

## **WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ON THE ISLAND COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT RELATING TO CHANGES TO THE LARGS CUMBRAE TIMETABLE FOR SUMMER 2026.**

**Personal information, including names, contact details and other identifying information, has been redacted where appropriate in accordance with regulation 9(2) of The Island Communities Impact Assessments (Publication and Review of Decision) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.**

### **SUBMISSION 1**

As someone who has recently purchased a property in Millport for use by ourselves, relatives and friends, I'm both very concerned and also puzzled by the proposed reductions to the Largs-Cumbrae service. There are significant waiting times for vehicles at peak periods and this move will surely degrade the service further.

- The current turnaround time seems to work effectively and safely, so why arbitrarily impose a longer time, seemingly for no good reasons?
- Significant investments have been made at the Largs end - a re-vamped booking office and waiting area. There's a lot of construction work at the Cumbrae slip, to replace the slip itself and to provide vehicle queuing lanes and better customer facilities. These long-term commitments to upgrade the route recognise its importance to the island community and are simply not consistent with the proposed reduction in ferry services. It needs to be kept at the current number of sailings per hour.

So I'm firmly opposed to the proposed changes.

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### **SUBMISSION 2**

I have been advised that your decision to cut ferry services has been challenged by Cumbrae Community Council.

To support this challenge (not that you seriously care) let me state a simple fact- your 2026 summer service is, so far, less frequent than the winter service of 25/26. And this in a period which included the Easter holiday.

A disgrace.

You must be aware your footfall is down on the same period compared to recent years. Please don't kid yourselves that this loss of revenue can be written off by blaming the weather.

Another fact- the small replacement vessel (Linnhe) has proved to be equally unreliable as that which regularly breaks down (Tarbert). And another- during a school holiday period you were providing a 40 minute service.

It's not just Millport that's suffering. I for one, as a Millport resident, have stopped regularly visiting Largs as it's not worth the time and effort to time a bus to meet your infrequent

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Written Representations

service.

Shortly we will have the MV Cumbrae to rely on. That will break down. Another simple fact.

### **SUBMISSION 3**

I would like to register my opinion on our new ferry timetable as being disabled and have numerous hospital appointments the present service is so unsatisfactory on Monday I have an appointment at the QEU Hospital at nine fifteen and am having to stay off island since the ferry change I would need to be on the 7,05 ferry leaving Cumbrae to get there on time 25 minutes earlier than before how is this progress, and with no consultation about bus service and them only running to one ferry every 40 minutes it a wait in the rain, however thought this up should try a couple of days traveling to see how much of a mess they have made of our lifeline service, and when writing can someone look at the access on the smaller ferry's for wheelchair users getting in and out of salon Will look forward to your reply.

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### **SUBMISSION 4**

I have been asked to submit my thoughts on the recently implemented changes to the CalMac sailings between Largs and Cumbrae.

The first concern that I have is the reduction in service during peak travel times in the morning. Traditionally there was one boat every 30 minutes starting at 6.45am until 8.15am (and 8.45am during the winter season). The reduction to one sailing every 40 minutes is a simple reduction of 25% in service at peak travel times. This cannot and should not be countered by any increase in capacity at other times during the remainder of the day, as these sailings are not as busy, for commuters primarily, although many other people regularly commute at these peak times for hospital appointments which are based further away, and require time to get to.

On a business level, this same change to the service is seriously affecting my staffing levels as the mainland staff who I employ, now either need to get an earlier boat to arrive at work on time, or come to work late, which results in a reduction in their wages. At the other end of the day the same staff are now requesting an earlier finish so that they can meet other obligations back at home (childcare for example) and the new ferry timetables (and buses it should be said) are not favourable to get back home in a timely manner in line with previous seasons.

These are a small number of the concerns which locals in our community have, and I am sure many other people will have given you their thoughts on the issues.

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### **SUBMISSION 5**

Hi, I'm writing regarding the changes in service from Largs to Cumbrae.

I live in Millport and rely on the ferries for medical appointments on the mainland.

The previous service was easy to manage as a foot passenger - timings in both winter and summer were straightforward and connected with the public transport I needed to get to Irvine Central , Crosshouse or Inverclyde. Now it's a logistical nightmare trying to work out

what ferry has a bus connection from the town to the ferry slip that will get me to Largs in time to get a connection to Irvine . Twice so far I've had to wait in a cold, damp shelter on returning to the island as I've got a ferry that doesn't have a bus connection ( the bus company has had to alter its timetable because of your imposed changes , and it's not possible for them to do the run to town and back for all ferries in the timescales you've decided on ,

It seems that we now have three ferries per hour at times when we only really require two, and only three when we really require 4 in peak season , just so that we have the same capacity averaged over the full year. It makes no sense , and is likely to mean even longer queues in the busy summer period .

I realise it's early days, but my husband runs a holiday flat, and bookings are down on last year, He's spoken with other short term let operators, and many of them are reporting the same issue. Some guests have told him they'd heard the ferries were a nightmare ( probably due to the adverse media coverage lately ) The business / tourism community here has always been pretty supportive of Calmac and played down any issues with ferries, but I fear the imposition of this timetable has undermined that and made it difficult to defend the service .

I have a small business and have clients who travel from the mainland for treatments, and have had to alter my regular appointment times to accommodate their travelling time and make sure they get a ferry that;s met by a bus .(I;ve twice had to arrange transport for elderly clients who got a ferry that no bus runs for )

I attended the consultation event at the Town Hall, and was pretty shocked at how token the whole thing was - we were told that the new timetable was non negotiable, despite there being questions about SimOps on the sheet we were asked to complete .

I think it;s vital that a Community Impact Assessment if properly carried out in line with the Islands Plan ,and that it is meaningful and not just a box ticking exercise

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## **SUBMISSION 6**

As per usual Calmac took it upon themselves to change their timetable without consulting the people who live on the Isle of Cumbrae. They didn't ask us if it would be inconvenient for us to attend hospital appointments, make travel arrangements, visit family etc, they just did it. They are atrocious, and that's being polite.

Please remind them that they are a service to the island community.

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## **SUBMISSION 7**

Hi, Please reverse your decision to move to a 20 minute service to Millport.

As a property owner on the island , your decision beggars belief.

Tourism will be impacted.

Businesses will be impacted.

Islanders will be sorely impacted.

No tie up with bus service - have you really thought this through.

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## **SUBMISSION 8**

### **Cumbræ Ferry Service Reduction**

I am writing in relation to the above ferry service.

I am a full time island resident and I work full time as a [redacted] on the mainland, commuting on a daily basis in term time. I also regularly provide childcare help for family members on the mainland, and so typically travel six times a week for most of the year.

I am deeply concerned by the reduction in service both for my own family and in the wider impact I am already noticing in the community. I am also concerned that CalMac's inadequate and dismissive attitude to islander concerns may lead to further reductions in future.

The reduction leaves me with really only one viable service in the morning, the 7am - if this doesn't run, the next is too late (I typically cycle to work but otherwise take the train). Returning in the afternoons I face a 40 minute wait - often cold and wet - outside the summer timetable (and at regular intervals when a ferry has broken down). If I do not have my bike I am faced with an incomprehensible timetable to try to work out which ferry might be met by a bus... or standing in the wind and rain to await said bus. This is not the fault of Millport Motors at all - clearly CalMac could not care less about sustainable, joined up public transport.

As a cyclist I am deeply concerned that this current nonsense timetable - and the helpful advice that "not every service is met by a bus", with no advice as to when buses do run - will vastly increase the number of cars on the island. I have already made additional trips with the car myself since the timetable change rather than be "stuck" with no bus - great for CalMac's coffers, terrible for the environment, for the public safety that CalMac care so much about and for Cumbræ's fragile environment and tourism industry. Indeed considering the timetable one might actually conclude that CalMac are actively encouraging passengers to bring their cars...

When visiting family and bringing my grandchildren to the island the irregular service will lead to an even longer journey and additional barriers to visiting family and/or bringing them to our home. It is an additional stressor also when trying to access the vet in Largs with dogs who do not travel well.

My main concern is the impact on the island's economy. I have already noticed the island being quieter over Easter, as the additional travel time and generally confusing timetable - see above re buses - acts as a disincentive to tourists to visit. This will be greatly exacerbated by lengthy queues in good weather - see above re cars.

I am also concerned by the utter disregard with which islanders were treated by CalMac - meaningless, token engagement when it was clear decisions had already been taken,

compounded by a price increase which only leaked out a day or two beforehand. CalMac clearly have zero understanding of the meaning of “lifeline service” and zero interest in accountability to islanders.

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## **SUBMISSION 9**

Dear Calmac.

Very sad to see the time changes that have been implemented on the Largs, Cumbrae ferry. As an older resident of Cumbrae these changes have a huge impact on my life. I have ongoing health issues and regularly attend hospital and dental appointments in North Ayrshire and Edinburgh. The time changes and omission of ferries is very inconvenient for me, as sometimes have to leave the day before to ensure making appointment times. This causes added anxiety and financial stress I could do without.

Please reconsider your decision.

Very concerned

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## **SUBMISSION 10**

How CalMac’s new Summer timetable (introduced on Largs - Cumbrae route on 27 March 2026) has affected my life.

I’m a permanent resident of Millport and use the ferry on average a couple of times a week. This can be by car with my husband or as a foot passenger using the bus connection to Millport. I am registered partially sighted so do not drive.

The new timetable appears to give an increased service at this time of year during core hours, but some commuter time services have been dropped. Putting on two ferries at this time of year also seems a little excessive as often the MV Loch Shira seems under used, whereas the smaller vessel fills up very quickly, particularly if a large trade vehicle is loaded too, as is frequently the case.

I have two specific examples from last week of where the new service doesn’t work for me..

- When travelling with my husband to do a weekly shop in Largs, we arrived back at Largs slipway at 10.20am, in good time for the 10.30am sailing to Cumbrae. We were perhaps 9th in the queue. There was one regular delivery lorry amongst the queue in front of us. We were not able to fit onto the 10.30am ferry and had to wait for the MV Loch Shira’s crossing at 10.50am. Under last years’ timetable, we might have had to wait half an hour for the next crossing in a worst case scenario, but only if we’d just missed a sailing. The difference in size of the current ferries, means that turning up in good time, does not mean you’ll get a place – it depends which size of ferry turns up next. The MV Loch Linnhe, MV Loch Tarbert and MV Isle of Cumbrae ferries all struggle to run to anything like their (small) capacity because of the regular transport of trucks, lorries and delivery vans that service the island – they ferries just aren’t wide enough.

- I had a 3.30pm optician appointment in Largs. On the former timetable, I could get the 2.40pm bus from Millport Pier, to catch the 3pm ferry, arriving with 20 minutes to make my way through Largs to the opticians. Under the new timetable, the 3.10pm crossing from Cumbrae slip would have been suitable, if I walked briskly from Largs slipway to the opticians. However, that ferry crossing is not serviced by a bus from Millport. As a result, I had to catch the 2.20pm bus from Millport Pier to catch the 2.50pm ferry to Largs, arriving 30 minutes before my appointment. On arrival at the Cumbrae slipway, the bus had to unload its passengers to allow the previous ferry's foot passengers to board.....and then the bus waited for the next ferry to arrive and collect those passengers too. On occasions, this has led to a very crowded bus, making the trip into Millport uncomfortable and often difficult to exit from without all the standing passengers getting off the bus first. In all cases, there is time wasted waiting on the bus, waiting for the next ferry – (not comfortable in the limited cover at Cumbrae slip) or hanging about in Largs because you've arrived far earlier than necessary.

Finally, a trip to England that needs me to catch the first Sunday ferry of the day in June, used to allow 14 minutes for me to connect with the first train to Glasgow. The time to get from the ferry slip to the rail station has been cut by 5 minutes on the new timetable, adding extra stress to that trip.

The simple system where the ferry left every half an hour and was always met by a bus at Cumbrae slip has been lost. I'm sure the bus drivers and CalMac shore staff are fed up with customers who don't know which ferries are coming or going and how to connect with a bus service – and that now includes residents of Millport and Largs, not just day-trippers or holidaymakers.

It would appear that no consideration was given by CalMac to the connections people need to make on their journeys. Possibly this may have become clear if CalMac had asked the users of its service BEFORE it redesigned its timetable.

On a general note, at this time of year, passenger numbers during the week rarely warrant the extra loading time that CalMac has integrated into the new timetable. It would certainly be helpful in maintaining the timetable during public or school holidays, but at the moment, the boats are loaded and then everyone (crew and passengers) waits for 5 minutes before the ferry journey starts – doesn't that show how unnecessary the 10 minute turnaround time is?

We've been living with this new timetable for a month now and it doesn't seem to be an improvement for any customers. Hopefully the shore and boat crews are seeing some improvement, else what was the point? The old timetable worked. It has for many years needed a larger second vessel during the summer holidays to reduce the very long queues that build up on both sides of the crossing.....but that was all that needed changing. CalMac has completely misjudged the needs of the community on this service – maybe because it didn't ask.

Thanks for your time.

## **SUBMISSION 11**

1. The latest so-called 'consultation' carried out by CalMac on Cumbrae was — as on previous occasions — a complete sham.
2. CalMac management pay lip service, nothing more, to representations made by the Cumbrae Ferry Users Group.
3. There is no consistency or regularity in the 'new' timetable: there are still unpredictable (and unexplained) gaps in the departure timings. This impacts badly on commuters, local businesses and people with medical appointments on the mainland.
4. There is no sign of joined-up thinking in a timetable which provides so many crossings that are not serviced by the local bus company.
5. The ticketing farce continues: the laborious online booking programme was clearly designed by and for CalMac accountants, office-bound administrators and subcontracted internet geeks who have no understanding of the individual needs of our service or what a 'service culture' means.
6. Why can't CalMac managers get their heads round the fact that Cumbrae is a one-destination-only service and should not need return tickets? Why can't CalMac learn something, anything, from Western Ferries, especially regarding 10-journey tickets, no time-limitation on ticket validity and manning of terminals?
6. The introduction of maintenance breaks is a nonsense. Why can't maintenance be carried out after the last crossing of the day?
7. Why is there not a joint Cumbrae/CalMac supervisory board? Taxpayers are funding a service for which there is no accountability, no local representation and no value for money.

The whole concept of running a vehicle ferry service from the busiest point in Largs town centre is madness. And on Cumbrae, why dump everyone as far away from Millport as possible? This may be CMAL's domain, but it's all symbolic of the lack of strategic thinking displayed by the monolithic quango known as Transport Scotland, to which CalMac and CMAL are tied.

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## **SUBMISSION 12**

To whom it may concern

I would like to respond to the ICIA Review ICIA 2026-001.

The current service is unreliable, unpredictable and much worse from a consumer perspective.

I understand there has been a spurious 'safety' issue raised for a potential problem which hasn't arisen on the island in its 40 years of current operation.

The fact that passengers need to cross traffic anyway in Largs, and that they do so a few meters away from where the many new members of staff stand and shepherd people onto the ramp is a travesty. I assume there is a nominal red line for Calmac in terms of liability.

Calmac operates a one-size fits all operation which knowingly impacts the Cumbrae community, doing so is in breach of the Islands Act.

1. The reduction in the ferry timetable personally impacts me because I commute to work in Glasgow and am a regular ferry user, both on foot and by car. The reduction in the number of ferry crossings and increased queues is not something I can avoid or change my timing to avoid. I am dreading end of the week returns to the island after work.
2. I also need to attend medical appointments on the mainland which have specific times and which cannot be missed. The stress of trying to ensure I am on time means I end up building wasted time in – simply because the service is now unpredictable.
3. An additional impact of the recent change is that the bus and ferry and train are no longer aligned, and it is not possible to work out from Calmac's site whether there will be a complete journey by foot. I have been told that I should have compared timetables across the ferry and the bus site. This is not what a local or visitor would expect to need to do. On 6 April I needed to get to the airport to fly overseas for work and waited for a bus which did not come. I missed the timetabled ferry and had to wait nearly an hour in Largs for the next train. Apparently the bus doesn't meet the small ferry. This made me late for the entire journey which was extremely stressful.
4. I am concerned about the impact that dropping 25% of sailings is going to have on the businesses on the island - many of which operate now with marginal profits. Calmac's highhanded unilateral decision will have an extremely damaging effect on the island. If people had an alternative method of travel the boats would be entirely empty. It doesn't feel like a service run for customers or designed to meet their needs.

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## SUBMISSION 13

RE: Formal SUBMISSION to the Consultation Regarding Cumbrae Ferry Services and Islander Impact

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to take part in your consultation regarding ferries on Cumbrae and the impact for islanders. As part of my ICIA SUBMISSION, I attach a copy of two different emails which I wrote to my MSP Kenneth Gibson about CalMac's proposals, the full text of which is included below.

FAO Kenneth Gibson MSP – 22nd February 2026

The strength of feeling from Cumbrae residents and visitors alike is that the CalMac proposed timetable changes are self-serving; therefore, nothing to do with health and safety which they had previously claimed, they haven't been able to cite any actual incidents on the route whatsoever.

If the problem, as CalMac sees it, is simultaneous loading of cars and passengers, perhaps they ought to redesign the infrastructure at the slipway to allow more efficient (safer) ferry access. The alternative would be CalMac having access to control the traffic lights on Largs main street to facilitate the disembarkation of cars more expeditiously. The Double Yellow lines need better enforcement at the Largs terminal as illegally parked cars block ferry traffic and this adds to the difficulties with CalMac sticking to their published timetables.

There really is no need for ticket staff on the Cumbrae side of the water at all, the system worked perfectly well beforehand for decades, so the changes introduced recently seem arbitrary.

Most islanders seem to be in favour of Western Ferries taking over the route from CalMac. I just wish this was an option as CMAL/CalMac monopoly means they are effectively doing as they like regardless of what island customers actually require from their ferry services.

CalMac one day consultation was nothing short of a joke, and a lot more people might have attended if the event was not held on a Friday during the day.

The ferry staff at Largs/Cumbrae slip are very good, but it seems CalMac management are imposing these changes on them which is equally unfair.

Anything you can do to help change CalMac's mind would be appreciated.

### **Correspondence to Kenneth Gibson MSP – September 2025**

CalMac say there is a choking point for cars disembarking the ferry at Largs as vehicles are getting stuck at the traffic lights / junction, and this slowing them up. As a consequence, CalMac suggest this causes difficulties keeping to timetable as they cannot fully load and unload the ferry safely in the allotted time. It is ridiculous that CalMac suggest the solution to this issue is a change to the timetable, reducing capacity by around 20%. Luckily, for the time being at least, CalMac have ditched the proposal to cut the number of sailings to/from Cumbrae. Nevertheless, this issue is weighing heavily on my mind as the it is being pushed down the road to a later date with no solutions being suggested.

There are a couple of personal observations which I would like to point out and would be grateful for any thoughts you may have. Concession rate ferry fares have substantially been increased recently, this seems unfair to me. There are plans to introduce a new ferry slip at Cumbrae, together new infrastructure to help manage the ferry queues for cars waiting to travel to Largs. I don't understand why this is happening when the bulk of the problem is really on the Largs side, not on Cumbrae.

Prior to the new ticketing system being introduced, passengers could only purchase return tickets. For most people (unless they had access to their own boat), there is only one way on the island and only one way off. Consequently, passengers purchased their return ticket and handed it over before boarding the ferry in Largs. Conveniently, no ticket had to be shown for the return portion of the journey at Cumbrae Slip. However, since tickets are inspected on both sides of the water, this now adds to delays - not to mention the further expense of having ticket collectors on both sides of the water. This could simply be resolved by going back to issuing return tickets only - the system worked perfectly for over 35 years, seems crazy to have scrapped it when the system worked perfectly, and islanders/tourists were not slowed down by queuing for tickets to be inspected.

The problem at Largs which causes a bottleneck can simply be reduced through good town planning and traffic management by North Ayrshire Council, or new infrastructure at the pier. For example, at particularly busy times, traffic lights could give priority to cars coming off the ferry thus reducing any bottleneck on Largs Main Street, thus allowing the ferry a quicker turn around. Or, perhaps Fort Street should be made a 2 way street again, but for ferry traffic only - no entry for non-ferry traffic. This means that if vehicles immediately turned right when getting off the ferry, the bottle neck would be at the much quieter Bath Street, not on Largs' busy Main Street, but this would also give would be sufficient room for the ferry to unload and load without impeding the traffic flow elsewhere.

CalMac are complaining the problem is the timetable, yet the ferries often run on a shuttle service to clear the backload of cars on busy days; so, why have worry about a timetable if boats can easily shuttle back and forth? Ferry users like it when they do this as it reduces wait times on both sides, and allows passengers to get to/from their destinations quicker.

Whilst Cumbrae Slip is big enough to accommodate 2 vessels simultaneously, Largs Slip is not. This means that if repair work to Cumbrae Slip is required, for example, the ferry is still able to land safely given it is a commodious slipway. What provisions and contingency plans are there for the Cumbrae Ferry to land on the mainland to disembark cars/passengers should Largs slip ever be closed for repair?

Cumbrae/Largs ferry is a lifeline for our community. Last year when the Loch Shira was unavailable, even with 2 ferries running, there was often a 4 hour waiting queue for cars boarding the ferry at both sides of the water. This meant for disabled people like me who rely on their cars and would struggle as foot passengers, a quick visit to the supermarket on the mainland or running errands or even medical appointments on the mainland were very difficult (or even impossible) - nobody has time to spend 8 hours of their day in a ferry queues.

There is clearly a demand for the Cumbrae Ferry in Summer, even with the disruption of the broken down MV Loch Shira, it was still the busiest route on the CalMac network last year. Cutting ferry capacity will only add to the island's problems, inconvenience locals, and adversely affect the local economy. A solution needs to be found, not situations that will cause further problems.

**In addition:**

Now that the Summer Timetable has been introduced, my thoughts so far are that with previous timetables, I instinctively knew the ferries were on the hour and then half hour going off, and every 15 minutes during the Summer. I didn't need to refer to the timetable as it has been part of my life for so long. However, It seems to me that the timing of the new timetable is somewhat sporadic and irregular, the sailings are all over the place e.g. on the hour, 20 to the hour, 25 mins past, then half past, then 10 mins to the hour etc. It would be impossible to instinctively know when the next ferry is due given the sporadic timings, even more complex when trying to understand which buses meet which ferry. This will make it very difficult for locals and tourists to safely know when they can catch the next sailing without missing it - it is not so much a timetable but a random number generator. I wonder if there was a reason for CalMac's lack of continuity in the new ferry times? At least during the middle of the day it is 10, 30, 50 going off, but the morning is such a muddle - why does it need to be so complex?

Why was last ferry from Largs changed from 8.15pm to 8.10pm (8.05pm on Sundays), these last few minutes might be vital for me getting home when rushing home on a busy motorway, making the last ferry leave Largs earlier than before is a retrograde step. Those extra 5 minutes (10 minutes on a Sunday) are valuable as that might be the difference between me getting home or not at all.

Regarding the impact on Integrated Transport and Accessibility, the sporadic nature of the new timetable has a damaging knock-on effect on our integrated transport links, specifically the 320 bus service to Millport. For decades, the synchronicity between the ferry and the bus was a reliable lifeline; however, with sailings now following an irregular pattern, this connection is no longer guaranteed. For foot passengers—particularly the elderly, those with limited mobility, or those travelling with young children—missing a bus connection at the Cumbrae slip is not merely an inconvenience. It leaves vulnerable people stranded in an exposed location with no shelter or services, waiting for a connection that no longer aligns with the "randomised" ferry arrival times. Even worse for those affected if weather is bad.

On the subject of Economic Sustainability and Supply Chains, beyond the personal inconvenience to residents, these changes threaten the economic stability of the island. Unpredictable ferry capacity and irregular timings create significant friction in our supply chains. Local businesses rely on the timely delivery of fresh goods and medical supplies, while residents depend on mainland tradespeople who are increasingly reluctant to service the island due to the risk of being caught in multi-hour queues. When ferry transit becomes a gamble rather than a certainty, the "island premium" on goods and services rises, leading to economic leakage as it becomes more difficult and expensive to maintain a home or business on Cumbrae.

Administrative Friction and Systemic Retrogression is also a primary concern. The move toward ticket inspections on both sides of the water represents a clear case of systemic retrogression. Under the Islands (Scotland) Act, transport changes are meant to improve outcomes for islanders, yet this new ticketing regime has reintroduced significant "friction" where none existed for over 35 years. The previous return-only system was a model of efficiency that prioritised the flow of traffic and passengers. By contrast, the current requirement for double-sided inspections adds unnecessary delays and administrative costs, serving no clear benefit to the customer while actively contributing to the missed sailings and "choke points" CalMac claims to be solving.

The Environmental and Public Health Concerns in Largs must also be addressed. The bottleneck created by CalMac's current loading procedures carries a significant environmental and public health cost that must be addressed in this consultation. When cars are held up at the Largs terminal due to inefficient disembarkation and a lack of traffic light priority, dozens of vehicles are forced to sit with engines idling on the Main Street. This creates avoidable air pollution in the heart of the town. These "choke points" are a direct result of ferry management policies; therefore, CalMac has a responsibility to coordinate with North Ayrshire Council on better traffic management rather than simply penalising islanders by reducing ferry capacity and complicating the timetable.

There has been a Failure to Stress-Test and a Risk of Irreparable Impact. It must be noted that the true impact of this 25% reduction in ferry sailings remains unknown, as the system has not yet been stress-tested by peak summer demand. Implementing these changes

based on "shoulder season" data is a dangerous oversight. By the time the full weight of summer tourism and resident travel hits the Largs and Cumbrae slips, any failure in the new timetable will result in immediate, catastrophic congestion. Once the island's reputation for accessibility is damaged by 4 or 5-hour queues, the economic fallout for local businesses cannot be easily reversed. CalMac is effectively sleepwalking into a summer crisis without a proven contingency plan, and the islanders are the ones who will pay the price for this lack of foresight.

Someone kindly gave me an unofficial ferry timetables showing which runs were operated by Loch Shira (and therefore had a connecting bus), and sailings were operated by the smaller vessel - I attach a copy of the photo they sent me. This is handy, The Loch Shira was shown in black text, and the other vessel in red text. Whilst this is a useful resource, it is not official, nor does it show the impact on sailings during Loch Shira maintenance Tuesdays, for example.

| SUN          |                     |                     |              |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Largs Depart | Cumbrae Slip Arrive | Cumbrae Slip Depart | Largs Arrive |
| 08:15        | 08:25               | 08:35               | 08:45        |
| 09:20        | 09:30               | 09:40               | 09:50        |
| 10:00        | 10:10               | 10:20               | 10:30        |
| 10:20        | 10:30               | 10:40               | 10:50        |
| 10:40        | 10:50               | 11:00               | 11:10        |
| 11:00        | 11:10               | 11:20               | 11:30        |
| 11:20        | 11:30               | 11:40               | 11:50        |
| 11:40        | 11:50               | 12:00               | 12:10        |
| 12:00        | 12:10               | 12:20               | 12:30        |
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| 18:00        | 18:10               | 18:20               | 18:30        |
| 18:20        | 18:30               | 18:40               | 18:50        |
| 18:40        | 18:50               | 19:00               | 19:10        |
| 19:00        | 19:10               | 19:20               | 19:30        |
| 19:20        | 19:30               | 19:40               | 19:50        |
| 19:40        | 19:50               | 20:00               | 20:10        |
| 20:10        | 20:20               | 20:30               | 20:40        |

The fundamental flaw of the current timetable lies in its "interleaved" design, where two different vessels (the MV Loch Shira and a smaller "Loch" class vessel) operate on two completely distinct, non-synchronous schedules. This creates a "fragile" service that only functions under perfect conditions. In previous years, the timetable followed a predictable cadence; even if one vessel was removed, the remaining boat typically defaulted to a logical "on the hour and half-hour" rhythm. Under this new system, there is no shared "skeleton" schedule. Consequently, when a fault occurs—as has happened with alarming frequency in the weeks since this timetable's inception—the remaining sailings are left as a series of sporadic, irregular events. This lack of a consistent "fallback" rhythm makes it impossible for islanders to intuitively know when the next ferry will arrive, effectively rendering the printed timetable useless during periods of disruption.

The "Information Blackout" and Commuter Risk is a severe reality. The recent string of technical faults has exposed the severe lack of "predictive certainty" for islanders. When one vessel goes offline, the "red" and "black" timings do not align into a coherent service; instead, they leave massive, uneven gaps that can exceed an hour. For commuters relying on the specific sailings highlighted for train connections, a single vessel failure isn't just a

delay—it is a total breakdown of their travel plans. Because the times are "all over the place," passengers are forced into a state of constant "information blackout," unable to plan their day without tethering themselves to a smartphone app. This is particularly discriminatory against elderly residents or those who lack digital access, who are left waiting at the slipway with no idea when a boat might appear or if it will even have the capacity to carry them.

The Capacity Crises and Pre-emptive Failure we are witnessing are grim. The frequent disruptions we have seen since the introduction of this timetable serve as a grim preview of the coming summer months. If the larger vessel, the Loch Shira, is the one that suffers a fault, the smaller "red time" vessel cannot possibly absorb the 25% reduction in overall sailings while simultaneously making up for the loss of the larger deck space. We are seeing a system that is failing even under "shoulder season" loads; to expect this disjointed, irregular schedule to survive the peak summer demand is a fallacy. By persisting with this complex, non-rhythmic timetable, CalMac is inviting a summer of "left-behinds" and gridlock, where the lack of a simple, predictable backup service will turn every minor technical fault into a full-day island crisis.

Regarding Speculative Restrictions and the EV "Weight and Fire" Risk, recent reports in The Herald and The Scotsman have raised the alarming possibility of new restrictions on Electric Vehicles (EVs) due to weight-related deck stresses and potential fire risks. While currently categorised as newspaper speculation, the mere suggestion that CalMac might reduce vehicle capacity to accommodate the heavier curb weight of EVs—or, more drastically, limit boarding to EVs with less than 40% battery charge—is deeply concerning. Such measures would represent a significant escalation in the degradation of our ferry service. If these speculative policies were ever implemented, they would not only worsen the already unacceptable queues but would also introduce a level of "boarding lottery" that would make island travel entirely untenable for a growing portion of the population and the visiting public.

The Failure of Infrastructure and the 40% Battery Paradox is evident. The suggestion that EVs should only sail with a low state of charge ignores the practical reality of island infrastructure. If a resident is forced to board a ferry with less than 40% battery to satisfy a speculative fire safety protocol, they are immediately placed in a position of "range anxiety" and risk. For example, a round trip from Cumbrae to Glasgow and back would be impossible on a 40% charge, yet the charging infrastructure on the island is currently insufficient to support a fleet of vehicles arriving in a depleted state. This creates a "catch-22" scenario where islanders are penalised for adopting greener technology, effectively trapping them on the island or leaving them stranded on the mainland. Economic Deterrence and "Front-of-Queue" Refusals would be a public relations disaster for Cumbrae. It would send a clear message that the island is "closed" to modern travellers. In the context of an already fragile service and a 25% reduction in sailings, adding speculative and unworkable EV restrictions would be the final blow to the island's economy.

Finally, concerning Maintenance and Operational Efficiency, I must ask why routine maintenance is scheduled during peak daylight hours rather than during the vessel's natural offline period overnight? Has CalMac conducted a formal impact assessment on how these daytime "maintenance windows"—which effectively reduce route capacity by 50% during the period of work—affect integrated transport links and medical appointment attendance for islanders? What specific logistical or contractual barriers prevent the implementation of a

night-shift maintenance regime, and have these been weighed against the economic cost of daytime service disruption to the Great Cumbrae economy? In light of the recent frequent technical faults, what measures are being taken to ensure that "routine" checks do not evolve into unscheduled service suspensions, and why is this work not prioritised for times when the impact on passengers is zero?

Thank you for your attention to these extensive concerns

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## **SUBMISSION 14**

Dear Calmac

As a resident of Cumbrae I am writing to you to register my objections to the latest timetable changes.

It is very confusing to work out when busses meet the ferries.

There are times when the busses do not coincide with ferries and there will be unnecessary waiting times.

For those of us who depend on the bus- to- ferry service .....particularly the elderly... this is not easy to negotiate and we may end up waiting for a connecting bus to Millport at the slip for long periods with no adequate shelter or seating.

I am also concerned that queues for the ferry will increase at both sides of the crossing... both cars and passengers .

Another matter which concerns me is that residents of Cumbrae who have appointments, jobs or other reasons to visit the mainland are not considered a priority over the visitors. ....whose daily lifestyle does not depend on the ferry service.

Friends of mine have become rather unwell standing in long queues on the Largs pier in hot sun but have not had the opportunity to leave the queue without losing their place.

I urge Calmac to consider a queue priority for locals and services like post, deliveries of food and building materials, oil, logs, gas etc.

As a "lifeline" service our ferry should serve the community first ..... and the tourists second.

These changes would renew the Cumbrae community's confidence in Calmac, which surely is top of the list of priorities and requirements of a ferry service.

It would be ideal if the Millport residents and Calmac could agree on a more island community-friendly service and avoid the confrontation and aggravation which has recently been happening.

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## **SUBMISSION 15**

I would like to register my deep concern at the proposed summer timetable for the Largs - Cumbrae ferry service. The planned reduction in the frequency of ferry services this year, will

significantly exacerbate an already challenging situation. It is clear that queues will become longer and waiting time increased.

My elderly mother is a full-time resident (aged 91yrs). Although I no longer live on the island I am a very regular visitor. I typically travel on this service several time each month for visits and to support with off-the-island hospital and other personal appointments. Whenever possible, I try to avoid peak travel time but this is often unavoidable. Sitting in ferry queues of over 2 hours in each direction is not uncommon. This situation has been particularly stressful when accompanied by my mother following her hospitalisation, and when taking her to visit my father (recently deceased) during many months he spent months in hospital before his final year in a Largs care home. Trying plan for and manage these trips around working life became extremely difficult, and at times impossible without taking extended time off work. On occasion, I have been concerned about my mother's well-being while sitting in these long ferry queues. A request to 'queue jump' due to my concern about her health was refused by ticket office staff in summer 2024. They did offer to accompany her onto the ferry, if she could not wait in the car - fortunately a friend travelling on the next ferry sailing came to our aid. (This is perhaps a separate, although related issue, which needs attention.)

While travelling on foot may appear an option to avoid long car queues, this is reality is not the case. While on the island, I need my car to transport my mother who has impaired mobility and I am also usually transporting heavy shopping / equipment / household goods for her. While my mother could previously occasionally make trips to Largs independently, the changes to sailing times now different each hour (and at present with buses only meeting the Loch Shira) have proved to be confusing and not a viable option.

As well as my personal/family concerns - and for all others with elderly relations and/or medical needs - I am also aware of the potential damage this could do to island businesses and of course the additional challenges to those who attempt to commute to work to or from the island. Cumbrae has a fragile economy which is dependent on tourism. Any reduction in visitor numbers due to the proposed timetable changes could have serious repercussions for the island.

On recent trips I have been bemused by the unloading process at Largs slip. Keeping all cars on board until foot passengers have disembarked has seemed unnecessary and not really any safer. With barriers, sign posting and clear direction from staff members this could surely be avoided and save on turnaround time - as was the case previously.

I very much hope that this situation will be reviewed and services are restored to at least previous levels. I hope offering this type of personal insight is helpful to those reviewing this situation.

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## **SUBMISSION 16**

I am writing as a resident of the Isle of Cumbrae to formally raise serious concerns regarding the reliability and management of the ferry service operated by Caledonian MacBrayne.

This route is not a luxury or optional service—it is a vital lifeline for our community. The crossing itself is approximately eight minutes, yet ongoing disruption, frequent cancellations

attributed to “technical issues,” inconsistent decision-making regarding weather conditions and now the new timetable with extra maintenance times flung in are having a significant and unacceptable impact on daily life.

The consequences of this unreliable service extend far beyond inconvenience:

- Residents are regularly unable to travel to work on the mainland.
- Children are missing education due to school closures when teaching staff cannot reach the island.
- Access to essential healthcare is being compromised. Residents are doing everything possible to attend vital hospital appointments, often with long wait times to be seen, only to miss them due to ferry cancellations attributed to “technical issues.” These are not routine inconveniences—missed appointments can have serious consequences for people’s health and wellbeing.
- In some cases, this creates unnecessary risk and distress for patients who are already in vulnerable situations.
- Local businesses, particularly within our tourism sector, are suffering due to long delays and lack of visitor confidence. Waiting times of up to three hours for what should be a 20-minute service are simply unacceptable.
- There are growing concerns about the long-term sustainability of our community, including a noticeable decline in primary school numbers. This may reflect a reluctance for families to relocate to or remain on the island due to ongoing uncertainty around ferry reliability.

While we acknowledge that weather-related disruptions are sometimes unavoidable, there are increasing instances where services appear to be cancelled despite conditions seeming manageable. This raises concerns about consistency, transparency, and operational decision-making.

Furthermore, the recent timetable changes have only exacerbated these issues. Despite a public consultation process, it is widely felt within the community that feedback was neither meaningfully considered nor reflected in the final decisions. This has led to a strong sense of frustration and disengagement among residents.

The Isle of Cumbrae is a thriving community with a strong reliance on tourism, local enterprise, and essential mainland connections. The current state of ferry provision is not only undermining our economy but also affecting quality of life and access to basic services.

On a personal level, I would also like to highlight the growing sense within the community that we are being overlooked. As someone who was born and has spent most of my life living and working on the Isle of Cumbrae, it is deeply frustrating to feel that remaining here is becoming increasingly difficult due to the unreliability of such a basic and essential service. No one should feel pressured to leave their home because of consistent transport uncertainty.

We are therefore requesting:

- A clear explanation of the criteria used for service cancellations.

- A review of the current timetable with genuine community input.
- Improved contingency planning to minimise disruption during technical faults.
- Greater transparency and communication with residents regarding service changes.

We urge you to recognise the seriousness of this situation and to engage meaningfully with the communities who depend on this service every day.

We would welcome a formal response outlining how these concerns will be addressed.

Yours faithfully,  
On behalf of residents of the Isle of Cumbrae

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## **SUBMISSION 17**

My name is [redacted] and [redacted] in Largs but reside on Cumbrae. I have emailed several times in recent months regarding the effect the ferry timetable changes and often lack of service has on trying to maintain a business and a healthy lifestyle.

I choose to swim 3 mornings a week before work with a rest day in between when I do 2 classes after work. I work from 9-5:30 pm but sometimes later. [redacted] do the job required so if the ferries don't run or change the timetable this means I have to cancel patients which may often be sight threatening as I am a [redacted] also.

The days I swim the pool only opens at 8 am. In past when a 7:30 ferry was running I can walk to the pool and arrive at 7:50 and swim from 8:00 to 8:30 am. Now I'm lucky if I'm in the pool for 8:10 meaning only a 20 min swim if at all. This will affect my fitness and I pay a membership for the privilege.

If I cancel px or have to move them the chances are minimally inconvenience and maximally, I lose their business and my livelihood. Never mind the inconvenience of the times when the ferry, including the last ferry decides to put ramp up early and sit, or to leave early, potentially leaving passengers stranded. The buses now cannot meet every ferry and bluntly the timetable has been unchanged for around 20-22 years now and the times in morning are all over the place. Why does it need to change now?

We haven't managed a single maintenance day yet as laughingly one third of your fleet is incapacitated and why it's required, when crew are paid until 10 pm and in winter when there's two ferries that don't run through the day, I will never know. Also with works going on at slip and all construction lorries you cannot get along road and into car park while ferry unloads then have to wait often in rain until cars load, before we are allowed to board. There has not been one single accident resulting in harm in all the years I have travelled this route so it seems unnecessary to me.

Time and money be better spent on maintaining your fleet to make it reliable, continuous training on a simulator for your ferry handling staff so they can handle the weather and a protected berth to shield ferry when berthing from the wind. Numerous incidences of late when ferry arrives and offloads and loads and we are sitting for a 5 or 10 mins doing nothing

until it sails. If they have that amount of spare time or time to leave 4 mins early, as happened on 19:50 service last week then they have time to run 4 ferries an hour!

CMAL is government funded with my taxes and we have a right to demand a service that we want that we were consulted properly on BEFORE any decisions were made regarding the change in timetable and a bit of courtesy also offered to the bus company in Millport over the delays in implementing any timetable.

I hope this enquiry finds fault in the management and implementation of this service that was neither consulted on in time nor wanted by the residents or business owners and a text message service that's so misleading it must drive the public away from visiting. Neither are wanted nor useful and delays on boarding are not down to safety in my observance but down to a poorly implemented ticketing system created by Calmac causing horrendous delays.

I hope for a decent outcome to this review.

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## **SUBMISSION 18**

I have watched questions in the Scottish parliament when concerns were raised about the changes to CALMAC ferry services to Cumbrae, in particular the reduction in service to twenty minute during summer sailings.

As an island resident who commutes daily to the mainland, I would just like to highlight that CALMAC do not provide a 20 service in the morning for commuters, mornings sailings now consist of 7.00 7.40 8.25 9.30. From the 9.30 sailing onwards the service is every 20 minutes until end of day with 19.50 and 20.30 being 40 minutes apart.

These restrictions especially in the morning are having a severe impact on community infrastructure with many island employers having to let staff leave early/ later at shift changes (care facilities, hospital) and commuters leaving earlier and arriving at work before places of employment, office/colleges are open.

For commuters the main issue is not the change from 15 minutes to 20 minutes service but the reduction in service both morning and evening that is having a huge impact on our quality of life (work life balance) and personally speaking my choice and the feasibility of staying on the island is now in question!!

This service is not one that serves the community this service is one that serves the tourist industry and fills the pockets of CALMAC.

Safety is not an issue, passengers and vehicles are loaded on early morning vessels easily and in accordance with protocol and now sit for at least 10 fully loaded to adhere to TT. Extra loading times are only needed when there is an excess of passengers!! During peak times!! For the purpose of collecting and issuing tickets.

The last couple of years has seen island commuters lose season tickets (monthly, 3 monthly and yearly) and now the reduction of commuters sailing!! Even as a disabled customer I am still unable to obtain a 10 journey ticket.

The island is becoming a tourist attraction and not a home.

Please consider addressing this morning/evening reduction and look to petitioning CALMAC to reinstate a service that supports community not CALMAC coffers.

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## **SUBMISSION 19**

I am a retail business owner on the Isle of Cumbrae. The reduced capacity on our ferry service at peak times, will have an impact on every business on this island. We all rely on tourist traffic. Although the weather has not been the best recently, I can confidently say that there is already a noticeable difference on the island in relation to visitors, day and short stay.

I have heard many references to people not coming over because of the ferry situation and particularly the fear of long queues, which have been a problem anyway in recent years. Cancellation of accommodation and restaurant bookings etc have been rife. If the people are not here they can then not spend in my shop. My business supports me and my daughter and we have already had a hard few years with Covid and then the flood defence works. There are many other building projects going on for the foreseeable future, which do not seem to have been taken into account!

My other fear is that Calmac will stop day trippers coming over on peak days ( as they have done several times in the past - about 2pm- as they say they cannot guarantee return). The reduced service is only going make this issue worse!

I also use the ferry to go to the mainland for Stock ( and petrol of course!!! ) and having to wait in long queues to get back over also has a knock on effect as I have to pay someone to watch my shop while I am away.

Calmac had simply decided what they were going to do ( money saving?) and then paid lip service at best to consulting with the community.

An impact assessment seems not only logical in these circumstances, but necessary. Their statements that they put the communities first is simply media spin.

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## **SUBMISSION 20**

The recent change to the ferry timetable has impacted my business and has reduced my ability to access mainland services — as there is no guarantee of being able to return home within a reasonable timeframe.

### Business Impact

To serve my customers during the busy season, I have committed to remain open 7 days per week. Because of the new reduced service to Cumbrae, I am unable to employ help as,

1. There is a limited pool of potential employees residing on the island, and
2. Were I to find willing candidates to travel to the island for work, there is no guarantee that they would be able to reasonably and reliably get to work due to extended wait times both at Largs and at Cumbrae.

Therefore, in order to serve my customers, I must staff my shop on my own — 7 days per week — between Easter and the last week of September.

During the peak travel times of the season, before our timetable was reduced by 25%; there were frequent alerts that queues had extended wait times to as long as 2-3 hours for autos to visit the island. I have seen cars intending to visit join the ferry queue only to then realise the wait time - only to leave the queue and take their plans elsewhere. That means lost potential income to my shop and to the rest of the businesses on the island.

#### Personal impact

I have a chronic health condition that requires monitoring and, as needed iron infusions and blood transfusions. Recently, due to technical issues and delays on procuring a replacement vessel, I was unable to have my samples taken to the lab in the required timeframe and therefore there was a re-test required, resulting in a delay in being sent to hospital for a transfusion. Because the ferries stop running so early in the evenings, I was unable to return home after my treatment and needed to occupy a bed in the already strained hospital.

At the very least, if you need keep the 20 minute schedule “for safety reasons”...then AT LEAST give us the SAME NUMBER OF SAILINGS per day as you had with the old schedule. ie. live up to your contract to provide a service.

With the gap in the morning schedule as it is now - tradesmen are losing critical time ...SITTING in Largs waiting for the next ferry... because the earlier sailings are full. WE — THE CUSTOMERS ON THE ISLAND — are going to have to pay for those workers to just sit in Largs. Projects are going to take longer and COST MORE.

I already know of 2 families moving away from the island because they can no longer depend on the ferries to operate on a timetable that allows them to participate in mainland after school activities.

Live up to your contract and your stated commitment to serve the islands.

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#### **SUBMISSION 21**

The impact of the changed ferry service from Largs to Cumbrae is major and has not properly been taken into account. As a regular traveller, i have many times experienced significant delays particularly at busy holiday periods when a 15 minute service was operating. This can only be exacerbated by the reduction to a 20 minute service. Trying to entertain young children while in a 4 hour queue is no joke. It is impossible to take them out of the car even to go to the toilet without risking your place in the queue, so it is physically damaging.

For several years, the message has been to travel by foot where possible. The bus service cannot meet a 20 minute service, so travelling by foot on the "wrong" ferry means there is no ongoing transport available meaning it is not encouraging travel on foot. This encourages the use of cars and is not eco-friendly

As someone who regularly travels by train to access the ferry, the lack of coordination of times of ferries, availability of buses and train times makes it extremely difficult to time the journey to get to the station for the once an hour train service. Again this encourages the use of cars, whereas public transport ought to be encouraged.

The impact on deliveries to businesses in the town has not been properly considered. essential supplies like milk and bread need to be brought to the island and it is not economically justifiable for supplies to be held in long queues.

in my 70 year history of visiting Cumbrae, I have never seen any incident where the loading of vehicles and foot passengers at the same time has caused any issue. there are always plenty of staff (arguably at times too many staff - no idea why they need to have so many on the island at all times as the previous round ticket system worked perfectly well) and queue control should not be beyond them. If, at Largs, the queue of foot passengers was shifted to along the promenade instead of on the pier, the vehicles and passengers could easily be kept separate. At Cumbrae slip, this is already the case.

While common sense is not always that common, a modicum of common sense could surely and effectively be applied in this case.

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## **SUBMISSION 22**

I wish to lodge my objection to the reductions in the Largs-Cumbrae Ferry service.

I live on Cumbrae and travel to the mainland for work. This has a massive impact on my ability to reach my work on time, especially now that there are fewer ferries journeys in the morning commute window between 7am-9am.

Furthermore, reaching mainland hospital appointments and dental services is much more difficult as the reduction in service means less capacity, larger queues, and therefore a higher risk of not getting to my appointments on time.

I believe Cal Mac has not considered the impact of this reduction in service on me as an Island resident – it is now much more difficult to get to work and to attend mainland medical appointments.

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## **SUBMISSION 23**

I wish to lodge my objection to the reductions in the Largs-Cumbrae Ferry service.

I operate a small retail business in Millport on Cumbrae. This reduction in service has a massive impact on tourism and the number of visitors to the island. This will massively impact my business in the busiest part of the year. In the peak July/August holiday season the large numbers of visitors are the only way that my business can survive and operate all year round. The peak season is where you are making these massive reductions in services and this will impact my business and make it less likely for me to retain local staff.

I believe Cal Mac has not considered the impact of this reduction in service on me as a Business Owner – it is now much more difficult to operate a small business.

You should be increasing the amount of services in July and August to support the island economy ( you should not be reducing it).

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#### **SUBMISSION 24**

I wish to lodge my objection to the reductions in the Largs-Cumbrae Ferry service.

As a landlord, I operate a small property rental business in Millport on Cumbrae. This reduction in service has a massive impact on the island economy and on my tenants. The ability for them to travel to medical appointments off island in a timely manner will have a significant say in their decision to continue renting here or to move off island. These changes will massively impact my business and the local economy.

I believe Cal Mac has not considered the impact of this reduction in service on me as a Business Owner – it is now much more difficult to operate a small business.

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#### **SUBMISSION 25**

I am writing as one of the [redacted] in Millport, to express serious concern about the proposed operational changes to the Largs–Cumbrae ferry service.

For accommodation providers like ourselves, the ferry is not just a transport link — it is the first and last part of every guest's stay. If visitors are faced with long queues, uncertainty, reduced sailings or a lack of confidence in getting on and off the island, it directly affects whether they choose to book, whether they return, and whether they recommend Cumbrae to others.

The Largs–Cumbrae route is a lifeline service for residents, businesses, workers and visitors. Any proposal that removes SIMOPS, increases turnaround times, reduces timetable flexibility, and introduces planned daytime maintenance periods must be supported by clear, route-specific evidence and a transparent assessment of impact. At present, that does not appear to be the case.

We are already seeing the practical consequences of reduced resilience on the route. On 25 April, a day forecast for good weather and therefore exactly the type of day when the island should expect strong visitor numbers, there was already a delay of over one and a half hours. Visitors were actively discouraged from coming over to the island because of that delay.

For a tourism-dependent island, this is not a minor inconvenience. It directly affects visitor confidence, bookings, footfall, hospitality, retail, leisure activities and the reputation of Cumbrae as an accessible visitor destination.

My concern is that we are heading towards a repeat of the 2024 season, when poor ferry service and disruption saw some businesses lose up to 30% of their annual revenue. For small island businesses, that level of loss is not sustainable. Accommodation businesses in particular depend on confidence. Guests need to know they can arrive and leave without excessive delay, especially those travelling with children, dogs, elderly relatives, mobility needs, work commitments or onward travel arrangements.

From the material disclosed to date, the process appears to be moving ahead with “Summer 2026 Option 1” despite major gaps in the evidence base. In particular, the full Passenger Management Review and time-and-motion study have not been disclosed. Only extracts appear to have been provided. If this work is being relied upon to justify longer turnaround times, the removal of SIMOPS, and a reduction in sailings, then the full report, appendices, methodology and raw timing data should be made available for proper scrutiny.

There is also no clear route-specific mitigation trail. A general risk assessment or reference to wider network safety concerns is not enough to justify a permanent reduction in capacity on a route where the vessels and slip infrastructure were specifically designed for SIMOPS operation. Before removing SIMOPS, CalMac should be able to demonstrate what specific hazards exist at Largs and Cumbrae, what mitigations were considered, why those mitigations were rejected, and why removal of SIMOPS is the only reasonable option.

That should include consideration of revised marshalling, pedestrian routing, ticketing and loading procedures, operational sequencing, and physical measures such as removable slot-in barriers on the slipway, which could also improve safety for visually impaired and less able passengers.

I am also concerned that the current process does not appear to separate genuine safety issues from operational delays caused by systems and procedures. If ticket scanning, dispatch processes or newer ticketing systems are contributing to slower turnarounds, that is an operational issue which should be fixed. It should not automatically result in a reduced ferry timetable for an island community.

The maintenance proposal is also under-evidenced. Nobody disputes the importance of proper maintenance and fleet reliability, but the community has not been shown a clear engineering justification explaining why daytime withdrawal is required on this route, which tasks cannot be carried out overnight or outwith peak periods, and how the timing has been assessed against guest arrivals, departures, business needs, commuting, care, education, freight and island supply chains.

From an accommodation and tourism perspective, this process is deeply concerning. Cumbrae’s visitor economy is highly seasonal and heavily dependent on reliable, frequent ferry access. Longer gaps between sailings and reduced flexibility will discourage overnight stays, create anxiety for guests before they even arrive, increase pressure on check-in and check-out days, and make the island less attractive compared with other destinations.

In this context, the proposal to reduce route flexibility and capacity cannot be viewed in isolation. The island is already vulnerable to disruption, and even one major delay on a good-weather day can change visitor behaviour. If visitors cannot trust that they will get on and off the island without excessive delay, many will simply go elsewhere. That loss is then

felt immediately by accommodation providers, shops, cafés, restaurants, attractions, bike hire, suppliers and seasonal workers.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires relevant authorities to have proper regard to island communities. In that context, a proposal reducing flexibility or capacity on a lifeline ferry route should not proceed without a full and transparent Island Communities Impact Assessment.

I therefore strongly urge that the current process is paused until the following have been provided and properly considered:

1. The full Passenger Management Review / time-and-motion study, including methodology and raw timing data.
2. A full route-specific SIMOPS risk assessment and mitigation appraisal for Largs and Cumbrae.
3. Evidence of any route-specific incidents or investigations relied upon to justify removing SIMOPS.
4. A clear options appraisal, including whether two larger vessels or wider network vessel redeployment were properly considered.
5. A full route-specific maintenance justification explaining why proposed maintenance windows must affect daytime service.
6. A full Island Communities Impact Assessment, including impacts on tourism, accommodation providers, business turnover, workers, residents, vulnerable groups, young people, healthcare access, education, commuting, freight, visitor confidence and population sustainability.
7. Meaningful engagement with island businesses and representatives before any final decision is taken.

As a small accommodation provider on Cumbrae, I must be clear that the current evidence falls far short of what should be required for a change of this importance. This is not simply a timetable adjustment. It is a proposed reduction in operational resilience and peak capacity on a lifeline island route, with potentially serious consequences for guest confidence, tourism, local businesses and the wider island economy.

I would be grateful if this matter could be escalated for ministerial consideration and if confirmation could be provided that no final operational decision will be implemented until the missing evidence has been disclosed and a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has been completed.

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## **SUBMISSION 26**

We are writing as [redacted], owners of [redacted], to express our serious concern about the proposed operational changes to the Largs–Cumbrae ferry service.

[redacted] Millport is not a new or short-term business. This year, the business turns 80 years old. It has survived recessions, economic downturns, changing shopping habits, rising costs,

Covid, and the many challenges that come with running a seasonal island business. However, we are genuinely worried that the impact of these ferry changes could bury our business — not because of lack of demand, lack of investment, or lack of effort, but because of a failing ferry service.

That is a deeply upsetting position to be in.

[redacted] supports more than 14 jobs on the island. Those are local jobs, island jobs, and jobs connected directly to a business that has served generations of visitors and residents since 1946. If the ferry service becomes less reliable, less frequent, or less capable of handling peak visitor demand, the consequences will not be theoretical. They will be immediate, commercial and potentially devastating.

The Largs–Cumbrae route is not simply a transport service. For businesses like ours, it is our main road, our customer access point, our delivery route, and the first impression visitors get of the island. If people are discouraged from travelling because of long queues, delays or uncertainty, they do not come to Millport. If they do not come to Millport, they do not hire bikes, visit the toy shop, buy from local businesses, use cafés, visit attractions, or support the wider island economy.

We are already seeing the practical consequences of reduced resilience on the route. On 25 April, a day forecast for good weather and exactly the type of day when the island should expect strong visitor numbers, there was already a delay of over one and a half hours. Visitors were actively discouraged from coming over to the island because of that delay.

For [redacted], and for many other tourism-facing businesses, this is not a minor inconvenience. Good weather days, weekends, school holidays and peak visitor periods are when we generate the income that helps sustain the business through quieter months. Losing those days has a direct impact on turnover, staffing, stock investment and long-term confidence.

We are extremely concerned that we are heading towards a repeat of the 2024 season, when poor ferry service and disruption saw some island businesses lose up to 30% of their annual revenue. For a seasonal island business, that level of loss is not sustainable. A business can survive recessions. It can adapt to rising costs. It can work harder, invest, innovate and diversify. But it cannot survive if customers cannot reliably get to the island.

From the material disclosed to date, the process appears to be moving ahead with “Summer 2026 Option 1” despite major gaps in the evidence base. In particular, the full Passenger Management Review and time-and-motion study have not been disclosed. Only extracts appear to have been provided. If this work is being relied upon to justify longer turnaround times, the removal of SIMOPS, and a reduction in sailings, then the full report, appendices, methodology and raw timing data should be made available for proper scrutiny.

There is also no clear route-specific mitigation trail. A general risk assessment or reference to wider network safety concerns is not enough to justify a permanent reduction in capacity on a route where the vessels and slip infrastructure were specifically designed for SIMOPS operation. Before removing SIMOPS, CalMac should be able to demonstrate what specific hazards exist at Largs and Cumbrae, what mitigations were considered, why those mitigations were rejected, and why removal of SIMOPS is the only reasonable option.

That should include consideration of revised marshalling, pedestrian routing, ticketing and loading procedures, operational sequencing, and physical measures such as removable slot-in barriers on the slipway, which could also improve safety for visually impaired and less able passengers.

We are also concerned that the current process does not appear to separate genuine safety issues from operational delays caused by systems and procedures. If ticket scanning, dispatch processes or newer ticketing systems are contributing to slower turnarounds, that is an operational issue which should be fixed. It should not automatically result in a reduced ferry timetable for an island community.

The maintenance proposal is also under-evidenced. Nobody disputes the importance of proper maintenance and fleet reliability, but the community has not been shown a clear engineering justification explaining why daytime withdrawal is required on this route, which tasks cannot be carried out overnight or outwith peak periods, and how the timing has been assessed against freight, commuting, care, education, deliveries, business needs and visitor demand.

From a business and employment perspective, this process is deeply concerning. Cumbrae's economy is highly seasonal and heavily dependent on reliable, frequent ferry access. Longer gaps between sailings and reduced flexibility will discourage day visitors, create longer queues at peak times, increase uncertainty, and make it harder for workers, suppliers and customers to travel.

For [redacted], this threatens far more than inconvenience. It threatens the future of an 80-year-old island business and the jobs it supports.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires relevant authorities to have proper regard to island communities. In that context, a proposal reducing flexibility or capacity on a lifeline ferry route should not proceed without a full and transparent Island Communities Impact Assessment.

We therefore strongly urge that the current process is paused until the following have been provided and properly considered:

1. The full Passenger Management Review / time-and-motion study, including methodology and raw timing data.
2. A full route-specific SIMOPS risk assessment and mitigation appraisal for Largs and Cumbrae.
3. Evidence of any route-specific incidents or investigations relied upon to justify removing SIMOPS.
4. A clear options appraisal, including whether two larger vessels or wider network vessel redeployment were properly considered.
5. A full route-specific maintenance justification explaining why proposed maintenance windows must affect daytime service.
6. A full Island Communities Impact Assessment, including impacts on tourism, business turnover, employment, residents, vulnerable groups, young people,

healthcare access, education, commuting, freight, visitor confidence and population sustainability.

7. Meaningful engagement with island businesses and representatives before any final decision is taken.

We must be very clear: the current evidence falls far short of what should be required for a change of this importance. This is not simply a timetable adjustment. It is a proposed reduction in operational resilience and peak capacity on a lifeline island route.

[redacted] has stood on this island for 80 years. It has brought joy to generations of families, supported local employment, invested in the island, and helped make Millport the visitor destination it is today. It would be devastating if a business that has survived so much was ultimately put at risk by a ferry service that no longer allows visitors, workers and customers to reach the island reliably.

We would be grateful if this matter could be escalated for ministerial consideration and if confirmation could be provided that no final operational decision will be implemented until the missing evidence has been disclosed and a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has been completed.

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## **SUBMISSION 27**

I am writing as [redacted], a resident of the Isle of Cumbrae, to express my serious concern about the proposed operational changes to the Largs–Cumbrae ferry service.

This is not simply a business or tourism issue. It is a resident issue, a family issue, and for many people on this island, a health and wellbeing issue.

My 78-year-old mother lives on the island and has complex medical needs. Like many older and vulnerable residents, she depends on reliable access to the mainland for healthcare, appointments, support, family contact and emergency situations. Any reduction in ferry flexibility, frequency or resilience creates real anxiety for families like mine.

The Largs–Cumbrae route is not a discretionary service. It is our road to the mainland. It is how residents access hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, care services, employment, education, shopping, family support and essential appointments. When the ferry service is delayed, reduced or unreliable, the impact is immediate and deeply personal.

I understand that residents travelling for hospital appointments may be given priority to leave the island, and that is appreciated. However, that does not solve the problem. Getting off the island is only one part of the journey. Getting back home is often the bigger issue. For an elderly person, someone with complex medical needs, or a family member supporting them, having to wait over an hour to return to the island after a hospital appointment is extremely stressful and, in some cases, simply not acceptable.

Medical appointments are often tiring, worrying and physically demanding. After travelling to the mainland, attending an appointment, and dealing with the uncertainty that comes with healthcare, people should not then face long waits at Largs just to get home. A reduced or

less flexible ferry service risks making essential healthcare journeys even more difficult for those who are already vulnerable.

I am also deeply concerned about the timing and wider process around these changes. CalMac was recently awarded a direct, non-competitive ferry services contract worth around £3.9 billion over ten years. Yet only shortly after that award, island communities are being asked to accept reductions in service flexibility, capacity and resilience on a lifeline route. That is extremely difficult to understand from a resident's point of view. A contract of that scale should surely come with stronger accountability, better resilience and improved service outcomes for island communities — not a reduced service that makes access to healthcare, family support and mainland services more difficult.

We are already seeing the practical consequences of reduced resilience on the route. On 25 April, a day forecast for good weather, there was already a delay of over one and a half hours. Visitors were actively discouraged from coming over to the island because of that delay. For residents, this kind of disruption is not just inconvenient. It can mean missed hospital appointments, longer waits, increased stress, and real concern about what happens if urgent travel is needed.

My concern is that the proposed changes — removal of SIMOPS, increased turnaround times, timetable reductions and planned daytime maintenance periods — will make this situation worse. Longer gaps between sailings and reduced operational flexibility may be manageable on paper, but for island residents, especially older people and those with complex medical needs, they create uncertainty and risk.

From the material disclosed to date, the process appears to be moving ahead with “Summer 2026 Option 1” despite major gaps in the evidence base. In particular, the full Passenger Management Review and time-and-motion study have not been disclosed. Only extracts appear to have been provided. If this work is being relied upon to justify longer turnaround times, the removal of SIMOPS, and a reduction in sailings, then the full report, appendices, methodology and raw timing data should be made available for proper scrutiny.

There is also no clear route-specific mitigation trail. A general risk assessment or reference to wider network safety concerns is not enough to justify a permanent reduction in capacity on a route where the vessels and slip infrastructure were specifically designed for SIMOPS operation. Before removing SIMOPS, CalMac should be able to demonstrate what specific hazards exist at Largs and Cumbrae, what mitigations were considered, why those mitigations were rejected, and why removal of SIMOPS is the only reasonable option.

That should include consideration of revised marshalling, pedestrian routing, ticketing and loading procedures, operational sequencing, and physical measures such as removable slot-in barriers on the slipway, which could also improve safety for visually impaired, elderly or less able passengers.

I am also concerned that the current process does not appear to separate genuine safety issues from operational delays caused by systems and procedures. If ticket scanning, dispatch processes or newer ticketing systems are contributing to slower turnarounds, that is an operational issue which should be fixed. It should not automatically result in a reduced ferry timetable for an island community.

The maintenance proposal is also under-evidenced. Nobody disputes the importance of proper maintenance and fleet reliability, but the community has not been shown a clear engineering justification explaining why daytime withdrawal is required on this route, which tasks cannot be carried out overnight or outwith peak periods, and how the timing has been assessed against medical appointments, care needs, commuting, education, freight, essential supplies and residents' ability to access mainland services.

For families supporting elderly or vulnerable relatives, ferry reliability is not an abstract transport matter. It affects planning medical appointments, arranging care, responding to emergencies, and maintaining family support networks. A reduced or less flexible service makes island life harder and less secure, particularly for those least able to absorb disruption.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires relevant authorities to have proper regard to island communities. In that context, a proposal reducing flexibility or capacity on a lifeline ferry route should not proceed without a full and transparent Island Communities Impact Assessment.

I therefore strongly urge that the current process is paused until the following have been provided and properly considered:

1. The full Passenger Management Review / time-and-motion study, including methodology and raw timing data.
2. A full route-specific SIMOPS risk assessment and mitigation appraisal for Largs and Cumbrae.
3. Evidence of any route-specific incidents or investigations relied upon to justify removing SIMOPS.
4. A clear options appraisal, including whether two larger vessels or wider network vessel redeployment were properly considered.
5. A full route-specific maintenance justification explaining why proposed maintenance windows must affect daytime service.
6. A full Island Communities Impact Assessment, including impacts on older residents, people with complex medical needs, vulnerable groups, healthcare access, carers, families, workers, education, freight, essential supplies, residents' wellbeing and population sustainability.
7. Meaningful engagement with island residents, carers, healthcare users and community representatives before any final decision is taken.

I must be clear that the current evidence falls far short of what should be required for a change of this importance. This is not simply a timetable adjustment. It is a proposed reduction in operational resilience and capacity on a lifeline island route.

For those of us who live here, the ferry is not optional. It is our connection to healthcare, family, services and support. Any change that weakens that connection must be evidenced, justified and properly assessed before it is allowed to proceed.

I would be grateful if this matter could be escalated for ministerial consideration and if confirmation could be provided that no final operational decision will be implemented until the missing evidence has been disclosed and a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has been completed.

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## **SUBMISSION 28**

I am writing in my capacity [redacted] of the Isle of Cumbrae Tourist Association to express serious concern about the process being followed in relation to the proposed operational changes to the Largs–Cumbrae ferry service.

The Largs–Cumbrae route is not a discretionary visitor service. It is the island’s essential transport link. Any proposal that removes SIMOPS, increases turnaround times, reduces timetable flexibility, and introduces planned daytime maintenance periods must be supported by clear, route-specific evidence and a transparent assessment of impact. At present, that does not appear to be the case.

We are already seeing the practical consequences of reduced resilience on the route. On 25 April, a day forecast for good weather and therefore exactly the type of day when the island should expect strong visitor numbers, there was already a delay of over one and a half hours. Visitors were actively discouraged from coming over to the island because of that delay. For an island economy so dependent on day visitors, this is not a minor inconvenience — it directly affects footfall, customer confidence, business turnover and the reputation of Cumbrae as an accessible visitor destination.

My concern is that we are heading towards a repeat of the 2024 season, when poor ferry service and disruption saw some businesses lose up to 30% of their annual revenue. For small island businesses, that level of loss is not sustainable. Many businesses on Cumbrae rely on the short summer season to carry them through the rest of the year, and further reductions in frequency, flexibility or peak capacity could have severe consequences for employment, investment and long-term business viability.

From the material disclosed to date, the process appears to be moving ahead with “Summer 2026 Option 1” despite major gaps in the evidence base. In particular, the full Passenger Management Review and time-and-motion study have not been disclosed. Only extracts appear to have been provided. If this work is being relied upon to justify longer turnaround times, the removal of SIMOPS, and a reduction in sailings, then the full report, appendices, methodology and raw timing data should be made available for proper scrutiny.

There is also no clear route-specific mitigation trail. A general risk assessment or reference to wider network safety concerns is not enough to justify a permanent reduction in capacity on a route where the vessels and slip infrastructure were specifically designed for SIMOPS operation. Before removing SIMOPS, CalMac should be able to demonstrate what specific hazards exist at Largs and Cumbrae, what mitigations were considered, why those mitigations were rejected, and why removal of SIMOPS is the only reasonable option.

That should include consideration of revised marshalling, pedestrian routing, ticketing and loading procedures, operational sequencing, and physical measures such as removable slot-

in barriers on the slipway, which could also improve safety for visually impaired and less able passengers.

I am also concerned that the current process does not appear to separate genuine safety issues from operational delays caused by systems and procedures. If ticket scanning, dispatch processes or newer ticketing systems are contributing to slower turnarounds, that is an operational issue which should be fixed. It should not automatically result in a reduced ferry timetable for an island community.

The maintenance proposal is also under-evidenced. Nobody disputes the importance of proper maintenance and fleet reliability, but the community has not been shown a clear engineering justification explaining why daytime withdrawal is required on this route, which tasks cannot be carried out overnight or outwith peak periods, and how the timing has been assessed against freight, commuting, care, education, business and visitor needs.

From a tourism and business perspective, this process is deeply concerning. Cumbrae's economy is highly seasonal and heavily dependent on reliable, frequent ferry access. Longer gaps between sailings and reduced flexibility will discourage day visitors, create longer queues at peak times, increase uncertainty for businesses, and make it harder for workers, suppliers and customers to travel. For many small island businesses, even modest reductions in capacity at the wrong time of year can have a significant impact.

In this context, the proposal to reduce route flexibility and capacity cannot be viewed in isolation. The island is already vulnerable to disruption, and even one major delay on a good-weather day can change visitor behaviour. If visitors cannot trust that they will get on and off the island without excessive delay, many will simply go elsewhere. That loss is then felt immediately by shops, cafés, accommodation providers, attractions, bike hire, suppliers and seasonal workers.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires relevant authorities to have proper regard to island communities. In that context, a proposal reducing flexibility or capacity on a lifeline ferry route should not proceed without a full and transparent Island Communities Impact Assessment.

I therefore strongly urge that the current process is paused until the following have been provided and properly considered:

1. The full Passenger Management Review / time-and-motion study, including methodology and raw timing data.
2. A full route-specific SIMOPS risk assessment and mitigation appraisal for Largs and Cumbrae.
3. Evidence of any route-specific incidents or investigations relied upon to justify removing SIMOPS.
4. A clear options appraisal, including whether two larger vessels or wider network vessel redeployment were properly considered.
5. A full route-specific maintenance justification explaining why proposed maintenance windows must affect daytime service.

6. A full Island Communities Impact Assessment, including impacts on tourism, business turnover, workers, residents, vulnerable groups, young people, healthcare access, education, commuting, freight, and population sustainability.
7. Meaningful engagement with island representatives before any final decision is taken.

As [redacted] of the Isle of Cumbrae Tourist Association, I must be clear that the current evidence falls far short of what should be required for a change of this importance. This is not simply a timetable adjustment. It is a proposed reduction in operational resilience and peak capacity on a lifeline island route, with potentially serious consequences for the community and the local economy.

I would be grateful if this matter could be escalated for ministerial consideration and if confirmation could be provided that no final operational decision will be implemented until the missing evidence has been disclosed and a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has been completed.

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## SUBMISSION 29

I'm a permanent resident of Millport and use the ferry on average a couple of times a week. This can be by car, as a foot passenger (using the bus connection to Millport), or on a motorcycle, depending on the reason for the crossing.

The new timetable *appears* to give an increased service during core hours, but some commuter time services have been dropped.

Putting on two ferries on the route at this time of year may seem a little excessive, but over a two-hour daytime period, using the Loch Linne and Loch Shira with a ferry every twenty minutes, gives a theoretical capacity of 144 vehicles transported in each direction ; the same as using the Loch Shira on the old time-table – every 30 minutes. In theory, if using the Loch Tarbert or Isle of Cumbrae, instead of the Loch Linne, the new time-table gives an extra capacity of 18 vehicles every two hours. These figures are highly theoretical though, as the smaller ferries rarely reach their theoretical capacity. What is the vehicle capacity based on – the size of a Mk 1 VW Golf perhaps? The ever-increasing size of private vehicles, plus motor-homes and delivery vehicles means that the smaller ferries struggle to use both lanes on the deck as they do not have sufficient width. The Loch Shira doesn't suffer so badly.

Last week when travelling by car with my wife to do a weekly shop in Largs, we arrived back at Largs slipway just after 10.10 am, just in time to watch the Loch Shira depart, but in good time for the 10.30am sailing to Cumbrae. We were perhaps 9th in the queue. There was one regular delivery lorry amongst the queue in front of us. We were not able to fit onto the 10.30am ferry, which was one of the smaller ferries (I don't know) which, and had to wait for the MV Loch Shira's crossing at 10.50am. Under last years' timetable, we might have had to wait half an hour for the next crossing in a worst case scenario, but only if we'd arrived very late at the slipway. The difference in size of the ferries means that turning up in good time does not mean you'll get a place – it depends which size of ferry turns up next. The MV Loch Linnhe, MV Loch Tarbert and MV Isle of Cumbrae ferries all struggle to run to anything like capacity because of the regular crossing of trucks, lorries and delivery vans that service the

island – they just aren't wide enough. When you are doing a supermarket shopping trip you can't predict how long you will need to take to do your shopping.

The simple system where the ferry left every half an hour and was always met by a bus at Cumbrae slip has also been lost. The bus drivers and Calmac shore staff are probably fed up with customers who don't know which ferries are coming or going and how to connect with a bus service – and that now includes residents of Millport and Largs, not just day-trippers or holidaymakers. At the moment the Millport bus company cannot justify running a two-bus service as generally there's not sufficient demand at this time of the year.

Most days since the new time-table was introduced the two-ferry schedule has coped with the passenger/vehicle demand – unless a ferry has broken down – an increasingly common situation with the older ferries. However, the weather has been pretty bad until this last week, and that has no doubt reduced demand. With a spell of fine weather, and hopefully a decent summer, demand for the service will increase and the two ferries currently in use will not be able to cope, leading once more to the ever familiar sight of queues of traffic in Largs and at Cumbrae slip.

On a general note, at this time of year, passenger numbers during the week rarely warrant the extra loading time that CalMac has integrated into the new timetable. It would certainly be helpful in maintaining the timetable during public or school holidays, but, at the moment, the boats are loaded and then everyone (crew and passengers) waits for 5 minutes before the ferry journey starts – doesn't that show how unnecessary the 10 minute turnaround time is?

We've been living with this new timetable for a month now and it doesn't seem to be an improvement for any customers. Hopefully the shore and boat crews are seeing some improvement, else what was the point? The old timetable worked. It has for many years needed a larger second vessel during the summer holidays to reduce the very long queues that build up on both sides of the crossing.....but that was all that needed changing.

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## **SUBMISSION 30**

To the ICIA Review Panel,

I am writing to register my strong objection to CalMac's proposed 25% reduction in ferry service frequency between Largs and the Isle of Cumbrae, and to urge the panel to recommend that these changes be reversed.

I write as a second home owner on the island and a former local business owner. I have seen firsthand how completely island businesses depend on the summer months to generate the majority of their annual income. The ferry is not a peripheral concern for these businesses — it is the single factor that determines whether visitors arrive at all. A 25% reduction in capacity during peak season will mean longer queues, deterred day-trippers, and lost revenue that many small businesses simply cannot recover from. Those of us who have run businesses on Cumbrae understand that a bad summer is not just an inconvenience — it can be the difference between staying open and closing permanently.

The existing turnaround arrangement has served this community well for many years. While CalMac has cited safety concerns over the simultaneous loading of vehicles and foot passengers, this has been a long-standing feature of the service. If there are genuine operational issues to address, they should be resolved in a targeted and proportionate way — not by cutting overall capacity and placing that burden squarely on the island community.

I also note that no adequate community impact assessment was carried out before these changes were announced, despite the scale of their potential consequences. The fact that CalMac is now legally required to conduct this ICIA review reflects the inadequacy of the original process. The community deserves to be genuinely consulted, not presented with decisions already made.

I respectfully call on the ICIA panel to:

1. Recommend that CalMac cancel the proposed 25% capacity reductions for summer 2026.
2. Require that service levels be maintained at least at summer 2025 levels until meaningful consultation with the community has been completed.
3. Ensure full compliance with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, with genuine and early community engagement before any future changes are implemented.

The ferry is the island's lifeline. Decisions of this magnitude demand proper process, proper evidence, and proper respect for the people whose lives and livelihoods depend on this service.

Thank you for considering my SUBMISSION.

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### **SUBMISSION 31**

I write to request that a full and proper Community Impact Assessment be undertaken to review the impact of the imposed new CalMac ferry timetable on the Isle of Cumbrae.

From a personal point of view, the new timetable is deeply inconvenient. The reduced service, particularly in the morning is affecting those of us who have to travel to the mainland for work or meetings. I have had to rearrange morning meetings locally within Ayrshire because I can't get to the meeting venue on time or because I would need to get such an early ferry that I would arrive up to 2 hours before the start time.

A family member and friends now have to leave the island much earlier to get to work on time on the mainland because the timetable doesn't meet their needs or because in order to get on to the ferry that will get you to work or an appointment on time, you have to be in the Cumbrae ferry queue ridiculously early.

The imposition of this timetable without proper consultation (no consulting took place during the 'public consultation' in Millport Town Hall - we were told the timetable was going to take effect and there was nothing we could do about it) OR a full Community Impact Assessment on how the timetable would affect the island residents and businesses is ridiculous.

The breakdown of the Loch Shira yesterday (Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April) meant that there was only one small ferry running on a beautiful sunny day. We were told that the crew in Largs

anticipated a wait of 5 hours for the massed cars at Cumbrae to be transported to Largs if she did not come back into service. There were hardly any daytrippers on the island and the weekend visitors were packing up and joining the ever-growing queue at the slip. The island was deserted - cafes and bars that should have been enjoying bumper trade had empty tables and shopkeepers were twiddling their thumbs.

It is simply not good enough. We feel as if we are being held hostage by CalMac and the new policy that passengers and cars can't embark and disembark the ferry at the same time. In addition, the ticketing system is completely unfit for purpose on a busy route like Cumbrae - the lack of a stable and consistent wifi service slows down the scanning and delivery of tickets to passengers.

So, again, I urge you to undertake a CIA and let us tell you how this is affecting us - and please listen to what we have to say.

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## **SUBMISSION 32**

I am emailing to submit a representation for the ICIA 2026-001 review of the decision not to undertake an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) for the changes to the Cumbrae ferry service.

The changes have produced a very different timetable and a 25% reduction in capacity at peak times. This has already had a dramatic impact on the community and will have an even greater impact as the summer approaches and the number of people visiting the island increases. It is very difficult therefore to understand how CalMac concluded that an ICIA was not necessary, as the change clearly exceeds the relatively low threshold of 'significant' impacts set out in the Islands Act.

The changes to the ferry service have been introduced for the convenience of CalMac, with no genuine thought given to the community. It is the roll out of a one size fits all policy across CalMac's entire fleet that does not consider local needs or risks. The Islands Act is intended to prevent such changes.

The changes have been introduced to address a theoretical health and safety risk, which has never resulted in a problem across decades of the service running, and which had never been raised as a problem by the community, but it has been implemented at the cost of actual, real detrimental impacts on the community. These real impacts should have been weighed up against the theoretical risk to assess whether, in the round, the changes would be beneficial for Cumbrae – but no such assessment was carried out.

The changes to the timetable have already caused enormous confusion. We have moved from a simple system of ferries every 15 minutes, which meant ferries and connecting buses were at the same time every hour, to one in which the schedule is effectively random throughout the day. This confusion is compounded by the fact that the bus only meets the larger ferry, and it is extremely difficult to work out which of the scheduled services that is, so it is now very difficult to know when the bus will be operating.

If you are a foot passenger, there is no longer any point in using the smaller ferry at all as there is no bus service connecting to it.

In addition, as there is no ferry service from Largs between 8:05 and 9:10, there is now no way for working people to get from Glasgow to Cumbrae by 9:00 using public transport.

This confusion and the lack of connectivity between the bus, ferry and trains, means that I am already making fewer journeys, and now tend to travel by car when I do have to make journeys.

In the summer the problems will inevitably be much worse, as there is a 25% reduction in capacity at peak times. Even before this change, there were very long queues at peak times, often of several hours. With this change there are only two possible outcomes – the first is that the waiting time will be much longer, and the second is that fewer people will visit the island. Both these outcomes will have a very significant impact on the economy of Cumbrae, both in terms of the reduction in visitors, and increased waiting times for those with unavoidable journeys.

Personally, I will avoid travelling on Fridays or at the weekends if this is at all possible. This will affect my job, which requires regular travel to Glasgow, and it will make me more socially isolated. In the longer term, I will have to consider whether living on the island is still viable for a working person.

To force these problems on a community in order to tackle a non-existent health and safety problem shows a total disregard for the people that rely on the ferry as a lifeline service, and a determination to standardise the fleet no matter what the consequences.

An ICIA should have been prepared before this change was rolled out so that so that the impacts on the community could have been properly assessed, and mitigations put in place to improve the outcomes, as required by the Islands Act.

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### **SUBMISSION 33**

Following your recent timetable and process changes on the Cumbrae to Largs ferry, I have suffered detriment to my work and view the new procedures as unsafe.

The gap of 40 minutes from 7 to 740 am adds increased stress on making my coaching job in Glasgow.

The queue system and signage is unclear and adds further stress whether travelling on foot, bicycle or car.

In view of the extra breaks and unreliability I have felt it necessary to buy a cabin cruiser to ensure I can bring frozen and farm foods back to the island. As I grow my retreat business I feel it is necessary to have this contingency plan to bring guests over.

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### **SUBMISSION 34**

Good evening - I am writing to express my concerns regarding the changes to the Cumbrae ferry service schedule. I am relocating home to Millport next month and will both be working off the island and also have a child who will be attending school in Largs. The sudden changes without community consultation impact us in numerous ways including, but not

limited to, schedules and times to get to work and school. The impact on reduced family time and time at home. The impact on availability of appointments and reduction of time to access these appointments in a timely manner. The ability to access resources that are available only on the mainland and the efficacy of utilizing the ferry service as the increased number of passengers and cars limits locals ability to travel back and forth.

Additionally, out with our own inconveniences, the long queues for the ferry in both Largs and on Cumbrae dissuade visitors from coming to Cumbrae as they will be spending increased time in ferry queues due to long wait times, making them less likely to want to spend half of their day in a queue. We all, every member of the Millport community, are impacted by tourism whether we work in a pub, shop or the local churches. Tourism drives our economy and without it the community loses income and resources. As you know, tourism is the biggest contributor to the Cumbrae economy and the deciding factor in many household incomes. If we can't cover household expenses due to reduced income we can't contribute to the local economy. It would behoove the administration of Cal Mac to spend some time assessing community need and not just the administrative burden and identify how these two parties can work together to find a way to continue to provide the service that has always been provided. It is abhorrent that this change was made without consultation with the community members and local councillors and should be rectified immediately.

As someone who grew up in Millport, it baffles me to know that we have more people coming to the island than in the 90's and 2000's but the ferry service is being reduced. It is almost like Cal Mac doesn't actually care about the people that it has been tasked by the Scottish government to serve.

Please reconsider these changes as they are directly impacting the community at large.

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## **SUBMISSION 35**

The new ferry times do not surprise me. Calmac do not listen to Islanders.

I work for the emergency services doing shift work on set hours. I now have to travel earlier so it makes my day longer. I had to change my hours to fit the ferry timetable already.

Myself and my husband also own a business on the island again we have to travel earlier when going for supplies. We are also loosing customers due to ferry issues.

There is no longer any trust in Calmac.

The ferries break down.

No one seems to think ahead when there is an event organised or the Easter weekend, September weekend.

It happens every year there is no thought put forward. There should be 2 ferries of similar size from end March to end September. 2 x Loch Shiras instead of 1 and a wee ferry.

The Islanders feel abandoned and stuck a lot of the time.

The businesses are looseing business due to lack of ferry service.

Calmac is consistent with letting people down.

Every year major que's of traffic 2 - 3 hours to get on or off the island.

Calmac staff are also under pressure with angry residents and holiday makers.

Isle of Cumbrae is the busiest run why does no one take that into consideration.

When are Calmac going to listen?

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### **SUBMISSION 36**

With reference to the above.

I have resided in Cumbrae since 2016. Since Covid, there has been an increase in the number of cars visiting the island, particularly for day trips, although no noticable increase in ferry provision.

I was therefore dismayed to discover that no Island Impact Assessment had been carried out by Calmac, regarding the 25% cut in provision.

Although I am retired, I share caring responsibilities for my elderly mother on the mainland and sometimes child minding for my granddaughter, also on the mainland. This results in approximately 2- 3 trips per week and sometimes weekends.

I need to take my car, so I am mindful that it can often be busy at weekends or good weather and try to plan my trips accordingly. I have experienced the 2hr queues to get home on several occasions. Having to stay with your car for extended periods, in order to keep your place in the queue to get home is no joke. I do all I can to avoid it.

Despite this, there are occasions when travel during busy periods is unavoidable. A recent example... on Friday 24th April there was a 1hr queue at Largs to get on the island at 10am in the morning. On Sunday 26th of April there was over a 2hr queue to get off the island during the afternoon, due to the Loch Shira being taken off.

At one point, Cal-mac staff explained to those day-trippers queuing at the Largs side, that they could not guarantee getting them back off the island that day .... It's not even high season yet.

The thought of travel with my car this summer fills me with dread. Having to arrange alternative care for my mother, at short notice, is an embarrassing and totally demeaning experience, both for her and myself. I honestly don't know how daily commuters for business will manage to cope.

Island life has always had its restrictions but there needs to be a balance. The ferry is supposed to be a life line service for residents. We have no alternative. It seems that very little thought is being given to the impact on the lives of residents.

Unless the number of vehicles being brought on to this small island by daytrippers is significantly restricted, there needs to be an increase in ferry provision at peak times, NOT a decrease.

I hope my views will be considered.

### **SUBMISSION 37**

I feel compelled to write to you regarding the new Cumbrae ferry timetable. The morning service now means that anyone with a morning hospital appointment now has to consider an earlier start with resulting in longer wait times at the hospital or hotel accommodation the previous evening to ensure they meet their appointment. The stress of not attending these appointments cannot be overemphasised especially for people suffering with cancer heart or liver illnesses. Missing these appointments could be life threatening.

This is coupled with an increasing number of early morning ferry cancellations where minimal notice of cancellation is given and even less or no notice that the service is back operational. People are relying on a reliable service to attend school work and many other social engagements.

The impact on the island is difficult to monitor at this stage but anecdotal evidence heard in the street restaurants and pubs would indicate that visiting people are becoming disillusioned by the ferry service as the reduction in the service has led to a reduced capacity. Would not be possible to run two larger capacity boats to alleviate this problem. Another possible solution would be to position 2 or 3 moveable barriers as the boat docked to cordon off passengers disembarking so that simultaneous disembarking by cars and passengers could occur thus speeding up turnaround time.

The worrying thing is that if this trend continues and people stop coming to the Island then essential shops and services will be forced to close leading to unemployment and all the issues that follow.

I would ask that you seriously reconsider the actions taken and listen to the many different concerns that both residents and visitors have

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### **SUBMISSION 38**

CalMac, you have decided to reduce my ferry service without checking how it would actually affect our community.

I am challenging that decision, and the law says CalMac must listen to my views.

I commute every day and the changes have made a big impact on my life. The change in morning ferry times and the lack of ferries in the morning is a disgrace.

I used to get the 8am ferry, this is the ferry that had been timetabled for YEARS, this is what enabled me to get a full time job in Largs and live in Millport so I can help care for my elderly mother. I am now left with being late and seeing my mother in the morning or being very early and not seeing her. There are a lot of islanders affected by your decision, which was not agreed by the islanders. I challenge this decision, you are a public service and you are not providing an adequate service.

You gave us a meeting to air our opinions, which you said you would take on board.

If this farce of a show wasn't so insulting it would be laughable, you had ALREADY made up your mind, our view, opinions, pleas had absolutely no point.

Your timetable doesn't mean a thing, we get a text almost every day with cancellations and changes. These problems have a direct impact on me and islanders relying on your promised ferry times. I don't think you realise the stress it causes, when the phone goes and you don't know if your going to make work on time or get home.

Today, was just another day with CalMac, boats cancelled due to staffing issues, then we are told its sailing 7 minutes before it was due to leave Cumbrae, ridiculous communication from you.

The fact that you are not incurring any fines as a company for your poor ferry service is another reason you can just do as you wish.

Your footfall is down, which means so is our Island economy, this is down to CalMac alone.

For islanders that commute every day, you used to have a season pass, so we saved around £20 a month. We were promised some sort of saving with the new ticket system with a multi purchase ticket option, but as expected this hasn't happened, CalMac simply does not care about islanders and are starting to clear scottish islands because of CalMacs incompetence.

You should have saved money by not making a new pier, which should have had multi berthing points from front and sides instead of just the front.

You won't need extra lanes and waiting areas as there won't be enough visitors.

It didn't take a fortune teller to see the boats are going to need replacing, this should have been sorted before it's got to the crisis stage.

I am very disappointed with CalMac and the service they offer.

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## **SUBMISSION 39**

I am writing to voice my disappointment and displeasure re the cuts to the timetable of the Largs to Cumbrae ferry service.

The reduction in the commuter boats i.e. the early morning boats will cause further loss of working families to the island. I say further loss as we have already had several families leave the island after just a year or two as the ferry service has been so unreliable with breakdowns and less willing to sail in inclement weather. The loss of yet more working families will decrease the primary school role and once again, we will have to fight the education authority to keep the same number of teachers. At the minute we've seven years that are taught in 3 composite classes. The loss of a further teacher would be unthinkable for education standards.

The change in timetables has made it very difficult to get a bus to the ferry. My high school age son plays rugby and has missed several sessions since the change has taken place, due to the bus not meeting every ferry. This is isolating him from his peers and detrimental to his mental health.

The last ferry leaving the mainland (except Fridays ATM) is now leaving earlier 5&10 mins on certain days. Again, this is isolating for the teenagers and adults who wish to socialise and spend their leisure time on the mainland. Cumbrae does not have a gym or swimming pool - we need to encourage fitness - not actively stand in the way of it.

I've often thought that the boats finish needlessly early at night - edging ever closer to 8pm. The Shira runs with two crews, that overlap see no reason why these crews couldn't be better organised to allow regular late boats. Other islands have this service, why not Millport? That would allow the children and adults to attend more sports opportunities, socialise with peers.

I'm disappointed in the timetable - there is absolutely no benefit to residents. Plenty of boats for tourists wanting to cycle round the island - but absolutely of no benefit to those of us who live here.

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#### **SUBMISSION 40**

Regarding the cuts to the Largs-Cumbrae timetable. I fail to see why the timetable was cut for the prime commuting ferries ie. 7-9am 4-8pm. For a company that is supposedly running a lifeline service for islanders this has had a direct impact on me personally getting to work in a care home in Largs. I can no longer get to my work on time which means I am docked 15mins for every second I am late (ferry now gets in at 7.50 instead on 7.40). Instead of hitting islanders who are struggling to make ends meet , trying to make a living...why not just tweak the timetable in mid day sailings when it's mostly daytrippers coming over. Why does refuelling need to be done when again islanders are trying to get to work, school bus is travelling and people are going for appointments... do this at a quieter time and take your breaks when it least impacts on commuters and islanders.

The scheduled maintenance days which we said would not work have now been cancelled 3 weeks in a row due to the amount of heavy traffic coming over. I think calmac should listen to their customers to whom they are getting subsidised to run the service for.

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#### **SUBMISSION 41**

I am here to give feedback on how the timetable change has effected my life.

I lived on Millport and have had to move away due to the poor service offered by Cal Mac. The time table change was the final straw. It left my wife and i feeling so isolated and let down that we decided to move away from the island we love. Seeing that the ferry service would be cut meant we knew that we were in for impossible to deal with waits for ferries and the possibility of our busy family and friends not able to visit us regularly for fear of being delayed or worse stuck. Left us feeling venerable and isolated.

It also meant that looking for work on the mainland was ruled out as the way the morning timetable is constructed.

We also feel that the resilience of the ferry is not something that we could cope with and as i write this i am sad to say we were right. Saturday hours of Q's, Sunday a break down, Monday a rare day with no cal mac drama and Tuesday no staff to run the ferry.

I love Millport and do not expect there never to be any problems but Cal Mac is killing the Scottish Islands.

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## **SUBMISSION 42**

The new timetable is having a very negative effect on the Island already and it's only April! I dead to think what it will be like during the summer.

Between breakdowns, crew shortages and other feeble excuses this service is not fit for purpose.

I am born and bred on this island and have never experienced such a shambolic service! Communication texts are atrocious! Often too late or so badly worded they don't make sense.

Personally I have missed 2 hospital appointments due to cancellations which I will now have to wait months to be rescheduled.

I dread having to go off the island for appointments or shopping for fear of either not getting off or not getting back.

Please rethink the summer timetable.

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## **SUBMISSION 43**

Dear CalMac and Transport Scotland,

We are writing to lodge a formal complaint regarding both the substance of, and process behind, the recent summer timetable changes for the Cumbrae route.

The new timetable represents an approximate 25% reduction in a lifeline service. This is already having a direct and detrimental impact on commuters, local businesses, and the wider island community. For a route of this volume and importance, such a reduction is neither proportionate nor justified.

Equally concerning is the way in which these changes were introduced. The so-called consultation process fell significantly short of acceptable standards. It did not constitute meaningful engagement, and there is a clear perception that decisions had effectively been finalised in advance. Contributions from residents and stakeholders were not properly considered.

The quality of engagement during this process was also unacceptable. Concerns were met with dismissive responses, including repeated assertions that no changes would be made regardless of feedback. In at least one instance, inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims were presented, further undermining confidence in the process.

We also note the apparent absence of an Islands Impact Assessment, as required under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. If such an assessment has been conducted, it has not been shared transparently. If it has not, this represents a serious procedural failing. In addition, there is no evidence that viable alternatives—many of which were suggested during consultation—were properly explored.

The operational impact of these changes is significant. The introduction of extended gaps between sailings—40 to 45 minutes between early crossings, followed by an hour-long interval—materially reduces the usability of the service. This is incompatible with the needs of a, commuter-dependent route.

There is also a growing concern that this reduction sets a precedent for further service cuts, particularly in the winter timetable, without sufficient justification or scrutiny.

This approach is inconsistent with the obligations set out in the CalMac contract, particularly in relation to transparency, accountability, and meaningful community engagement. The current situation reflects poorly on both CalMac's service delivery and Transport Scotland's oversight.

We request a detailed response addressing:

The rationale for the timetable reductions;

Evidence of compliance with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018;

An explanation of how consultation feedback was considered;

Whether any revisions to the timetable will now be undertaken.

We expect a substantive response and a reconsideration of these changes.

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## **SUBMISSION 44**

Last year you cancelled a meeting in Millport to discuss reducing the number of ferries per day. When you cancelled the meeting you reported that you had decided not to change the ferry timetable.

I believe that you decided in November to change the timetable without consulting any of your stakeholders.

Earlier this year you did hold a meeting to listen to Millport residents concerns and suggestions but failed to hear our concerns. Many at the meeting pointed out that reducing the number of ferries from 4 to 3 before 9am would greatly effect people travelling to work either on/off the island meaning they are having to travel on an earlier ferry to arrive at work on time. Once off the island they may have longer to wait for a bus. Also the large number of business delivering supplies or travelling to work, also concerned about the capacity of the second ferry, etc.

Reducing the number of ferries means increased the stress of travelling to work or attending appointments. If I have an appointment at Crosshouse hospital at 9am I now have to travel on the 7am instead of the 7.30 am ferry as the 7.40am means I would be late or miss the appointment altogether as it take a long time to park and find my way to the correct

department. Attending hospital is a very stressful but the timetable change makes the day much longer.

It is hard to get firms to deliver to the island but the reduced number of ferries means delivering take more time which will increase the cost for these deliveries or firms may stop delivering to the island. This may result in local businesses closing.

I am less likely to leave the island to visit friend or family as I will experience longer waiting time to leave or return to the island, resulting in me feeling isolated.

During last weekend families travelling had to wait longer because of the volume of traffic. Usually when this happens you post waiting times eg 30,min, one hour but now it's 40 mins,1 hour 20 mins and during summer season could be 3 hours. Travelling to the island is expensive and families do not want to wait so long to visit Millport so are likely to cancel their visit here. This reduces my wellbeing as family/friend may not visit me as often as they do at present.

I dread to think what you are planning for the winter, back to the 1980s when we only had one ferry an hour?

Remember the ferry is essential lifeline for the island and reduction in the service affects all residents and could reduce the number of people deciding to live or holiday on the island.

Please reconsider your decision and resume the 4 ferries an hour, there has never been an accident causing staff/passenger injury on the ferry or on the slip in the 45 years I have lived here. Largs and Millport slip staff are excellent at ensuring everyone is save.

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## **SUBMISSION 45**

Hi I am just writing to you to show the issues that I am currently facing with the new timetable that has been implemented.

The first ferry has remained at the same time but the second ferry is now arriving into Largs 10 minutes later and the loss of the 8 am ferry has meant that I have now been late for when there has been issues with boat. Especially today, I work in a large secondary school in inverclyde. I was late for the Higher Biology exam in which I should have been supporting a pupil. I completely understand that the skipper being unwell is something that can not be helped but in historic cases the 0745 from Largs would have run and would have allowed for people who are commuting to not be late for work. I could have got the 0800 from Cumbrae slip and still have been in Greenock for 0840 however this morning I was not in Greenock until 0910 meaning I was late for work. This new timetable is major problem for people who are commuting to work even just in Largs and further afield.

The reduction in the number of sailings is also problematic as there is now lengthy queues at times when there wasn't any previous due to the reduction of sailings.

What is going to happen in winter. Are we going to end up going back in time to 30 years ago when the ferry finished at 1845 from Largs and was 1 sailing an hour.

You keep promoting the island for tourism but what about the residents who have lived there all their life. Myself included. I have commuted for 15 years for work in the mainland and it has never been a problem until this new timetable.

Also attending hospital appointments are now even more problematic as you are unsure if you are going to get back in time with the ferry now leaving earlier from Largs in the evening. I've had appointments at 1730 in Glasgow and it was an additional stressful moment worrying if you were going to get home or not. I also have to plan to leave earlier and arrive back later from work due to the new ferry times. You say you don't want to inconvenience us but some people may have no option but to leave their home and move off the island due to the new timetable.

I want you to know that the staff at Cumbrae, Largs and on the boats are fantastic and I would do anything for them! But they do not deserve to be treated the way that they are being by Gourock!! The way that information was communicated today was absolutely shocking! The text to say that the shira was running didn't come out until 0817 and it was meant to be updated at 0745 as I was told by Darren on the office over the phone, this was also the same for the website. Please make the information more concise and up to date.

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#### **SUBMISSION 46**

I am writing to formally raise concerns regarding the newly introduced summer timetable for the Largs–Cumbrae ferry service and its disproportionate negative impact on island residents.

It is evident that the current timetable has been designed primarily with visitors in mind rather than those who rely on the service for daily living and employment. For example, there were previously six sailings between the first ferry and 09:30; this has now been reduced to four. In addition, sailings were previously evenly spaced at half-hour intervals, whereas there are now gaps ranging from 40 minutes to as much as 1 hour and 5 minutes. This lack of consistency is wholly unsuitable for commuters travelling to and from the island for work.

The revised timetable has already had a direct personal impact. The shift of the early morning sailing from 07:30 to 07:40 results in a loss of 10 minutes of flexitime per journey. While this may seem minor in isolation, it accumulates over time and ultimately affects my non-working life, as this time must be made up elsewhere.

There are also fewer sailings in the evening between 17:00 and the last ferry. This reduction primarily affects island residents, as most day visitors have already departed by teatime. The result is an extension of the working day for islanders, with clear consequences for family life and work-life balance.

Furthermore, the last ferry from Largs now departs five minutes earlier than previously. This small change can have significant consequences, particularly given ongoing roadworks and widespread 20mph speed limits. Missing this ferry means being unable to return home and having to stay overnight on the mainland. Again, this disproportionately affects island residents.

The reduced frequency of sailings now means larger queues for each boat. Last week I was the last car to board a midday ferry despite leaving Millport 20 minutes before the ferry's scheduled departure. Had I been delayed by even a couple of minutes, I would have missed the sailing entirely due to the number of cars behind me in the queue. Fortunately I had decided to go for an earlier ferry than required for my appointment. The persons behind me may not have had the same flexibility.

Taken together, these changes appear to be in conflict with Section 7 (Duty to have regard to island communities) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The current timetable does not adequately consider the needs of island residents and instead places an additional burden on those who depend on the lifeline service most.

I ask CalMac to review the timetable as a matter of urgency with meaningful consideration of the needs of the island community and take steps to restore a service that supports, rather than hinders, daily life on the island.

I look forward to your response and to your demonstration of compliance with your Section 7 duty

Yours faithfully,

Please rethink the summer timetable.

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## **SUBMISSION 47**

I am a resident of the Isle of Cumbrae.

In the last few years the ferry service to and from Largs seems to have reduced in quality. Numerous "technical faults" have left residents and tourists high and dry. Despite this the demand for the service seems to increase, particularly the number of cars. As a result the simplest trip of the island has had to be planned with military precision to avoid the queues which appear with increased regularity.

To add insult to injury Calmacs solution to this avoidable decrease in quality of the island residents life is to , apparently at a whim, reduce the service!

I simply cannot comprehend what sort of mind looks at the Largs/Cumbrae route, your busiest route, sees that demand is increasing and thinks the solution is to reduce the service.

As I said this reduction in service appears to have been introduced at a whim with no meaningful consultation or investigation of the consequences for the islands residents or the businesses operating on Cumbrae. I find the unbelievable that Calmac should operate in such an unprofessional way.

As well as being a resident I am the Chair of the Royal British Legion Scotland Millport Branch. In this capacity I organise a number of parades in support and remembrance of our countries servicemen and women. This has become a fraught task with the difficulties of getting participants on and off the island with the poor and erratic nature of the ferries.

The reduction in the ferry service has also made the running the Branch Club a challenge, on more than one occasion the Tennents delivery lorry has not managed to get over simply because of the length of the queues. This of course affects every licensed premises on Cumbrae.

I feel as an individual and as a representative of the RBLS that the reduction in the Cumbrae/Largs ferry service is nonsense and was introduced in a manner that was contrary to the content and aims of the Island (Scotland) Act.

It appears that Calmac senior management does not realise that simply provideing a ferry is not the same as providing a ferry service.

Calmac senior management should hang their heads in shame for their failure to provide the most basic quality of service for island residents.

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#### **SUBMISSION 48**

The recent changes to the timetable have had a negative impact on Cumbrae residents who rely on the island bus service to travel to meet the ferry and again back to Millport.

With Loch Shiora running every 40 minutes, foot-passengers from Largs have to get on Loch Shiora to ensure a bus connection to Millport. The bus does not run to meet the smaller ferry which runs to the alternate 40- minute schedule.

The local bus company puts on extra buses during peak holidays and summer weekends to manage the influx of tourists and holiday home owners. However, the reduction from 4 ferry runs to 3 per hour will mean longer queues on both sides of the water with cars.

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#### **SUBMISSION 49**

Feedback on the summer timetable for the Largs-Cumbrae route:

There are now only 3 ferries before 9.30 making travel time for bus and train connections much longer - going for the 9.07 Largs train now means leaving Millport on the 8am bus and waiting in Largs for 30 minutes. It may not seem like much but, especially for our old people, it's a long time travelling. Car drivers can't be guaranteed to get the ferry off the island they aim for and even at the moment (28/04) cars are being left behind, disrupting work, health and family commitments.

The implementation of the 20-minute service at the moment means that the buses can't maintain a service to each ferry and unless travellers are very clued in on the relationship between individual ferries and the bus times, they can end up waiting at the slip for long periods. I've already seen an elderly lady who carefully researched the ferry and bus times to make sure there was one to meet the ferry she got home from visiting her husband in a care home in Largs. She timed it correctly but there was a large queue from the previous ferry already waiting to board the bus and she had to stand in a long slow queue to get on. She has a bad back and was really struggling to stand for that length of time - she thinks she will have to stop visiting now.

The ferries already are unable to meet demand, this will only worsen with a 25% reduction in service. Islanders returning from hospital appointments and cancer treatments already had to wait in long queues to get home - this will worsen.

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## **SUBMISSION 50**

While the move from a 30-minute service to a 20-minute service appears as an improvement, the peak holidays and weekends lose out as the former service was every 15 minutes during these times.

Reducing the service to 20 minutes for the whole summer season will mean longer queues at both Largs and Cumbrae and with the number a break-downs that the aging fleet is experiencing, and the number of cancellations this causes can only mean more disruption for the residents and businesses on Cumbrae, as well as mainland businesses and individuals who provide services and support for the island.

I have already been impacted, having to rearrange appointments on the mainland due to the bus timetable only running to meet Loch Shiora. Prior to the timetable changes islanders could rely on joined-up transport links.

Calmac need to think again!

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## **SUBMISSION 51**

I am writing this to strongly complain about the significant reduction and changes to the Largs to Cumbrae ferry service. My family and I have been using this service for decades. Initially as day visitors and then second home owners when I retired 7 years ago and then permanent residents when my husband and I moved here 4 years ago. We previously lived in Beith and commuted daily to Glasgow for work.

One of the main reasons for our decision to move permanently was due to the excellent transport links with the regular ferry timetable and how easy it was to reach Largs by public transport as well as by car, with the knowledge that we could easily keep in touch with our family and friends, as well as traveling on the mainland for hospital, dental, etc appointments. We also now travel weekly to provide essential childcare for our son's family in south Lanarkshire.

The changes to the ferry have come as a considerable blow as they have and will continue to have a detrimental impact on our life on the island and travel to the mainland.

It is no longer possible to predict when a bus will meet a ferry, especially at Largs as it only meets the Shiora, so we now have to hang around for 40 minutes either at Largs or awaiting a bus at Cumbrae. We have experienced significant queues when traveling in the morning due to a reduction in ferry journeys as well as at other times, especially when a ferry cancellation means only one ferry in an hour.

Our family have also been impacted by queues when visiting us and can no longer rely on meeting the bus from Largs to Beith as they could previously. Or arriving at a reasonable time on a Friday after work to visit at the weekend.

This is having a negative impact on my wellbeing and I am concerned about the impact in the future as we had intended this to be a permanent move having committed to moving here at this stage in our lives. I thought the changes to the tickets with the added need for tickets from the Cumbrae side was poor and a backward step but had to accept this. The reduction of service by 25% is not acceptable or defensible on spurious safety reasons. I have never felt a safety risk over decades of travelling when boarding or disembarking, even with toddlers and pets.

Please give some thought to the wellbeing of customers who have been seriously impacted by this service reduction and return to the original timetable. Thank you for taking the time to consider my email. I hope it will help to explain the serious negative impact of the timetable changes.

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## **SUBMISSION 52**

I would like to complain about the changes made to the ferry service.

I have a senior job in Glasgow City Council and I commute between Cumbrae and the city centre.

Lack of reliability of the service

I am just able to make it to work in the morning by train, as long as the ferry service is running. This week the first two ferries simply didn't run on Tuesday and I missed meetings. I had a meeting this morning I could not miss and decided I didn't trust the service not to drop sailings on a second day, so I spent an extra night in the city.

The lack of reliability is anxiety inducing and disruptive in a way which is hard to quantify.

Lack of connectivity for commuters

For the nights I work late in the city and stay in Glasgow, I need to be back on the island and online by 9am. The timetable simply does not allow this.

The first train to Largs is 6.45 and gets in at 8.05. Even if I run, I get to watch the 8.05 ferry leaving, and then I have to sit for an hour and five minutes fuming and not able to start my day. Why has this not been considered? It makes a journey from Glasgow to the island take over 2 and a half hours. I am now having to drive in order to be able to do my work. Why are the morning ferries so spaced out when everyone wants to travel?

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## **SUBMISSION 53**

Hopefully this is something the community council can raise - I'm concerned since the timetable change that an unintended consequence is that traffic now comes off the ferry before the loading traffic has arrived.

This is particularly an issue for the first ferry of the day with drivers (particularly but by no means exclusively deliveries!) speeding round the corner at [redacted] into oncoming traffic heading for the ferry (often also speeding as they can see the ferry unloading...)

I'm afraid it's a matter of time before there's a head on collision as the road is narrow there - I think there needs to be signage to warn drivers (perhaps CalMac would contribute, given their interest in Health and Safety has caused the problem in the first place).

## ICIA Review ICIA 2026-001 – Cumbrae Ferry Committee

### *Cumbrae Ferry Committee*

The Cumbrae Ferry Committee, reporting to the Cumbrae Community Council, represents a broad cross-section of island life, including commuters, local businesses, the Tourist Association, older residents (via the Cumbrae Forum), and the Field Studies Centre. Elected members of North Ayrshire Council also sit on the Committee.

We submit this document to set out, clearly and unequivocally, the profound social and economic consequences of the proposed 25% reduction in ferry capacity for summer 2026, and to highlight the complete absence of a lawful and meaningful Islands Community Impact Assessment (ICIA) by CalMac.

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### *Summary of Concerns*

CalMac's proposals represent a significant reduction in peak-season capacity on one of Scotland's busiest and most economically critical island ferry routes. This is not a marginal adjustment—it is a structural reduction that will materially damage the island's economy, disrupt daily life, and accelerate depopulation.

Despite the scale of this change, no ICIA has been undertaken, no mitigation measures have been presented, and no transparent justification has been provided.

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### *Impact of Proposed Capacity Reductions*

The proposed summer 2026 timetable reduces peak-day capacity by approximately 25% compared to previous years. The consequences are predictable and severe:

- **Economic Damage to Local Businesses**

The island's tourism economy is highly seasonal and dependent on peak-day visitor numbers. A reduction in capacity on busy days directly translates into lost revenue.

Evidence from summer 2024—when the service was constrained due to vessel issues—showed:

- Queue times regularly exceeding two hours
- A 30% reduction in turnover for some businesses over a three-month period

Under the proposed timetable, these conditions would become the norm rather than the exception. This threatens business viability, employment, and ultimately the sustainability of the island economy.

- **Social Impact on Residents**

Reduced connectivity affects every aspect of daily life, including:

- Access to healthcare and education
- Commuting to work
- Family life and caring responsibilities
- Essential shopping and services

Extended queues and reduced reliability will make routine travel difficult or, at times, unmanageable.

- **Risk of Depopulation**

When access to essential services and employment becomes unreliable, residents are forced to reconsider living on the island. The proposed reductions therefore pose a direct risk to population sustainability—contradicting national policy objectives.

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### *Failure to Comply with the Islands Act*

The Cumbrae Ferry Committee has repeatedly requested an Islands Community Impact Assessment, as required under the Islands (Scotland) Act for changes of this magnitude.

To date:

- **No ICIA has been carried out**
- **No economic or social impact analysis has been presented**
- **No mitigation strategies have been proposed**

This represents a clear failure to meet statutory obligations.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government's **National Islands Plan 2 (February 2026)** explicitly prioritises:

- Improved island connectivity
- Stronger island economies
- Sustainable populations

The proposed reduction in ferry capacity is fundamentally at odds with these objectives and has not been supported by the level of evidence or transparency that such a policy conflict demands.

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### *Deficient and Non-Transparent Engagement*

The process by which these proposals were developed raises serious concerns about transparency and good faith engagement:

- The timetable consultation began in October 2025, yet **no mention of a 25% reduction in capacity** was made until **20 January 2026**, one day before publication.
- Evidence shows that this reduction was:
  - Modelled internally between September and November 2025
  - Formalised in November 2025
  - Shared with Transport Scotland

**At no stage during this period was the Cumbrae Ferry Committee or the wider community informed or consulted.**

- A draft timetable was not provided to the Committee until 19 February 2026, despite internal deadlines indicating it should have been assessed and agreed by mid-December 2025.

This sequence demonstrates a pattern of withholding critical information until the latest possible stage, preventing meaningful scrutiny or input.

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### *Failure to Analyse Community Feedback*

At public engagement sessions on 20 February 2026, CalMac collected 189 written and online responses from island stakeholders.

- Approximately **80% of responses were negative**
- Submissions included **detailed evidence of personal, social, and economic impacts**

However:

- No substantive analysis of this feedback has been undertaken
- No conclusions or mitigation measures have been drawn from it

This represents a missed opportunity—and arguably a failure—to incorporate lived experience into decision-making.

We request that all submitted responses be formally considered as part of this ICIA review.

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### *Legal Concerns*

Preliminary legal analysis (attached separately) identifies multiple areas of concern regarding the lawfulness of the decision-making process, including:

- Failure to comply with statutory duties under the Islands Act
- Lack of documented impact assessment or risk evaluation
- Absence of transparent governance and ministerial oversight

These issues merit close scrutiny within the ICIA process.

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### *Conclusion*

The proposed ferry timetable changes are not a routine operational adjustment—they are a decision with far-reaching consequences for the economy, sustainability, and future of the Isle of Cumbrae.

The absence of an Islands Community Impact Assessment, combined with inadequate consultation and a lack of transparency, undermines confidence in the decision-making process and raises serious questions about compliance with both legal requirements and national policy.

We urge that:

1. A full and proper ICIA be conducted as a matter of urgency
2. All community feedback be formally analysed and incorporated
3. The proposed capacity reductions be reconsidered in light of their demonstrable impacts

Without these steps, the proposals risk causing lasting and potentially irreversible harm to the island community.

## 2. Timeline of Key Events and Information

| Date      | Responsible                     | Key Points                                                                                                                                                                       | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 2025  | Cabinet Secretary for Transport | Confirms no timetable changes without meaningful consultation, robust risk assessment, consideration of passenger experience and capacity, and appropriate ministerial oversight | <br>Response-202500464853.pdf                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| July 2025 | Cumbræ Ferry Committee          | Meeting with Calmac.<br><b>No information provided to community on any prospects of a 25% reduction in service</b>                                                               | <b>Minutes of meeting</b><br><br>RE_ Cumbræ Ferry Committee Meeting.m<br>incl updates by [redacted] up to<br><br>Action updates.msg<br><b>10<sup>th</sup> Oct</b> |
| Oct 2025  | Summer Timetable Consultation   | Request from Cumbræ Ferry Committee for <b>identical capacity and frequency as 2025</b>                                                                                          | <b>Email + Submitted on Calmac</b><br><br>Summer timetable<br><b>online form Email</b> 2026 _ Largs to Cumb                                                                                                                                         |
| Oct 2025  | Maintenance Windows             | Proposal by CalMac to introduce Maintenance Windows                                                                                                                              | <br>Summer 26<br><b>Email</b> Timetable Consultatio<br><br>meeting summary and presentation.msg                                                               |

|                          |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 2025                 | Maintenance Windows                                     | Press Release from Cumbrae highlighting concerns over impact of maintenance Windows                                                                               | 2025-10-21 Press Release<br><br>2025-10-21 Press Release Cumbrae Fur                                                       |
| Oct–Nov 2025             | FOI requests submitted to CalMac and Transport Scotland | –regarding maintenance windows, impact assessments, and decision-making records ([redacted], Cumbrae Ferry Committee)                                             |  FoI info next steps .msg<br> FOI'S.msg |
| 17 Nov 2025              | CalMac FOI response                                     | confirms no ICIA or EQIA completed and no decision papers, risk papers, or ministerial briefings held. ([redacted], Cumbrae Ferry Committee)                      |  FoI info next steps .msg                                                                                                  |
| 24 Nov 2025              | Timeline for Summer Timetable Publication               | To CalMac from Cumbrae Ferry Group highlighting concerns on Impact Assessment on changes to the timetable                                                         |  Re_ Summer 2026 Timetables – Update o                                                                                     |
| 25 Nov 2025              | CalMac                                                  | <b>Briefing Paper to Transport Scotland proposing 25% cut in service. This proposal was not shared with the Cumbrae Ferry Committee or the Cumbrae community.</b> | Annex B (FOI 4244) from 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2026<br> Annex B Largs-Cumbrae TS Bri                                       |
| 25 Nov 2025              | Calmac                                                  | Email from CalMac suggesting they were still “discussing matters”, which totally conflicts with formal proposals with Transport Scotland                          |  RE_ Summer 2026 Timetables – Update o                                                                                   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2025 | Calmac SIMOPs suspension                                | The community were told that an incident required postponement of SIMOPs. However evidence shows the permit had expired,                                          | Email from [redacted]                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                           |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                    |  <br>2025-12-03 Mv Loch Annex G Loch Shira<br>Shira - SIMOPS suspe Largs SIMOPS Operat |
| Dec 2025                  | CalMac                                                | No meaningful engagement with route users despite emerging proposals.<br>Several proposed meetings were cancelled                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 15th Jan 2026             | [redacted]<br>(Cumbrae Ferry Committee)               | Email to Kenneth Gibson MSP and Information Commissioner about failure to carry out ICIA and EQIA on Maintenance Windows                           | <br>2026-01-26 Email re<br>Information Commiss                                                                                                                            |
| 19th Jan 2026             | CalMac proposes reductions in service for summer 2026 | Proposals of a 25% cut in service due to increased extended turnaround times plus maintenance windows                                              | Email from [redacted]<br><br>Update on the<br>Summer 2026 timeta                                                                                                          |
| 19th Jan and 2nd Feb 2026 | Response to Cuts Cumbrae Ferry Committee              | 2 Email responses to proposed 25% cuts in the ferry service                                                                                        |  <br>Update on the Summer 2026 timeta RE_ Update on the Summer 2026 timeta             |
| 25th Jan 2026             | Press Release Cumbrae Ferry Committee                 | CalMac plans massive service cuts to its busiest route – islanders up in arms.<br>Concerns raised about impact assessment                          | Press Release<br><br>2026-01-25 Press<br>Release - CalMac pla                                                                                                            |
| Jan 2026                  | Cabinet Secretary                                     | confirms no final decisions taken, Transport Scotland instructed CalMac to allow further time, and a meeting with CalMac scheduled for 28 January. | <br>Response-20260050<br>4469.pdf                                                                                                                                       |
| 2nd Feb 2026              | Cumbrae Ferry Committee                               | Email highlighting Impact on Community to [redacted] and requiring Impact Assessment                                                               | <br>2026-02-02<br>Cumbrae Feedback o                                                                                                                                    |

|                              |                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Feb<br>2026  | Cumbrae Ferry<br>Committee                  | Press Release “STOP THE CUMBRAE CLEARANCES” incl the need<br>for a full ICIA                                                                                                                                        | 2026-02-07 Press Release<br><br>2026-02-07 Press<br>Release - Stop the Cu |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar<br>2026  | CalMac<br>/Cumbrae Ferry<br>Committee       | Email chain around consultation events and the information<br>between 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb and 3 <sup>rd</sup> March.<br>Email exchange of 20 messages around the impact of the<br>proposed changes to the timetable | <br>2026-03 Email Chain<br>Update on the Summ                             |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Mar<br>2026 | Legal Queries                               | Paper prepared for Cumbrae Ferry Committee                                                                                                                                                                          | <br>2026-03 Legal<br>Assesement on Timet                                  |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> Mar<br>2026 | Press Release<br>Cumbrae Ferry<br>Committee | “CUMBRAE CLEARANCES” ROW INTENSIFIES AFTER MINISTERIAL<br>MEETING CANCELLED AND FOI DOCUMENTS REVEAL EARLY<br>PLANS FOR FERRY CUTS                                                                                  | <br>2026-03-13 PRESS<br>RELEASE.docx                                      |