



Mull and Iona Ferry Committee

Representing the users of our lifeline ferry services

Ferry Committee Meeting

2nd February 2024 | 17:30 **An Roth and Teams**

Members in attendance:

Joe Reade (Chair)
Douglas Wilson
Ben Wilson
Moray Finch
Colin Morrison
Tim Dawson

Finlay MacDonald (Vice Chair)
Claire Simonetta
Billy McClymont
Keith Robbie
Dave Currie
Chris Roberts

1. Apologies

- Andy Knight, John MacDonald.

2. Report on CMAL Meeting in Port Glasgow and Preparation for Monday Meeting

- The next CMAL meeting is scheduled for Monday 5th February 2024. This is a follow up meeting to the meeting held in December to discuss procurement generally and renewal of the Isle of Mull specifically.
- Joe Reade, along with Ewan Hague [naval architect advisor] attended a full day meeting in Port Glasgow with Jim Anderson on 1st February 2024. This included a tour of the Glen Sannox.
- The discussion focused on the <<REDACTED>> specification and design part of the procurement process. <<REDACTED>>
- Ewan considers this to be a collection of design studies of whole vessels or parts of vessels that you review to help decide what you are asking the ship to be. This considers questions such as the impact on superstructure of including full-service catering for example. This would identify the design and compromises that should be made, such as crew levels, to aid design discussions. CMAL seem to use the term 'concept design' to describe the final detailed design that goes out to tender.
- Jim outlined that CMAL's process was to spend a long period of time with designers, choosing in detail exactly what should be built, making the design choices and creating a very detailed design. This is what they then issue in the ITT documents. This is a CMAL design rather than what the market would design or recommend.
- This ensures all bids are on a like-for-like basis to a very prescriptive design, but leaves no room or encouragement to bidders of the 'design' part of 'design and build'.
- Budgets are outlined in the strategic plan so you can see that the quotes will all align to this as well.
- There was a positive from the meeting. <<REDACTED>>
- The issue is that <<REDACTED>>
- The best people to help with this are <<REDACTED>>).
- The focus for the next meeting needs to be <<REDACTED>>
- To focus on moving forward, <<REDACTED>>
- This also needs to address the cost issue; the island's productivity plan has highlighted that RET is no longer affordable. The operating costs for Calmac are £180m per year. This is mainly driven by staffing costs. If this is not addressed now, we are in of future

governments not wanting to pay this and therefore we will get a reduction in service, fares will be under increasing pressure to rise, or worse, we might lose the services all together.

- If these discussions fail, <<REDACTED>>

3. Winter Timetable 24/25

- We have been asked to review the Winter Timetable for the 24/25 season.
- Our main comment is that we do not want a single vessel service, the Loch Frisa only timetable is not acceptable for connections to Iona and onward travel.
- Finlay MacDonald and Joe Reade will review the timetable and feedback on the changes needed to meet connections. This includes the last train connections on a Friday and Saturday that could not be worked around this winter.
- Other feedback is:
 - that once the timetable is agreed it needs to run to it. Constant changes to the timetable become unworkable for businesses and individuals trying to keep appointments. This is unacceptable.
 - To look at option for an additional middle of the day run.

4. Likely Vessel Cascade after 801/802 Introduction

- Due to the load capacity of the pier at Craignure, as outlined by Argyll and Bute Council following recent survey work, the vessels that could be redeployed to Mull are restricted. Finlaggan, Clansman and the Hebridean Isles have been discounted.
- It is likely to be the Caledonian Isles that comes to Mull with the Isle of Mull being retired.

5. Shelter in Oban

- A request has been received for a shelter and some seating for passengers that must wait out in the bad weather to board from the car deck on the ships that cannot use the Oban passenger access system.
- This has been taken up with CMAL.

6. Attempts to Fix Frisa-Only Train Connections - Outcome

- The Loch Frisa crew agreed to a 15 minute turnaround time so the 17:00 boat became the 16:55, enabling a connection to the 18:00 train service.
- The Friday and Saturday late connection with the last train could not be achieved due to crew working hours. This could have been achieved by starting slightly later in the morning and more 15 minute turnaround times to reduce crew working hours. This was rejected by Calmac for this timetable but will be considered for next winter.

7. Reporting on Community Ferry Co Outcome / CHFS Contract Award

- This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

8. Contract Award – What Do We Want to See Change? Consultation?

- This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

9. Fair Fares and Islands Connectivity Plan

- This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

- The Island Connectivity Plan was published today.
 - The vessels plan shows medium sized vessels for Mull.
 - It showed a fixed link for Mull.
 - Operating cost is an issue and has not been addressed previously. The way this is being addressed is through RET. They are proposing to charge non islanders more, to flex rates across the day and the vehicle charging will change.

- Changes to tourists / non islander pricing will impact on visitors to the island and it was reported that the last peak season had already seen a 50% reduction in footfall. This is concerning.
- Rumoured that 801 and 802 engine rooms are so confined, maintenance cannot be carried out when running. To get around this it is proposed to engage a double shift of engineers for each ship so that maintenance can be performed overnight. [post-meeting note – FOI submitted to find out if true]