



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 7pm

Members in attendance:

Joe Reade (Chair), Finlay McDonald, Sue Hawkes, Tim Dawson, Chris James, Heather Hill, Moray Finch, Chris James, Tim Dawson, Billy McClymont, Dave Currie, David Galbraith

Members joined via video conference:

Colin Morrison, Claire Simonetta, Andy Knight, Geoff Adams and Pete Pinnington

Guests:

Leanne Coyle (Whistledown Productions for the BBC) and Michael Buchanan (BBC) Sandy Brunton (online), James Harmer, Angus Campbell (Ferries Community Board, online)

JR opened the meeting at 7pm and welcomed all to the meeting.

Meeting Minutes:

1. Apologies

Celia Compton, Ben Wilson and Stuart MacDougall

2. Chairs report

JR reported that this year a lot has been achieved including a year-round 2 vessel service for the first ever time, with an approx. increase of 40% more sailings in winter. It was noted that the committee are still concerned around capacity and reliability, and although the Island Focussed Timetable had now been delivered, it had been done so in the most costly and inefficient way.

We have a commitment from CalMac to trial the Samsø System next summer, although this is not guaranteed. We need to make sure CalMac continue to be committed and work hard to ensure it is successful.

Transport Scotland are responding well to our request that the IOM replacements deliver a high-frequency, a long day, using weather-resilient vessels. We are positive about this, and productive conversations are taking place. Good progress has been made.

In 2022 we helped to prevent CalMac's proposed penalty charges; this was very successful.

We have upheld the Islands Act and received de-facto confirmation from CalMac that this has been recognised and they will abide by the Act.

The most significant work the committee undertook in 2022 was advancing the debate around ferry provision, and procurement.

We continue to receive lots of media interest, it is clear we are being heard. The Government are also now hearing us, but we hope they are listening too.

We will continue to advance island users' needs robustly.

JR stated that in 2023 we will continue to put pressure on for the Isle of Mull replacement to ensure the best outcome, and not a carbon copy of previous mistakes made. It should be a genuine process, not a pre-determined outcome.

Continue scoping out the possibility of community ferry provision and continue to inform the debate around this and project Neptune.

Influence the Island Connectivity plan.

Vote of thanks to Joe from the Committee members.

3. Election of Members

Resignations noted as: Simon Thomson (to chair prior to meeting) and Chris Baker (several weeks previously).

Constitutionally the committee are limited to 20 members, it was previously agreed that we can co-opt additional members as required. There are currently 28 members, this includes our 4 local authority Councillors.

It was noted that any member with an area of specialism interest should let JR know so that this can be noted and utilised when required.

JR formally proposed the new members, the members agreed.

New Members noted as: Dave Currie, Sally Swinbanks and Tim Dawson

4. Ferries Community Board Chair Angus Campbell (Project Neptune and FCB recruitment)

Angus Campbell is running the project Neptune consultation, and is Chair of the Ferries Community Board.

AC outlined the project remit; AC was asked to run a consultation and it has been agreed that the tripartite would meet the needs of the community. The terms of reference have now been received; AC will email them to JR.

AC is meeting with Transport Scotland Minister this week; public consultations will then commence. These will take place in the form of drop ins, online sessions for groups across the islands and various sectors. JR stated that he would like to see unbundling included in the consultation, it is worthy of consideration. It has previously been excluded which was noted as very frustrating.

AC ran through the scope of the work; this included the Ministers decision around removing unbundling. AC confirmed that he has responded to say this should be allowed to be explored.

The FCB will be advertising for 4 new members to join the board before Christmas, AC confirm that this is a network wide recruitment process. JR emphasised the need for a representative from Mull and Iona, given the importance of the islands in the network. AC agreed it would be good to have a member join them.

6. "10-minute rule" for foot passengers

The members discussed the 10 minute check-in rule, particularly in regard to the late Friday sailing sailing during the Loch-Frisa-only period. The train arrives 9 minutes prior to sailing, but CalMac insist passengers board 10 minutes before. Other connections are affected also, particularly if the train is delayed. Some passengers have been denied boarding, the members all agreed this was a nonsense rule and needs challenging. Discretion is needed for those passengers facing this issue.

JR has emailed CalMac regarding this matter, they have responded to say that the rule is needed to create the passenger manifest and headcount. The members agreed that CalMac are putting process ahead of customer

service, there is a lot to question around this issue, in particular the train connections being late into Oban leaving little or no time for foot passengers to disembark the train and get the ferry connection.

MF stated that Transport Scotland by its inaction in dealing with the issue to manage CalMac and Scotrail services are failing to meet their own climate change objectives by not maximising the use of public transport.

7. Winter timetable consultation 2023/24

JR informed the Members that the consultation is expected to commence before Christmas for the winter 23/24 timetable. CalMac are playing catch up.

The summer timetable consultation has just concluded, we sent in a spreadsheet of requests. We now have to wait for the response, but it should be soon as usually they aim to publish 3 months before summer.

8. Late sailing data and Information Commissioner

JR informed the Members that he has requested a full anonymised set of data around crossing performance times from CalMac. CalMac have refused this request, JR appealed this decision, it was subsequently refused again.

The Members suggested that the initial approach should be to ask CalMac whether they are internally conducting their own performance related reviews, to avoid having to go to the Information Commissioner. The Members agreed with this approach.

If the answer is not adequate, then consider going back to the Information Commissioner.

9. "Samsø System" update

JR informed the Members that CalMac have confirmed that resource has now been allocated to this. The Members all agreed that this system is needed, and that we need to keep on the pressure to ensure this happens.

10. Small Vessel Replacement Programme

There has so far only been a public webinar, no local public consultation has taken place. JR attended the webinar and asked questions around the concept and scope and how they arrived at their decision. He specifically asked during the webinar if they had compared with the catamaran designs, they informed him that they had and that they were not suitable due to being unable to use concrete slips. JR stated that this is categorically not the case, there is a lot of proof that catamarans have been working to slips for decades.

Subsequently CMAL were challenged by JR, FM and MF at a meeting with the Head of Vessels, Jim Anderson. Our meeting objective was to ask whether they would accept design proposals from other designers to compare alongside their current solution. Jim Anderson insisted he was confident in the design choice made, that they are right and will not consider any other options. It was a very frustrating and disappointing meeting.

The Members agreed that we need to robustly continue to challenge their decision on this matter otherwise we will be in the same position with a substandard solution being provided again, we can and must demonstrate this.

The Members all agreed that a carefully well thought out alternative proposals will be presented to the Minister to ensure all options are considered, the Members agreed with this approach. We will also consider if other communities involved in the SVRP would like to be involved.

11. Community Ferry Co update

JR confirmed that the invitation to tender has gone out, we expect to see some tenders in soon.

12. NZET Committee enquiry – our contribution and others

JR informed the Members that the submission is nearly completed and will be submitted soon.

13. Committee funds

The funds are limited, JR informed the Members that there is a small amount left over from the money raised for the catamaran study. JR stated that there is very little expenditure overall. MF recommended doing a crowd funding activity, to reach a wider market for support and everyone agreed that this will also help to inform the wider community of the work of the committee.

14. Meeting dates

The meetings take place the last Wednesday of every other month, the Members agreed the same schedule for 2023. The next meeting will take place on the 25th January 2023.

15. Any other business

15.1 FM informed the Members that at the meeting with the Minister he asked about the issue with last winter's timetable and Monday morning ferry provision for the school children and whether any progress had been made on these following discussions with the Head Teacher at Oban High. The Minister did not respond satisfactorily, FM will continue to try to get an answer on this matter.

15.2 DW informed the Members that accommodation for the Loch Frisa crew is unavailable over Christmas, it was also noted that someone local had applied to crew and it was declined. This is in contrast to the communications that they cannot crew the vessels.

15.3 Lochaline car marshalling lanes - queue jumping is still taking place, it causes chaos, and the Members are worried about it turning nasty. The Area Manager has promised to monitor this and will look measures to stop it taking place. JR to contact CMAL for resolution.

15.4 Corran Narrows. DW raised this as an important issue that we should contribute to. JR to contact relevant people at Highland Council.

The meeting closed at 9:33pm.