with this:

- Three of the new small vessels will run between or to Mull and Iona
- We should demonstrate flaws in the procurement process, and get them fixed
- We can advocate for better vessels. Again a catamaran appears to offer significant advantages.

The Members all agreed that JR should continue to engage on the SVRP.

5. Community Ferry Co – tender for consultancy

JR confirmed that the consultancy grant (£15k) has been confirmed for the first round of the consultation. JR has not yet been able to fully review the paper received, the next steps will be to publicise our invitation for tenders.

Some discussion took place around advocating for “unbundling”, the Members agreed that we should continue to consult and discuss the potential of running our own ferry service to allow for much better autonomy and they hope it will encourage other islands to do the same.

The Members agreed that the debate has to take place as the old system is clearly not working well and we need to push for a full review to ensure we have ferry services that work for the island.

JR will refine the tender spec, and circulate. The outcome of the consultancy will be the basis for wider community consultation.

6. Crewing on CalMac Vessels – discussion paper

JR circulated a paper ahead of the meeting (appendix CM discussion paper).

The Members agreed to send a short succinct response, to include:

- Disappointment in the Loch Frisa being used as an example
- Pros and cons of both live-aboard and shore-based crewing models

7. AGM

The Members agreed to hold the 2022 AGM on Wednesday 30th November, JR to confirm timings and send out invite.

8. AOB

8.1 CS informed the Members of continuing confusion and difficulty with livestock bookings. There needs to be a significantly improved service and much better communication with farmers wanting to book livestock trailer bookings. The Members all agreed that a dedicated phone service would be the preferred solution for livestock and commercial bookings.

CS agreed to get in touch with the NFU and ask for help to resolve this issue, CS will copy in JR to assist. JR agreed to ask CalMac whether commercial bookings will be able to be made on the new ticketing system.

8.2 AK informed the Members that a TV production company have made an approach, they are making a series of human-interest programmes. CalMac are facilitating a fly on the wall programme about "life on the ferries". It will be produced and paid for by the BBC.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm.