



# Mull and Iona Ferry Committee

Representing the users of our lifeline ferry services

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## **Ferry Committee Meeting**

26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 | 19:00 **An Roth and Teams**

### **Members in attendance:**

Joe Reade (Chair)

Finlay MacDonald (Vice Chair)

David Galbraith

Douglas Wilson

Ben Wilson

Billy McClymont

Moray Finch

Keith Robbie

Colin Morrison

Chris James

Sue Hawkes

Claire Simonetta

Tim Dawson

### **1. Apologies**

- John Mac Donald
- Dave Currie
- Andy Knight
- Heather Hill

### **2. Minute Taking**

- Unfortunately, our current minutes secretary can no longer take the minutes which is why there are no minutes for the last two meetings.
- Joe Reade to identify someone to take over minute taking role.

### **3. Business Disruption Survey**

- We have had a lot of BBC coverage on this.
- Joe Reade has requested a meeting with Fiona Hyslop on the compensation and support issue. There is no date fixed yet nor have we had anything more substantive than a brief letter just acknowledging that they have received our letter. This has been forwarded to the committee for information.
- The intention of the meeting is to have multiple attendees including the Community Council and MICT as this has been a joint effort.

### **4. Meeting with Pippa Milne**

- Joe Reade, Finlay MacDonald and Moray Finch held a meeting with Pippa Milne and Jim Smith following on from the Mull and Iona Transport Liaison Group and the apparent instruction to Piers and Harbours officials that they were not to deal with us.
- Our issues were laid out to Pippa in that we felt that it was inappropriate to be excluded and that there needed to be a proper group to deal with the detailed design work on the pier. Pippa agreed to look into it and come back to us.
- It was highlighted that other council officials had been invited to a Community Council meeting and the response received was that operational staff to do not come to meetings and to speak to the elected member. So something appears to have changed in the council rules stopping operational staff interfacing with community groups.

- We have been told to go through the Transport Liaison Group but that has over 30 invitees, including Transport Scotland, Coll, Tiree, Islay and the conversations are very superficial and the scope too broad. There are no minutes for that group either.
- It used to be called the Craignure Marine Infrastructure Liaison Group but the name and remit was changed at a subgroup meeting last November. This is undocumented.
- This is unsatisfactory with all the design specifics that are needed and we will await Fiona's response.
- [Post meeting note – Jim Smith and Pippa Milne have indicated the intention to re-start CMILG meetings]

## 5. **Lochaline Marshalling**

- The drawing has been circulated. It looks the best that could be achieved. If there is more traffic than the ferry this will still need some form of marshalling to get people into the right lanes.
- Don McKillop, replacement Calmac Operations manager whilst Donna is off sick, has been contacted with regards to the need for a person to manage the marshalling of lanes at Lochaline during the summer season. The Ferry Committee have not received a response yet.

## 6. **CMAL**

### • **Freedom Of Information and Catamarans**

- Back in April, a meeting was held with Kevin Stewart, the previous Transport Minister, where the Ferry Committee discussed CMAL's history with catamarans and the four examples that we had of prejudicial treatment. He undertook to look into it. Since he left, we have had a letter from a Civil Servant to say they were still working on it. We have not received any further response since then.
- CMAL's behaviour over the Indonesian cat was completely unprofessional and poorly handled; A corruption of process.
- As a result of this, the Ferry Committee submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to Transport Scotland asking for all the communications between Transport Scotland and CMAL regarding the catamaran. Richard Hadfield was handling the FOI and Joe Reade spoke to him to apologise for raising the request.
- We received the information, circulated, and there are approximately five emails. This was far less than expected.
- There are a lot of redactions under section 30B, which is the catch-all exception that can be applied if it is felt that disclosing the content would 'prevent the free and frank exchange of views between officials'.
- The remaining content holds no further information than has already been shared with us. There were no statements from CMAL to Transport Scotland explicitly stating that if you proceed with the purchase that we may end up with a ferry that is not legal to use in UK waters. (The frequently-repeated and false assertion made to the press by CMAL and Transport Scotland)
- The content is more about things such as crew cabins, hard job to make the changes needed - which are subjective items. No firm information regarding the bill of sale but a slightly greater insight into what their reasons were. This does not give an insight into any advice given by CMAL to the Minister. This has been requested but we have not received this information under FOI.
- There was a letter written by Jenny Gilruth to Round and About, in response to questions about the Indonesian catamaran and for the reasons why it was not followed through. One of the key reasons given to Janna and documented in Round and About, was that there was a high likelihood that CMAL could have bought a vessel that wasn't certified for use in UK waters, and this was too risky. This

is completely unsubstantiated, and directly contradicted by the terms of sale offered.

- As well as Catamarans, a FOI was also sent in with respect to the Small Vessel Replacement Programme (SVRP).
- We pointed out to Kevin Stewart that possibly the SVRP was also suffering from the CMAL myopia.
- After giving objective, detailed evidence of the case regarding catamarans, it seems to have been totally ignored by CMAL.
- Pentland's Alfred has been very successful on the Arran route and this was a vessel that has not been designed for the route so could have been even better with a catamaran specifically designed. It has also sailed when the Caledonian Isles couldn't. It will be interesting if it is still here in the winter and what the outcome is. For approx. £2m more CMAL could have owned a catamaran rather than renting one.

## **7. Community Ferry Company and Meeting with Fiona Hyslop**

- The Ferry Committee have received the final report on the Community Ferry Company (technically still called a draft but is finished).
- It was successfully paid for by the extra fundraising on top of the grant money.
- Next step is to write to Transport Scotland to request a meeting to discuss, prior to it being published.
- The report is long and covers a lot of technical information, information regarding various ways it could be done such as vessel owning company, partnership with an established operator who would bring the technical skills, etc., levels of risk involved. The summary is quite readable. Two key issues are risk management, and the other is political i.e. how do you make it happen?
- There is a way to do it but unbundling would be a necessity. It does demonstrate that there are other ways to do it so a good conversation aid.

## **8. Ticketing System**

- Ferry Committee are still receiving regular emails from people. One was the colour of text on the screen – you could type in, but the text was not showing on the screen as it was white. The reason for this is that the ticketing software is not compatible with a browser or computer working in dark mode. This is a basic design error that should not have happened.
- Invoices being received are full of misinformation as the port or boat staff are having to fill in so much information on the system, they are just using whatever was in the box before so not even names against each bill.
- Problems are still being pointed out and the Ferry Committee are still maintaining a list and sending this to Robbie Drummond. This will need to be re-visited in a couple of months to see if it has been fixed.
- It does not appear to have been properly tested even though the testing was completed by reputable people.
- Ticket system not working the other day and people were just waved through for no charge. Also when a ticket does not scan, people are being let through.
- Another main problem is connectivity. For example, there are very few areas on the pier and ferry at Iona that there is a signal for selling tickets. In busy periods, this could be 250 individual tickets, and this is slowing down the whole process. Information from ferries will be very limited as to who is actually travelling on it.
- If there was a tragedy, then we would have no idea how many people were travelling on board. This is the worst it has ever been.

- The issue with ferries being shown as full when they aren't, and this is not just limited to 2 hours before a sailing. When you ring up, depending on who you get on the phone, you can quite often get on.
- Another issue is foot passenger tickets not being open tickets anymore but for specific sailings. People are now booking for a later sailing, turning up early as they know they will get on and the ticket will be valid as they do not want the hassle of having to change their original sailing time.
- If you go into the ticket office for an open ticket, their advice is to buy two singles for your days of travel now so the open ticket idea has gone.
- Medical appointment protocol is still not understood by staff and people are having to give private medical information which is not acceptable.
- Date of Birth along with your name being printed on loose bits of paper is not acceptable – all they need to know is gender and adult/child.
- One of the questions asked is for passport number rather than concession pass number. If you go to the ticket office, you still have to present your card, as they have to delete the number you have entered and then re-enter it. Why not have a chip on the card?

### **9. Ferry Stakeholder Meeting**

- There is a quarterly meeting organised by HiTrans There are representatives from many different areas across the Argyll area – Transport Scotland, Calmac, Ferry Committee members, Councillors, Community Council members.
- This meeting is just an update meeting and has little follow-up action.
- The meeting highlighted that there will be a consultation on the Small Vessel Replacement Programme for Mull in early September.
- The meeting documents have been shared. These include reports from Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac.

### **10. Additional Lochaline Ferry for Rally Weekend**

- It has been confirmed that there will not be an extra boat on the Lochaline service.
- The rally organisers have asked whether it is possible to have an extra, large boat on the Craignure route, in a similar fashion to the Tiree music festival, so that you have the Isle of Mull and, for example, the Clansman running additional services on the Sunday service. This will be taken to Calmac for consideration.

### **11. Fair Fares Review**

- The Ferry Stakeholder meeting highlighted that there was a Fair Fares review in progress under the Island's Connectivity Plan. This was for all fares including commercial fares.
- This would include a review of RET and addressing gaps in the operating costs.
- This would include adjusting fares for the type of vehicles and the day/time. This would encourage vehicles away from peak sailings to other sailings with availability during the day.

### **12. Any Other Business**

- The Island Crossing programme has been released on tv. This gives a good insight into both Calmac and the lives of Islanders as well as being a PR opportunity for Calmac.
- Service have issued a survey to Calmac business customers.
- A New Port Manager vacancy is to be advertised.