

Improving every journey



Delivery plan Human Resources Strategy

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Executive summary

This delivery plan sets out how we at Caledonian MacBrayne will deliver a resilient, inclusive and future-ready workforce to support the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract. It reflects our commitment to providing a reliable public service and aligns with the priorities set out in the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) and Scotland's Public Sector Reform Strategy.

Our people are central to the success of the service. This plan outlines how we will attract, retain and develop a skilled workforce that reflects the communities we serve and is equipped to meet the operational demands of a complex maritime environment. It includes our approach to recruitment, succession planning, apprenticeships, and employment management — all underpinned by fair work principles and a strong focus on employee wellbeing.

We will deliver a resilient, inclusive and future ready workforce through structured workforce planning, inclusive employment practices, and targeted development programmes. Our strategy includes clear lines of responsibility, transparent recruitment processes, and a commitment to building a capable local workforce. We will continue to work closely with recognised trade unions, community partners and employment organisations to identify opportunities and support long-term resilience.

This plan also sets out how we will measure success — through performance indicators that reflect staffing levels, diversity, retention, and employee engagement. By embedding continuous improvement and aligning our HR delivery with the wider corporate objectives, we will ensure our workforce is ready to deliver a safe, accessible and reliable ferry service for Scotland's island, peninsula and coastal communities.

1. Introduction

At Caledonian MacBrayne, our people are central to the delivery of a safe, reliable and resilient ferry service. This HR strategy delivery plan sets out how we will attract, retain and support a skilled and inclusive workforce to meet the operational requirements of the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract.

Our approach is grounded in fair work principles, visible leadership, and a commitment to continuous improvement. We aim to be an employer of choice — offering competitive pay and benefits, clear career pathways, and a positive working environment that supports wellbeing and development.

This plan outlines the employment arrangements, crewing strategy, and staffing structures that will underpin service delivery. It includes our strategic workforce planning framework, succession planning for key roles, and our commitment to apprenticeships and community-based recruitment.

We recognise the importance of working collaboratively with recognised trade unions, employment organisations and local partners to identify opportunities, support long-term unemployed individuals, and build a resilient workforce across both seagoing and shore-based operations.

By embedding inclusive practices, investing in training and development, and maintaining clear lines of responsibility, we will ensure our workforce is equipped to deliver a high-quality public service — one that reflects the communities we serve and supports Scotland's wider transport and economic goals.

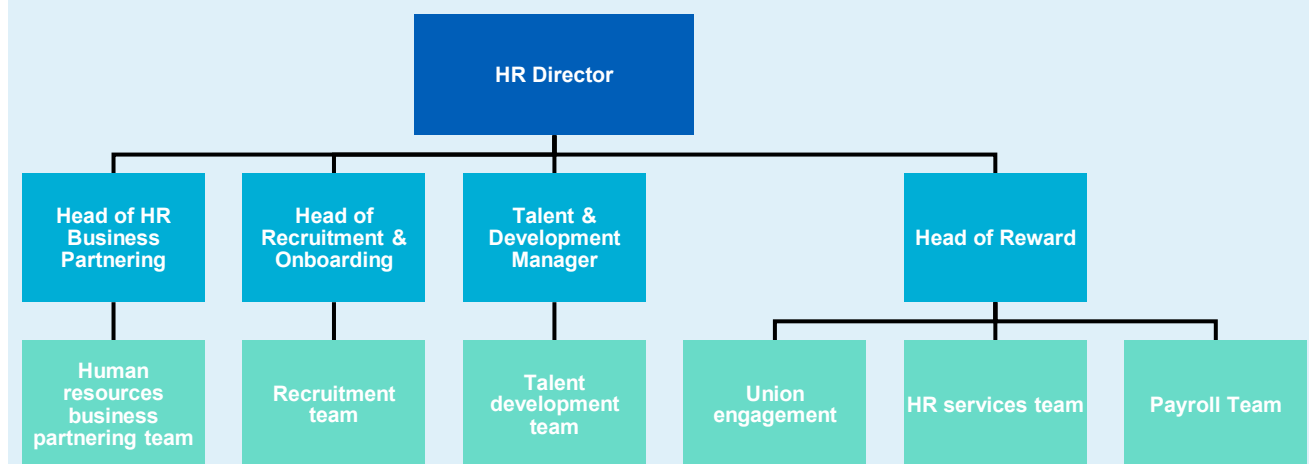


2. Organisational structure and governance

Delivering a reliable ferry service depends on having clear lines of responsibility, strong governance, and a workforce structure that supports operational resilience. At Caledonian MacBrayne, we have established HR processes that ensure our employment practices are aligned with public service values, legal requirements, and the expectations of the communities we serve.

Our organisational structure (Figure 1) is designed to support both seagoing and shore-based operations, with defined reporting lines and accountability across all grades. The HR business partner team provide day to day support on all people related matters and maintain a policy matrix to track and review all HR-owned policies, ensuring they remain current, compliant and fit for purpose. Governance responsibilities are shared across Recruitment, Reward, Talent Development, and the HR business partner team, with oversight from senior leadership.

Figure 1 - HR Organisational Structure



We operate a transparent and structured approach to decision-making, supported by data-driven insights and regular performance reporting. Our HR systems — including MyHR and Power BI — provide real-time visibility of workforce metrics, enabling us to monitor headcount, absence, case management, appraisal completion and agency usage. These tools support evidence-based planning and ensure we remain responsive to operational needs.

We work closely with recognised trade unions through joint consultative committees and collective bargaining agreements, ensuring staff have a consistent and effective voice in shaping employment practices. Our approach to governance also includes regular legal updates, external benchmarking, and attendance at professional seminars to ensure our policies reflect best practice and emerging legislation.

By embedding strong governance and clear organisational structure, we ensure our workforce is supported, our policies are fair and consistent, and our service delivery remains accountable to both our people and the communities we serve.



■ 3. Crewing strategy and operational planning

Delivering a safe, reliable and resilient ferry service requires a structured and responsive approach to crewing. At Caledonian MacBrayne, our crewing strategy is designed to ensure the right people are in the right roles at the right time — supported by fair employment practices, robust planning and strong operational insight.

We employ a flexible mix of permanent, seasonal and contract arrangements to meet the varying demands of our network. Crew configurations are tailored to each vessel and route, with seasonal adjustments made to reflect passenger volumes, vessel capacity and service schedules. Rotational schedules are used across the fleet to balance operational efficiency with crew wellbeing, and a resilience vessel is retained to support continuity of service during major outages.

Crew deployment is informed by detailed analysis of passenger trends, vessel utilisation and local needs. We monitor crew-to-passenger ratios and passenger certificate numbers to ensure compliance with safety regulations and to maintain high standards of customer service. Our planning process includes forecasting demand, identifying staffing gaps and aligning resources with service requirements across all regions.

By combining operational flexibility with inclusive employment practices and data-informed planning, we ensure our crewing arrangements are resilient, responsive and aligned with the needs of both our workforce and the communities we serve.

■ 4. Staffing overview

We operate a diverse, multi-skilled workforce across both seagoing and shore-based operations. Our staffing model is designed to support the delivery of lifeline ferry services across the Clyde and Hebridean network, with roles structured to meet operational, safety and customer service requirements.

Employment arrangements are underpinned by fair work principles. We do not use zero-hours contracts and have committed to a policy of no compulsory redundancies without full consultation and engagement with recognised trade unions.

We prioritise local hiring wherever possible, supporting island economies and reducing reliance on external workers. Our strategic workforce plan includes targeted recruitment, succession planning and structured development pathways to ensure continuity and capability across all grades. All crew members are supported to maintain mandatory qualifications and participate in ongoing training programmes.

We maintain detailed records of staff numbers and grades across all business areas, including CalMac Ferries Limited, Caledonian MacBrayne Crewing (Guernsey) Limited, and David MacBrayne HR. These records are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with service needs and regulatory standards.

Our workforce includes a wide range of roles — from Masters, Engineers and Deck Ratings to Port Assistants, Contact Centre staff and Support Services personnel. Each role is supported by a comprehensive role profile, which informs recruitment and training.

We also monitor the geographic distribution of our workforce, with a strong focus on employing individuals who reside within island communities or within reasonable commuting distance to ports.



This supports local economies, improves retention and ensures our service is rooted in the communities we serve.

Staffing levels are adjusted seasonally to reflect passenger demand and operational requirements. We maintain flexibility through a blend of permanent, temporary and contract arrangements, supported by a central resource pool for rapid deployment.

Shift patterns across CalMac's network are tailored to meet the operational demands of both seagoing and shore-based roles. Rotational schedules are used across the fleet to balance service delivery with crew wellbeing, while port staff operate flexible arrangements that support seasonal fluctuations, weather-related disruption, and planned maintenance. These adaptive scheduling practices are designed to ensure continuity of service, promote work-life balance, and respond effectively to the unique challenges of lifeline ferry operations.

By maintaining a clear and structured overview of our workforce, we ensure we are equipped to meet operational needs while remaining responsive to the communities we serve.

5. Strategic workforce planning

Our workforce planning approach is strategic, data-informed and tailored to the unique operational demands of the delivery of Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services. It ensures we have the right people, in the right roles, at the right time — supported by clear processes, robust analysis and strong leadership.

Planning is conducted annually through our people resource plan, with input from senior management and operational teams. This process considers current staffing levels, projected turnover, seasonal demand, and the specific needs of island and coastal communities. It also factors in demographic trends, economic conditions and the logistical realities of delivering lifeline services across a geographically dispersed network.

We use scenario planning to identify potential gaps and surpluses and develop actionable strategies to address them — including recruitment timelines, succession planning, upskilling and organisational redesign where required. Our planning is supported by real-time data from MyHR and Power BI, giving us visibility of headcount, absence, qualifications and performance across all roles and locations.

A key focus of our strategy is resilience. We identify business-critical roles and ensure successors are in place, with emergency cover plans developed for all priority positions. Our succession planning process is reviewed annually and includes structured development pathways, mentoring and leadership coaching for identified talent.

We also embed diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our workforce planning. This includes targeted outreach, inclusive recruitment practices and support for career returners and changers. We work closely with employment organisations to identify opportunities for long-term unemployed individuals and support community-based employment programmes.

By aligning workforce planning with operational needs and strategic goals, we ensure our people are equipped, supported and ready to deliver a high-quality public service — now and into the future.



6. Recruitment and talent acquisition

Our recruitment strategy is designed to attract, assess and appoint the best talent available — fairly, transparently and in line with our commitment to being an employer of choice.

We operate a structured and objective recruitment process that ensures all candidates are evaluated consistently against essential criteria, including relevant skills, experience and ability to perform the role. Our approach is underpinned by fair work principles and inclusive employment practices, with a strong focus on removing barriers and promoting equal opportunities.

All roles are advertised internally and externally by our HR services team, unless by exception. Vacancies are promoted across multiple channels — including our website, social media platforms, job centres, community groups and career fairs — to maximise visibility and reach. We also work with specialist marine recruitment agencies to support short-notice and seasonal appointments.

To ensure fairness and calibration, interviews are conducted by trained panels using a structured matrix. Wherever possible, interviews follow a two-stage process and include at least two interviewers. Detailed notes are retained in line with our records and retention schedule, and feedback is offered to all candidates who attend interview.

We are committed to continuous improvement and regularly review our recruitment practices. This includes launching post-recruitment feedback surveys, updating our interview guidance, and expanding our outreach to underrepresented groups. We also welcome applications from previous employees and individuals with disabilities and encourage candidates to discuss reasonable adjustments where needed.

Our recruitment policy is supported by training for all staff involved in selection, and by digital tools that streamline administration and improve candidate experience. We also ensure compliance with right-to-work legislation and maintain robust reference-checking procedures.

By embedding fairness, transparency and inclusivity into every stage of the recruitment process, we ensure our workforce reflects the communities we serve and is equipped to deliver a high-quality public service.

7. Apprenticeships, cadetships and early careers programmes

Developing the next generation of maritime professionals is central to our long-term workforce strategy. At Caledonian MacBrayne, we are committed to creating meaningful career pathways through apprenticeships, cadetships and graduate programmes — supporting young people and career changers to build skills, gain qualifications and contribute to the communities we serve.

Apprenticeships

Our apprenticeship programme offers structured, hands-on training across both seagoing and shore-based roles. Apprentices gain practical experience alongside formal study, with all costs covered — including travel, accommodation, uniforms and tuition. We actively promote opportunities within our communities, with a strong focus on encouraging seasonal staff and young people aged 17–24 to apply.

Our seagoing apprenticeships include Engine Rating and Deck Rating pathways, delivered in partnership with Glasgow Nautical College. Apprentices complete 18 months of training, combining



classroom learning with onboard experience. We also offer Mechanical Engineering apprenticeships and are expanding into areas such as project management and technical support.

Apprenticeships are aligned with our workforce planning and succession strategy, helping us address skills gaps, support retention and build resilience across the network. We are proud of our track record — with over 400 applications received for 20 places in our most recent intake, and a 91.8% completion rate since 2016.

Cadetships

Our cadet sponsorship programme supports the development of Deck, Engine and Electrotechnical Officers through a three-year structured training pathway. Delivered in partnership with Clyde Marine Training Ltd and Northern Marine Ltd, cadets receive academic instruction and extensive sea time aboard operational vessels.

Cadets are trained to the highest standards and supported throughout their journey — with mentoring, financial assistance and access to experienced professionals across our fleet. This investment ensures a pipeline of qualified officers who are confident, capable and committed to delivering lifeline services for island and coastal communities.

Early careers programmes

We also offer early career opportunities across shore-based functions, including engineering, accounting, business administration and project management. These programmes combine formal learning with real-world experience, helping participants build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the maritime sector.

Our outreach includes school visits, STEM talks and participation in career fairs — all designed to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and promote careers in maritime. We work closely with community partners to ensure opportunities are accessible, inclusive and aligned with local needs.

By investing in apprentices, cadets and graduates, we are building a skilled, resilient and community-rooted workforce — ready to support the future of ferry services across Scotland's west coast.

8. Retention and employee development

We recognise that retaining skilled and motivated employees is essential to delivering a reliable public service. Our retention strategy is built around fair employment practices, career development opportunities, and a strong focus on wellbeing and engagement.

We offer a competitive compensation and benefits package, including a generous pension scheme and annual leave entitlements.

Career development is a core part of our employee experience. We provide structured pathways for progression, supported by personal development plans, accredited training programmes, and opportunities for secondments and cross-business projects. All employees are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, with support from line managers and access to digital learning tools.

Our Centre of Excellence delivers onboarding and 'Day one' training for new starters, ensuring they are equipped to succeed from the outset. We also offer mentoring, coaching, and leadership development programmes to support progression across all levels of the organisation.



We maintain comprehensive role profiles for all positions, which underpin our job evaluation and salary benchmarking processes. These profiles are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with operational needs and industry standards.

Employee wellbeing is a strategic priority. We provide access to occupational health services, physiotherapy support, and a 24/7 employee assistance programme. Our wellbeing committee leads initiatives across mental health, financial resilience, and physical health — including health screenings, stress management workshops, and community volunteering opportunities.

Recognition is embedded in our culture. Through our Prezee reward platform, managers can acknowledge exceptional contributions with smart gift cards, valid across a wide range of retailers. We also celebrate long service milestones and offer retirement awards to honour employee commitment.

By investing in our people and creating a positive, inclusive working environment, we ensure our workforce remains engaged, resilient and ready to deliver for the communities we serve.

■ 9. Employee engagement and wellbeing

At Caledonian MacBrayne, we believe that a supported and engaged workforce is essential to delivering a high-quality public service. Our employee engagement and wellbeing strategy is structured to improve morale, productivity, satisfaction and retention across the organisation.

We operate a rolling 12-month engagement programme, designed to foster a culture of recognition, development and open communication. This includes independently run annual staff surveys, intermittent pulse reviews, and a comprehensive internal communications plan that shares business, community and celebration news across multiple channels.

Our wellbeing strategy is led by a dedicated wellbeing committee, supported by bi-monthly meetings, expert guest speakers and targeted initiatives. These include health screenings, mental health awareness, financial wellbeing workshops and stress management training. We also collaborate with Scottish Union Learning to deliver additional support, including mental health first aid, neurodiversity awareness and suicide prevention training.

We provide access to a 24/7 employee assistance programme (EAP) and occupational health services through Medigold. These services are designed to help employees manage personal and professional challenges, reduce absenteeism and improve overall resilience.

Leadership visibility is embedded into our engagement model, with senior leaders participating in “day in the life” activities and networking events to build stronger connections with staff. We also maintain positive union engagement through regular joint consultative committee meetings and collaborative problem-solving.

By investing in employee engagement and wellbeing, we create a workplace where people feel valued, supported and empowered to deliver the best possible service to our customers and communities.

■ 10. Diversity and inclusion in the workforce

We are committed to building a workforce that reflects the communities we serve and where every employee feels valued, respected and supported to succeed. Our approach to equality, diversity



and inclusion (EDI) is embedded across our recruitment, development and workforce planning practices.

We actively promote inclusive employment policies and procedures, working to eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment. As an equal opportunities' employer, we strive to ensure our workforce is representative of the communities in which we live and operate — both at sea and ashore.

We deliver equality, inclusion and diversity training across the organisation and regularly review our policies to ensure they support flexible working, job sharing and accessibility. We also encourage applications from underrepresented groups and provide reasonable adjustments where required.

Our Women's Network and corporate membership of Women in Transport are examples of how we support gender balance and career progression for women in maritime. We also engage with schools and colleges to promote diverse career pathways and create role models from within our existing workforce.

We are expanding our EDI learning resources and have committed to implementing Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) from 2025 onwards. These assessments will help us understand how policies and decisions affect different groups and ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

By fostering an inclusive culture and removing barriers to employment and advancement, we are building a stronger, more representative workforce — one that is equipped to deliver a public service that works for everyone.

11. Union engagement and industrial relations

We recognise the vital role that trade unions play in shaping a fair, inclusive and resilient workplace. Our approach to union engagement is built on mutual respect, transparency and a shared commitment to delivering a high-quality public service.

We maintain strong relationships with four recognised trade unions: Nautilus International, RMT, Unite the Union and TSSA. Engagement is structured through Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs), which meet regularly to ensure consistent and effective participation in decision-making. These committees provide a forum for operational insight, collaborative problem-solving and constructive dialogue on matters affecting our workforce.

In addition to scheduled meetings, we hold ad hoc discussions as required — covering topics such as timetable changes, crewing requirements and project updates. These sessions allow for timely input and help ensure that decisions are informed by the lived experience of our employees.

Collective bargaining agreements are in place across key staff groups, including officers, major vessel ratings, small vessel ratings, port clerical workers and support services. Annual pay negotiations are conducted through Joint Negotiating Committees, with outcomes implemented in October each year.

We are committed to maintaining a non-compulsory redundancy policy and do not use fire-and-rehire practices. Any proposed changes to staffing arrangements are subject to consultation and engagement with the relevant trade unions, ensuring fairness and transparency throughout.



Our union engagement strategy also supports employee wellbeing, with joint initiatives focused on workload, safety and morale. We collaborate on training programmes, policy development and continuous improvement efforts — ensuring that our workforce is supported, heard and empowered.

By fostering strong, respectful relationships with our trade union partners, we ensure that our employment practices reflect the values of public service and the expectations of the communities we serve.

12. Performance management

At Caledonian MacBrayne, performance management is a key part of how we support our people and align individual development with organisational goals. Our approach ensures every employee has a clear understanding of expectations, opportunities for growth, and the support needed to succeed.

All eligible employees participate in an annual performance review process, which includes a personal development plan tailored to their role and career aspirations. These plans are aligned with our company values, strategic priorities and defined competencies, and are reviewed regularly to support both short and long-term objectives.

The appraisal framework uses a five-point rating scale, covering both achievements and behaviours. This ensures consistency across departments and provides a structured basis for feedback, recognition and development planning. Conversations focus on strengths, areas for improvement, progress against objectives and future goals.

We offer a wide range of development opportunities to support performance, including formal training, secondments, coaching, mentoring, shadowing and online learning. Managers are equipped with the tools and guidance needed to carry out effective reviews, and employees are encouraged to take ownership of their development journey.

By embedding performance management into our culture, we ensure our workforce remains motivated, capable and aligned with the delivery of a high-quality public service.

13. Absence management

Managing absence effectively is essential to maintaining operational resilience and supporting employee wellbeing. Our absence strategy is structured, proactive and designed to balance the needs of our people with the demands of a lifeline ferry service.

Absence is recorded and tracked using our dedicated reporting system, Absentia, which provides real-time notifications to managers and immediate access to occupational health support. This ensures timely intervention and consistent case management from day one.

We hold regular absence review meetings across Fleet and Port operations, supported by HR Business Partners to ensure fairness and consistency. These meetings include detailed reviews of short and long-term cases, trend analysis and progress tracking.

Support measures include health screenings, physiotherapy, mental health resources and flexible return-to-work arrangements. We also monitor patterns such as recurring absence and provide targeted interventions where needed.



Our policy includes clear thresholds and formal review triggers. Employees who exceed absence limits may be invited to a formal review meeting, with outcomes ranging from support plans to formal warnings, depending on the circumstances. Extended monitoring periods and reissued warnings are used where appropriate to manage recurring absence.

Key performance indicators include timely completion of return-to-work meetings, welfare support reviews, and occupational health referrals. These metrics help us maintain consistency, identify areas for improvement and ensure our approach remains fair and effective.

By embedding a structured and compassionate approach to absence management, we support our employees while maintaining the reliability and resilience of the service we deliver.

14. HR systems and data management

Effective HR systems and data management are central to how we support our people, monitor performance and deliver a responsive public service. We use secure, integrated platforms to manage the full employee lifecycle and provide real-time insights that inform strategic decision-making.

MyHR

MyHR is our centralised Human Resources Information System (HRIS), used to manage personal details, contractual records, leave, training history and employment changes. It offers self-service functionality for employees and managers, reducing administrative burden and improving data accuracy. Automated workflows support key HR processes such as onboarding, absence approvals and contract updates, ensuring consistency and timely communication.

MyHR is fully aligned with UK data protection regulations, including GDPR. Role-based access controls ensure that sensitive information is only available to authorised users, maintaining confidentiality and compliance across the organisation.

Power BI Dashboards

We use Microsoft Power BI to analyse and present HR data through interactive dashboards. These cover a wide range of workforce metrics, including headcount, absence rates, secondment tracking, performance appraisal completion and agency staff usage. Dashboards are customisable and updated in real time, allowing managers and HR teams to drill down into specific data segments and monitor trends over time.

This data-driven approach supports evidence-based planning, helps identify emerging risks and enables continuous improvement across all HR functions. It also enhances transparency and accountability by providing clear visibility of workforce performance.

CIPD HR Inform

To ensure our policies and practices remain current and compliant, our strategic HR team has full access to CIPD HR Inform — a comprehensive resource developed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. This platform provides legally compliant templates, benchmarking tools, case studies and guidance on emerging HR issues. It supports consistent policy development and helps us respond quickly to changes in legislation or best practice.



By integrating modern HR systems with robust data management tools, we ensure our people strategies are efficient, compliant and aligned with the needs of our workforce and the communities we serve.

15. Conclusion

This HR strategy delivery plan sets out how we will deliver a resilient, inclusive and future-ready workforce to support the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract.

It reflects our commitment to fair work, visible leadership, and continuous improvement — ensuring our people are equipped, supported and empowered to deliver a safe, reliable and customer-focused public service. From strategic workforce planning and inclusive recruitment, to apprenticeships, wellbeing and union engagement, every aspect of this plan is designed to strengthen our operational capability and reflect the communities we serve.

We will continue to monitor progress through clear performance indicators, regular reporting and structured engagement with employees, trade unions and stakeholders. Our HR systems and governance frameworks provide the tools and transparency needed to track delivery, respond to challenges and adapt to changing needs.

By embedding this strategy into our day-to-day operations, we will ensure our workforce remains motivated, capable and aligned with the values of public service — helping us improve every journey and build a ferry service that Scotland can be proud of.