

Improving every journey



**Delivery plan
Harbour access agreement
plan**

Published 1 October 2026





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Executive summary

The Harbour Access Agreement Plan sets out a strategic framework to formalise and strengthen relationships with third-party harbour authorities, ensuring safe, reliable, and consistent access for lifeline ferry services across the network.

For Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) customers, this matters. Every journey begins and ends at a harbour - and the quality, safety and reliability of that experience is shaped by how well those harbours are managed. By securing clear agreements with each authority, we're making sure that the infrastructure CalMac customers rely on is maintained to a consistent standard, that safety procedures are aligned, and that any issues are resolved quickly and transparently.

The plan responds to recent updates to the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code, which places greater emphasis on collaborative engagement between harbour authorities and operators within those authorities' locations. Through standardised agreements, CalMac are embedding shared responsibilities, clear performance expectations, and robust mechanisms for dispute resolution and continuous improvement - all of which contribute directly to a better customer experience.

This approach supports CalMac's commitment to delivering a high-quality, dependable service. It also provides assurance to Transport Scotland and other stakeholders that harbour infrastructure is being managed in line with national safety standards and our operational requirements.

1. Introduction

Harbour access is fundamental to the delivery of our ferry services. Every port we operate from plays a critical role in ensuring our customers experience a safe, smooth and reliable journey - whether they're travelling for work, education, healthcare, or leisure.

This plan sets out how we will formalise access arrangements with third-party harbour authorities, ensuring that each location meets the standards required to support our operations and deliver a consistent customer experience. It builds on the principles of the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code, which now places greater emphasis on collaboration between harbour authorities and operators within the authorities' operational areas.

While we do not operate these harbours directly, our vessels and crews rely on them daily — and so do our port teams. From supporting with the coordination of berth availability for the ferries, to managing turnaround times and ensuring compliance with safety protocols, our teams work in dynamic, high-pressure environments where clarity and consistency are critical. The quality of harbour infrastructure, the definition of roles and responsibilities, and the effectiveness of safety and reporting procedures all directly influence their ability to deliver a smooth, safe and reliable service to the communities we serve.

By establishing clear, standardised agreements, we are taking proactive steps to protect infrastructure investment, reduce operational risk, and ensure that every harbour we use is aligned with our expectations - and those of our customers.

2. Plan objective

The objective of this plan is to ensure that every harbour we access is managed to a standard that supports safe, efficient and customer-focused ferry operations. By formalising agreements with



third-party harbour authorities, we aim to create a consistent framework that protects infrastructure investment, clarifies responsibilities, and enhances the overall experience for our passengers.

Our customers expect reliability, safety and professionalism at every stage of their journey - and that includes the harbours we operate from. This plan ensures that those expectations are embedded into the way we work with harbour authorities, particularly where infrastructure has been publicly funded and must continue to deliver value.

With support from Transport Scotland, we will recommend that any infrastructure funding provided to third-party locations includes a requirement for those authorities to enter into formal agreements with us. These agreements will provide assurance that the funding objectives remain aligned with the delivery of lifeline ferry services.

Each agreement will, as a minimum, include:

- Compliance with the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code
- Clear division of responsibilities between our teams and the harbour authority
- Defined access rights for ferry operations
- Transparent harbour dues charging methodology
- Procedures for reporting damage or defects
- Change and improvement protocols
- Dispute resolution mechanisms
- Clauses for severability and variation
- Performance indicators and berth availability commitments
- Defect management processes
- Attendance and scheduling of performance reviews

By embedding these elements, we are creating a foundation for long-term operational resilience and customer satisfaction across our network.

3. Planned approach

Our approach is designed to ensure that every harbour access agreement is both operationally robust and aligned with the expectations of our customers, stakeholders and crews. It reflects recent updates to the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code, which now places greater emphasis on collaboration between harbour authorities and operators - even where the operator does not formally manage the port.

At several locations, our teams carry out critical activity that directly supports safe harbour operations. This creates a shared responsibility, and an opportunity to strengthen engagement with third-party harbour authorities. Through formal agreements, we can ensure that safety standards are upheld, roles are clearly defined, and infrastructure is managed in a way that supports the delivery of our lifeline ferry services.

We recognise that third-party harbour authorities vary in structure - including private, municipal and trust-owned entities - and that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be achievable. However, our



aim is to develop a standardised agreement template that can be adapted where necessary, while retaining core clauses that protect our operational interests and customer experience.

To lead this work, a dedicated Contract Manager will be appointed, reporting directly to the Head of Harbour Operations for CalMac. This role will be responsible for the delivery and ongoing performance management of each agreement, acting as a contractual escalation point and maintaining a clear separation from day-to-day operational roles. This ensures that our Area Harbour Managers and Deputy Area Managers can focus on service delivery, while contractual matters are handled with consistency and expertise.

This structured approach allows us to build strong, transparent relationships with harbour authorities, reduce operational risk, and ensure that every harbour we access is fit for purpose - for our vessels, our crews, and most importantly, our customers.

4. Contracting strategy

To ensure consistency and accountability across our network, we will enter into formal agreements with each third-party harbour authority through a structured contracting strategy. This approach is designed to protect our operational interests, support infrastructure investment, and deliver a reliable experience for our customers.

Each agreement will be established directly between CalMac and the relevant harbour authority, with clear governance and approval pathways. Our strategy recognises the diversity of harbour ownership models - including private, municipal and trust authorities - and is flexible enough to accommodate these differences while maintaining core contractual standards.

The contracting process will be led by our appointed Contract Manager, who will act as the single point of contact for all agreement negotiations and performance oversight. This role ensures consistency in how agreements are formed, reviewed and managed, and provides a clear escalation route for any contractual issues.

As mentioned previously, where infrastructure funding is provided by Transport Scotland, we will recommend that a formal agreement is a condition of that investment. This ensures that public funding is protected and that harbour infrastructure continues to support the delivery of lifeline ferry services in line with national expectations.

By taking a proactive and structured approach to contracting, we are strengthening our relationships with harbour authorities, reducing operational risk, and ensuring that every harbour we access is aligned with our service standards and customer commitments.

5. Standardised agreement template

To support consistent engagement with third-party harbour authorities, we will develop and implement a standardised agreement template. This template will form the basis of all harbour access agreements, ensuring that key operational, safety and performance elements are embedded from the outset.

The purpose of the template is to streamline the contracting process, reduce ambiguity, and provide a clear framework that reflects our operational requirements and customer expectations. While we recognise that some degree of customisation may be necessary to reflect local



conditions or authority structures, the core content of the agreement will remain consistent across all locations.

The standardised agreement will include:

- Defined roles and responsibilities for both parties, aligned with the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code
- Access rights and operational interfaces, ensuring our vessels, crews and shore operatives can operate safely and efficiently
- Charging methodology for harbour dues, with transparency and fairness built in
- Reporting and defect management procedures, enabling timely resolution of issues
- Performance indicators and review schedules, supporting continuous improvement
- Dispute resolution mechanisms, providing a clear path for escalation and resolution
- Clauses for severability and variation, ensuring legal robustness and adaptability

By using a consistent template, we can ensure that every agreement supports our strategic objectives, protects public investment, and contributes to a reliable and safe customer experience. It also enables us to monitor performance across the network more effectively, identify trends, and respond proactively to emerging risks or opportunities.

The template will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects any changes in legislation, operational practice or stakeholder expectations.

6. Core agreement components

Each harbour access agreement will include a set of core components designed to ensure operational clarity, legal robustness and a consistent standard of service across all locations. These components reflect our commitment to safety, accountability and customer experience, and will be embedded within every agreement, regardless of the harbour authority's ownership model.

Detailed obligations

Agreements will clearly define the obligations of both parties, ensuring that responsibilities are understood and upheld. This includes:

- Compliance with the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code
- Maintenance and availability of berths and associated infrastructure
- Safe access for our vessels, crews and customers
- Clear division of operational responsibilities between our teams and the harbour authority
- Procedures for managing planned changes and improvements

These obligations are critical to maintaining a safe and reliable service, and to ensuring that our customers experience a consistent standard of harbour operations across the network.



Claims and disputes procedure

To support transparency and minimise disruption, each agreement will include a structured process for managing claims and resolving disputes. This will cover:

- Escalation pathways for operational or contractual issues
- Defined timelines for resolution
- Access to legal support and mediation where required
- Clauses for severability and variation to ensure flexibility and legal integrity

By formalising these procedures, we can ensure that any issues are addressed promptly and fairly, protecting both our operational interests and the customer experience.

Reporting and monitoring

Performance monitoring is essential to ensuring that harbour authorities continue to meet the standards set out in each agreement. The reporting and monitoring framework will include:

- Key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with safety, availability and service quality
- Regular performance reviews, with attendance from both parties
- Defect reporting and management processes
- Mechanisms for continuous improvement and feedback

This framework allows us to track performance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that harbour operations remain aligned with our service delivery commitments.

7. Implementation and oversight

Delivering this plan requires a structured and accountable approach, with clear roles, defined milestones and ongoing oversight to ensure agreements are not only signed but actively managed.

A dedicated Contract Manager will lead the implementation of all harbour access agreements. Reporting to the Head of Harbour Operations, this role will act as the central point of coordination, responsible for:

- Negotiating and finalising agreements with each third-party harbour authority
- Ensuring consistency in how agreements are structured and applied
- Monitoring performance and compliance across all locations
- Acting as the contractual escalation point for any issues or disputes

This separation of contractual oversight from day-to-day operational delivery ensures clarity of responsibility and allows our Area Harbour Managers and Deputy Area Managers to focus on service delivery and customer experience.

Implementation will follow a phased rollout, prioritising locations where infrastructure investment is planned or where operational risk is highest. Each agreement will be supported by a performance monitoring framework, including regular reviews, defect reporting and feedback mechanisms.



Oversight will be maintained through scheduled performance reviews, supported by data and insights from our operational teams. Where issues arise, they will be escalated through the agreed dispute resolution process, ensuring timely and fair outcomes.

This approach ensures that harbour access agreements remain live, responsive documents - not just contractual formalities. By embedding them into our operational rhythm, we can protect infrastructure investment, uphold safety standards, and deliver a consistently high-quality experience for our customers.

8. Conclusion

This plan sets out a clear and structured approach to securing safe, reliable and consistent access to third-party harbours across our network. By formalising relationships through standardised agreements, we are strengthening our operational resilience, protecting public investment, and ensuring that every harbour we use supports the delivery of lifeline ferry services to the standards our customers expect.

The plan reflects our commitment to collaboration, safety and continuous improvement. It provides a framework that not only meets regulatory expectations but also enhances the customer experience by ensuring that harbour infrastructure is well-managed, responsibilities are clearly defined, and performance is actively monitored.

Through dedicated oversight, a consistent contracting strategy and a shared focus on service delivery, we are building strong foundations for the future - ensuring that our harbour partnerships continue to support the communities we serve, every day.