



Mull and Iona Ferry Committee

Representing the users of our lifeline ferry services

Ferry Committee Meeting

2nd October 2023 | 19:00 **An Roth and Teams**

Members in attendance:

Joe Reade (Chair)
Moray Finch
Keith Robbie
Claire Simonetta

Finlay MacDonald (Vice Chair)
Colin Morrison
Andy Knight
Heather Hill

Tim Dawson
Douglas Wilson
Dave Currie
Sue Hawkes

Kate Payton
Billy McClymont

1. Apologies

- Willie Hume
- Celia Compton
- John MacDonald
- Stewart MacDougall
- Ben Wilson
- David Galbraith

2. Islander Prioritisation Pilot

- This is supposed to start with the winter timetable. In the update from Calmac, the advanced standby list would be given space before it was opened up to the islander priority.
- To be on advanced standby, you have to meet certain criteria, e.g. you are a doctor or carrying shellfish or livestock. One criteria that was added was if you have a holiday booking on the Island you could also access advanced standby. This means that holiday makers be guaranteed a space over islanders.
- A protest was raised to Calmac which re-iterated the consultation for advanced standby should not be penalised but no other reason. Advanced standby has to remain in place.
- Advanced standby is not used very often but if people become more aware of it, this will become an issue as the space will be allocated to them before islanders.
- It is the principle of what was agreed being disregarded and this means that this is not a proper trial. Coll and Tiree agree.
- The key issue is the scope of advanced standby and the Ferry Committee did not agree to this in the first place. Calmac are sticking to their consultation argument and this is a very poor process
- The issue has been escalated in Calmac and we are waiting for a response from them. If the response is not positive, Jenny Minto, MSP, will be contacted. [post meeting note – CalMac agreed to remove Advanced Standby from Craignure-Oban]

3. Follow up from meeting with CMAL and forthcoming meeting with Kevin Hobbs, Murdo MacLennan and Jim Anderson

- Kevin Hobbs is CEO, Jim Anderson is Director of Vessels, and Murdo MacLennan is a Stornoway based Non Executive Director of CMAL.
- They have agreed to have a Follow Up meeting with the Ferry Committee but have not yet given a date yet.
- The key points for the meeting will be our criticism of the small vessel replacement programme and the procurement process, as discussed with Fiona Hyslop.

4. SVRP and procurement process

Awaiting response from Minister

- We agreed with the Minister that we would not be openly critical of the replacement programme and the procurement process until we had had a response from the Minister. This response has been chased but we will reach a point where we need to act.

5. 'Real' cancellation stats – a suggestion

- There was a Radio 4 programme that covered the difference between CalMac published cancellation figures and reality. This was positive.
- It was agreed that at the end of the summer season, full cancellation stats should be gathered and added to those for last winter. This should be supplemented with all the information on sailings that should have happened in the normal timetable but did not. The reasons should be captured e.g. weather cancellation, pier works, vessel breakdown or reallocation. This will present a true picture of what it is like for passengers.
- Once the spreadsheet is compiled, the dates can be cut to match any reported information to show the comparison "real" view.
- It should also be shown against the service norm of two vessels.
- There is also an underlying issue in that, once a ferry has been cancelled, you cannot get re-booked.
- The presentation of the information might need some thought. For example, presenting how many large ferry sailings might prove to be a good picture to show the reality of the situation.

[post-meeting note – not done, due to pressure of time and other higher-priority issues]

6. Cancellations and passenger expense reimbursement

- It has been highlighted that, when a sailing is cancelled and you have to find accommodation, you do not get reimbursed your true cost but you get a standard £70 per room per night. This can leave passengers significantly out of pocket if there is limited accommodation available.
- This was appealed as it was not paying reasonable costs and the appeal was also raised by the Ferry Committee to Robbie Drummond. The response provided back was that £70 was the legal maximum.
- Upon checking this, it was found that this is a guidance limit and not a legal or contractual limit. This was again challenged. Currently, accommodation is looking to be over £100, the Premier Inn is approximately £120 per night. Eventually, it was agreed that £70 is not reasonable costs and they should be paid in full and that the limit would be reviewed by Calmac.
- It was agreed that time would be given to Calmac to take this through the government review process and the Ferry Committee would re-visit early in 2024.

7. Ferries Community Board (FCB) representation

- Mary-Jean Devon has re-joined the FCB but has declined our invitation to attend Ferry Committee meetings.

8. Summer timetable consultation (deadline Oct 9th)

- We have received the summer timetable and have been given a deadline of October 9th to get our response back. This is very short notice to undertake community consultation on it.
- We will ask for this to be extended but we need to progress this as a priority. A website post will be put up asking for feedback.
- Committee members are also to provide any comments / feedback as soon as possible.

9. AGM November

- The AGM is due to be held and the proposal is to hold this as the November meeting.
- This will be advertised.

10. AOB

- CMAL Small Vessel Replacement
 - At the recent meeting with CMAL, Jim Anderson stated that a medium speed catamaran had to be aluminium and therefore more expensive. This is incorrect, and demonstrated an ignorance of the vessel type.
 - Jim stated that CMAL had commissioned naval architects to examine the Sea Transport proposal for the SVRP and produce a report, which CMAL have now received.
 - It was stated that the report ratified the decisions being made by CMAL.
 - The Ferry Committee have asked for sight of the full report. This has not yet been received.