

**MINUTES of the FERRIES COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING  
held on Friday 25 February 2022 at 0930 hrs  
by video/audio conference**

[FOISA Status – Exemptions under Section 30 (Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs) Section 33 (Commercial interests) and Section 36 (Confidentiality)]

- Present:** Angus Campbell (AC) - (Chairman)  
Bill Calderwood (BC)  
David Herriot (DH)  
Ian Macfarlane (IM)  
Jim Porteous (JP)  
Gail Robertson (GR)  
Angus Campbell (AC2)  
Donnie Macinnes (DM)  
Eoin MacNeill (EMacN)  
Ida Holmstrom (IH)  
Kirsty MacFarlane (KMacF)  
Murdo MacLean (MMacL)  
Joanna Peteranna (JoP)  
Kevin Peach (KP)
- In attendance:** Chris Wilcock – Head of Ferries, Transport Scotland  
Laurence Kenney – Ferries Unit, Transport Scotland  
Kevin Hobbs – Chief Executive, CMAL  
Brian Fulton – Head of Business Support, CMAL  
Erik Ostergaard (EO) – Chairman, DML  
Robbie Drummond (RD) – Managing Director, CalMac  
Pauline Blackshaw (PB) – Head of Operational Planning, CalMac  
Andrina McCrae (AMcC) – Executive Assistant, CalMac
- Apologies:** Rhoda Campbell (RC)  
Camillie Dressler (CD) – am only

ITEM		ACTION
1	<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	
	AC welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Erik Ostergaard, newly appointed Chairman of David MacBrayne Ltd. EO thanked AC for his welcome and expressed his pleasure at being able to attend the meeting.	
1.1	<b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> Apologies for absence were received from Rhoda Campbell and Camille Dressler.	
1.2	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b> GR declared an interest, in that she is the manager of a local haulage company and AC also declared an interest due to his role as Further Education Regional Lead of UHI.	
1.3	<b><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2021</u></b> It was agreed that these minutes were an accurate record of discussions.	
1.4	<b><u>ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u></b>	
	<u>Relief crewing</u> Action to be left open. This is expected to continue over a period of time.	
	<u>Loose freight</u> CD will provide an update on this.	
	<u>Under-19 travel issue</u> This is a main part of the Board's work and ongoing campaign, so should remain open. BC commented that this should be amended to under-22 travel to provide equality with mainland travel.	
	<u>Drydock schedule</u> RD is expected to raise this during his session later in the meeting.	
	<u>Number of dogs carried</u>	

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Action can be closed.

### Social media presence

Report from the sub-group has been circulated.

### RET Review document

The link to this document has not yet been received from Transport Scotland. AC2 thought something had been published on the Scottish Government website, but TS had undertaken to circulate the document, and this has not happened.

### TS slide deck

The slide deck used at the September meeting has not yet been circulated.

### TS organogram

This document is still to be received.

### CMAL update

The slide deck used at the September meeting has not yet been circulated.

### Prioritisation of islanders

Members to advise AC if a one-off discussion on this is required.

BC commented the focus should be on providing capacity to meet demand rather than try to allocate the restricted capacity. He agreed a separate session would be beneficial. KMacF would be keen to reflect the range of views coming from the Board. The Isle of Mull ferry committee has issued a press release challenging the government.

AC added that, with recent disruption, Western Isles and other islands are worried about essential supplies getting in. AC advised he had sent off the data gathering exercise regarding the effects of disruption but has had no response as yet. It might be worth offering our time to help TS with this. AC has a meeting with the Minister on 3 March, so her views may come to the forefront.

BC advised that he and GR attended the CalMac Customer Steering Group. They sent a paper to Blair and Diane and had a frank discussion on it. There seems to be a lack of understanding on the impact to the islands. He would support a one-off meeting between TS, CalMac and the Board. Communities won't last until the £580m of funding comes through. KMacF's impression was discussion had taken place on the cancellation policy and there were statistics for the number of cancellations. She thought TS had been asked for a breakdown of these statistics. The feeling on Coll is that we need to understand what the cancellation policy is, and we felt it was very punitive. AC asked if she was referring to the no show penalties. He couldn't remember it being discussed but encouraged KMacF to put this request to TS.

AC had been made aware of other companies working 12 hours on and 12 hours off. Their services were perhaps off for a couple of hours until the worst of the weather passed. Are we building boats that are capable of running 24/7? Do we have the right vessels and the right crew to run in weather conditions? AC said the condition of the fleet has an impact on this. He would certainly expect that ships are being built to run 24/7.

The Working Time Directive and agreements with staff and unions and how they are used by CalMac will be covered in RD's session. AC2 said this was also relevant for TS and CMAL in respect of having two crews to run 24/7 if it was required.

JP pointed out that it was recorded in the minutes of the last meeting that the company would look at breaking down the number of no-shows by route – this has not been done as yet.

The company is keen to establish a timeline. The suggestion was made to document all comments and then hold a separate meeting. This is a big issue and a fair amount of hostility can be expected from the communities.

DMacI said we have to nail the terms and conditions. It was meant to be implemented on 1 February. A communications plan was scheduled for 14 January and staff training was to be given. We need to get more crew cabins on the ships so that we have the possibility to run extra hours. It is probably too late to do this on the Islay ships but going forward we need to have extra accommodation to put on extra sailings.

## 2 TS UPDATE

CW and LK joined the meeting.

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CW advised there was no presentation for this meeting, he just wanted to give a verbal update and then have a general discussion. TS are focused on disruption across the network which has been unprecedented across the last few weeks and appreciate the feedback received from the Board around the issues on the ground. Ministers have been keeping a very close eye on this.

There is an issue with reliability and breakdowns in the fleet. The team is very much focused on working with CMAL and CalMac colleagues to get approval for the 2 new Islay vessels. CMAL continue to look for additional second-hand tonnage to support the network. There has been a call from some sectors to have a second order of 2 more Islay vessels. We need to clarify as a priority whether that class of vessel is what would be needed for other areas of the network, but it is not something TS are averse to. It is not included in the current £580m investment but TS would be content to discuss this with Ministers. It is not within TS' gift to increase funding but we can give details of what could be achieved if we do get additional funding. There are strong views from the communities that we should get on and produce more of these vessels.

Work has continued on other measures to take forward to reduce pressure on deck space. This has taken longer than planned due to lack of staff resources as a result of Covid.

It was noted that AC is meeting with the Minister next week. She had hoped to be at today's meeting, but this proved not to be possible. She is keen to engage with the Board and get out and engage with the communities. As well as Ministerial engagement, CW's team is keen to go out and speak directly on these issues and provide an update on other work which may apply in different areas.

### Islands Connectivity Plan

LK advised there has been a struggle with resources to move this forward, but there is a commitment to get this finalised for formal consultation by the end of this year. There will be engagement with stakeholders in advance of this. We are looking to develop the over-arching aims and objectives for ferry services for CHFS and NIFS, as well as individual pieces of work:

1. Future vessel investment plan and, in particular, a deployment plan, setting out a pipeline of investment.
2. A fares review across both of our ferry service networks and where we should be taking that forward.
3. Refresh of the community needs assessment. This was done through the initial Ferries Plan in 2012 but there is a desire to refresh this and undertake a market needs assessment.
4. Pathways to net zero across the network by 2045.
5. Connecting and onward travel – looking at how we can move to being more sustainable.

CW outlined other areas of activity:

1. Project Neptune – there have been press reports and suggestions that we are looking to break up the network and unbundle. The First Minister has made it clear that there is no intention to do that.
2. We are looking to take forward CHFS3 and are starting to see how we can engage with communities on this. The Board would be one of the key elements in doing this.

Consideration is being given to whether the Ferries Community Board should be a formal contract requirement. The consensus is that this will be the case. Consideration is also being given to whether the current length of contract is something that should be addressed.

AC commented that the meeting with the Minister is on 3 March. He had suggested previously that, if she could give him dates when she could meet with the Board, members would accommodate these. AC will repeat this offer during the meeting.

He added that an invitation had been received from the group looking at the Islands Connectivity Plan. The timetable for achieving this is unclear. Communities need something done in the short term regarding the issues they are currently experiencing. They need assurance this is under control. This is not the perception at the moment.

In response to a question from AC2, CW advised the current contract would end in October 2024. AC2 said the contract is very strict in terms of CFL having a timetable and asked, given issues with weather etc., how TS are working with CFL to encourage them and working the contract so that, if they cannot meet the timetable they can put extra crossings on to run at different times to allow a service to run rather than having no service.

CW said this point has been made a few times and he would be keen to explore what that might mean. CFL do seek weather windows and look at other options. Would we be asking the operator to have a spare crew available? AC2 replied that we are not asking for a 24-hour service, but it would be better to run at night if there is no opportunity to operate during the day. There is no incentive for CFL to operate in a different way. CW replied he had seen clear

## CONFIDENTIAL

examples recently where CFL made efforts to run the service. AC2 said TS should encourage them to do that to provide a better service to communities. They need to be innovative about crewing/drydocking etc.

CW advised there are things TS are looking to do in the vessel space around having resilience. The aspiration is to have a spare vessel in the major fleet, fully crewed and ready to cover. AC2 asked what TS could encourage CFL to do in the interim period until these vessels are built and asked if vessels are being built to run 24/7? CW replied that the team is focused on getting new tonnage ordered but will look to see if there is anything else that can be done. Additional funding was provided to bring MV Utne in, so we are now running an extra vessel, but any additional spend is being heavily challenged. We will continue to make these points and try to push for things, but it would be wrong to say that funding availability is not a challenge.

AC said this emphasised for him the need to have discussion on this as soon as possible.

CW would like to speak to CFL and Serco to see if there is an opportunity to run an evening service or whether it is about cost and resources. CW is happy to explore if there is a barrier in the contract to provide this service or whether there is a crew and costing issue.

AC would like to have CFL and TS in the same room to discuss these matters.

EO said when there are weather disruptions to the service there seem to be formal barriers to carrying out alternative sailings to catch up. This has been mentioned by RD as an issue. He said it was time consuming to get through. CW said this was helpful and he would be happy to explore if there is something TS can do to help.

CW had had the same idea about getting TS and CFL together, perhaps also with CMAL and would be happy to participate in such a meeting.

BC was pleased to hear there is a willingness to take this forward.

With regard to the Islands Connectivity Plan and Fares Review it would be good to get something out by the end of the year. BC asked for clarification on the VRDP and whether this is going to come out separately or be included in another plan. LK replied that the extant VRDP is informing the projects TS are working on. In terms of the VRDP going forward, TS are looking at taking it into the Connectivity Plan. Ultimately a plan is required for replacing every vessel in the fleet as well as a long-term pipeline to give certainty of long-term investment plans required to be in place beyond the next 5 years. TS are conscious that things have been slipping but hope to have a suite of documents ready by the end of the year.

It was noted that the Islands Connectivity Plan is the new name for the Ferries Plan.

BC commented that communities are desperate to see some sort of plan. They are interested in the long-term plan but are looking for something that solves the next 1-2 years because many of our islands and businesses will not last.

LK asked BC what he saw as the need in the medium term. BC suggested this should be first agenda item at the proposed meeting – what can we do short term, medium term and long term. CW agreed with BC's points. How we can better use the deck space forms part of the interim space as well.

AC said this sounded like the Community Board is being asked to decide how the recovery plan is going to work. Board members are happy to put in the points we have been raising, but hope it is not the case we are expected to come up with the answers. CW said this was not the intention at all.

BC referred to CHFS3. CHFS as we have it just now expires in 2024, but there was the matter of 6 years + 2. Is there any opportunity in the last 2 years of the contract for some variation to the contract based on community input rather than just continuing the existing contract? If we could get some constructive dialogue going this could form the two years which would be informative for any new contract. CW replied that this is not a break in the contract in the same way it was with Abellio/Scotrail. It is a rebasing opportunity for the operator to revise their costs and for TS and Ministers to say whether the view is that those costs are reasonable. The contract can be varied at any time within the limits of what can be done within procurement rules.

BC said we understand it is an 8-year contract with a 2-year period at the end. We need CFL to come to us with initiatives.

JP added that, with the contract being such a large document, 2 years to re-scrutinise it is not a lot of time if we are going to get into some of the nuts and bolts and make it better from a communities aspect. If we are going to be involved with this again, can we be really involved and focus on particular parts from the community perspective. That would be very welcome.

## CONFIDENTIAL

With regard to Project Neptune, it is good to hear that the First Minister is against de-bundling. CW replied that the First Minister had stood up in parliament and ruled out de-bundling, so that is the strongest statement on that. Rumours in the press that TS have been sitting on a finalised report for 5 months are not true. The final report was received last week and is being shared with CFL and CMAL. It will have a range of options that Ministers will consider in terms of ferry structure. The next step is to put the report to Ministers and for them to decide how we take it out and engage with stakeholders as to what the next steps might be. Involvement from the Communities Board, communities and stakeholders will not be something at the end of the process. The stakeholder group will be able to feed in at the start of the process so that we can gauge peoples' aspirations. It is true to say there is not a lot of time to do this and TS are looking at how to make the best use of this time or if there is a way of getting more time.

With regard to when the Project Neptune report will be in the public domain, CW's personal view is that it will be for the Ministers to decide on this. TS are keen to get it out and have engagement. If we were looking at a structural change of the bodes involved, this will not happen overnight. We don't want to focus on a structural change over other issues we highlighted earlier

DMacI referred back to new builds and the idea of getting another 2 Islay vessels. He would go for 3. Crew would be able to move between them and they would have all the same spare parts. People in the communities want new tonnage and a fleet without breakdowns.

CW replied that the feeling they are getting at the moment is for ordering another 2 vessels, not necessarily from the same yard. This is in our thinking. The £580m does not allow us to do that, so we need to know if we can get extra funding or what would need to be dropped to permit this to go ahead. If we can afford to buy more and are all agreed that this is the right solution, TS are open to exploring that.

KMacF asked if there was scope for money to be allocated to create extra fuel storage or food storage or fund small projects - inject some cash into an island. People have been spending quite large sums of money circumventing lack of CFL services - hiring planes and using RIBs. A decision is need on what is an acceptable level of a lifeline service and that has to impact on the whole aspect of compensation. This level of loss and personal cost cannot continue. This should be built into a service contract. There has to be a point which triggers a financial response and the operator pays for alternatives to get people off and on the island.

CFL's proposed cancellation policy where people are going to lose their whole booking fee if they cancel within 24 hours is appalling and sending out the wrong message at the wrong time. There is going to be a lot of push back from people against the current practices.

CW replied that he will pick up the point of an island resilience fund for food storage with the Islands team but was not sure how practical this would be. In terms of the cancellation policy, there is a balance in all of these things. We are trying to better use the deck space. Any measures being brought in are not meant to be punitive, but people should be encouraged only to book when they need to so that space that could be made available to other people is not lost. It is about influencing behaviours.

Regarding the outstanding TS actions on the action log – details of these are to be forwarded to CW/LK.

CW commented that TS continue to search for second hand tonnage but can only take something that is going to provide resilience and reliability. Things are not dismissed out of hand, but caution is required.

AC said that, having personally campaigned against the principle of unbundling, one of the advantages was to see resilience in the fleet.

He added that it would be very disappointing if the Community Board was not seen as an important part of the next contract.

Discussions had taken place about a joint meeting and he thought the communities would be glad to see that urgency was being placed on this.

### 3 CALMAC UPDATE

RD and PB joined the meeting

EO advised that he has spent his entire working career in the shipping industry; the last 23 in the ferry industry. He joined CMAL in 2006 just after the Scottish Government decided to split the ferry service into an asset owning company and operating company and was a Non-Executive Director from 2006 until the end of last year, after being Chairman for 7 years. He has also served on the Board of both Red Funnel and Wightlink. He was on the Board of the Isle of Man

## CONFIDENTIAL

Steam Packet Company before stepping down in 2018 and was appointed to the Board of Dover Port for 5 years. He also sits on the Board of the UK Chamber of Shipping. He is the CEO of a Danish organisation involved in land logistics and transportation.

AC welcomed EO to his post as Chairman of DML, thanked him for joining the meeting and looked forward to working with him.

RD said this has been an immensely difficult period with extremely poor weather and he appreciated how difficult the current situation is. He showed some slides which had been shared with the Transport Minister highlighting critical issues facing the company going forward. The point had been put to her that there are some fundamental issues that have to change because unless we see progress around vessels, the next few years are going to be very difficult.

BC asked if there was any indication of the cost to the communities of the company not being able to provide the resilience the communities need. RD replied that the company had shared a study it had done, but not the information BC refers to as the company does not have this information. If BC has information he can share, CFL would be happy to take this to the Minister in conjunction with Board members.

BC replied that communities are being lost, so the comparison has to be put forward between the cost of delivering an initiative and not delivering it. This year we have lost £3.5m GDP in 7-8 weeks. This does not count the social and health impacts, etc. We need to look at the cost of not delivering.

JP said there is a short-term problem of where we are now and when new tonnage is found or introduced. So far only one ferry has been sourced in 5-6 years. He asked if consideration had been given to looking for a freight vessel. PB replied that when we are searching for second hand tonnage, we do not limit ourselves to looking for a like for like capacity. What we might need to do is think differently about it. There has been some representation about a freight operator coming in to Islay – could we step in to look at the Pentalina model. All of these things are definitely in the mix, but there are still challenges. JP wanted to make it clear his point was not just about Islay.

RD added that all the brokers know we are looking for tonnage. There are only two on the market – Pentalina and Arrow, which is only available for a limited period and we have 3<sup>rd</sup> call on her. Loch Frisa is a very welcome addition but does not give a lot of additional capacity.

JP said a freight vessel would be cheaper to build. RD added it would also be cheaper to operate.

AC2 referred to the discussion with CW about flexibility. Can you bring something to TS to say how you could utilise alternative ways of crewing and running, so providing a service rather than a timetable.

PB said the company would always look to sail where weather windows allowed. For example, we sailed at 0230 hrs this morning. We have crew working outwith their normal schedules to get essential services to the islands. The weather windows available to us have been very limited and varied across the islands. RD added there is nothing in the contract to prevent us from running these additional services. Where we can we move off timetable and on to alternative services.

KMacF said she did not recognise the picture that had just been painted. Any kind of weather window where we get a sailing is quite rare. Perhaps that is down to the conditions at the pier. Berthing in Coll now in hours of darkness is apparently not permitted.

Another factor adding to peoples' distress and strain is that they keep being told the crew have to have rest hours.

The perception is that that is ok and understandable, but they will have been sitting in port for 3 days. Everybody on the islands has to deal with all the stuff that comes off the boat. The perception is that crew hours are looked after but the islanders are just left to get on with it.

RD appreciated that sometimes the ferries were coming in at awkward times, but we are entirely governed by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) and if we breach the rules, we would lose our licence to operate.

KMacF replied that there has to be an agreed level of a lifeline service. There has to be a balance between the rules and the lifeline service.

## CONFIDENTIAL

RD reiterated that the company cannot operate outwith the law and this would be the same for another operator.

PB added that there are some aspects of the contract that are quite limiting in how we can operate. Weather disruption has more flexibility. When the contract was awarded, we agreed changes to the contract to allow us to respond operationally with TS and we have regular dialogue with TS on this. Generally, they are always very accepting if we have taken a decision because it was best for the community. RD added that originally any additional sailing, no matter how small, had to be approved by TS. We went back and challenged this.

KMacF said the delivery of a lifeline service is also impacted by island people not being able to get away because the ferry is full. This is not just weather conditions, it can be due to fully booked ferries.

BC commented that Arran had an additional sailing last night at 0540 hrs. The impact of that was that they lost the last sailing last night and will lose a sailing tonight because of crew hours. If we go back to the earlier discussion when JP was talking about freight and we agreed this could be an option, it would require less resources. Is there no way we could look at the minimum number of staff and duplicate that on the key routes? This would give a bit of flexibility to communities that are feeling pressure.

RD said the company did present a paper to do that, but maybe this is something we have to present to TS again. There may be issues with accommodation and also running these ageing vessels.

BC responded that it comes back to the question of what is the cost of not doing it, but RD said that running elderly vessels even harder would break them.

AC sought clarification on working time rules. His understanding is that these are laid down by the MCA. In the islands, people work for other ferry companies and work longer hours, some working 12 hours on and 12 hours off. How do we deal with the perception there are different rules for CFL?

PB replied that there is a difference between whether it is a 2 on/2 off or 12 hours rota. Ship patterns vary. Pentland Ferries were more restrictive as they demanded maintenance time within these hours.

AC2 referred back to the flexibility piece and working round weather windows. We talked about demand on routes where things are adjusted. What can you do about bringing in extra crews to deal with this? What additional things can you bring in and do you need assistance from the Board to lobby TS? Is there a different crewing pattern that would allow things to work differently? RD replied that, if we were to look at relief crew, that would run into millions of pounds, but that is something we can raise with TS.

GR commented that she had always appreciated what the Board was told about how difficult things were for CFL, but she is finding it difficult to convince the communities that CalMac are doing what they can to support the communities.

RD replied that the company is now stepping into the space where we are saying things need to change. We are having these conversations, but they have not landed yet. We need to work with communities to build trust. We are speaking directly to the Minister and to other senior people in the Cabinet to say this requires significant investment.

GR replied that businesses are struggling because of Covid and non-reliability of ferries.

DH asked if, as a Board, they should be lobbying across the wider political range. RD replied that this should be done via the local MSPs. The Transport Minister is not in the Cabinet and we need to be influencing the entire government.

JP referred back to working hours, in particular the rules of fatigue, which he thought must be difficult to manage. Dates mentioned in the paper are 2014 and 2002 rules. Has anything much changed since then, particularly in regard to seafarer fatigue management? This imposes an additional burden about having this fairly open-ended statement about fatigue. We have been offered a sailing timetable which is more restricted in terms of crew than it was 4-5 years ago. Has something changed in relation to the law that makes it more difficult for you to deal with?

PB replied that there has been a bit of a change more from the perspective of compliance. We are audited every year to make sure we are complying with the rules. We have seen a significant

## CONFIDENTIAL

emphasis on fatigue. It is very difficult when it is open ended, but it is something that is clearly set out in the guidance and we have to take it into consideration. We found that the particular example you are referencing, the ongoing sustained high level of demand being placed on crew was not sustainable and was impacting on fatigue and this raised the flag that we had to make a change. There has been no change in the law, but a change in the importance of that and how it is looked at by the MCA.

RD added that fatigue is an increasing challenge and something the MCA is much more aware of than they were in the past. We are trying to limit when we interrupt a person's 2 weeks off. It is up to us to make sure we have the right numbers of crew available so that we drive down levels of overtime.

BC referred to the earlier discussion with CW about perhaps getting TS/CFL/CMAL together with the Board to talk through what we can do. From CFL's perspective, it would be useful to know what your top topics would be to service the communities' demands and needs and if you could prepare that with an indication of cost. RD confirmed he would be happy to participate in this meeting.

KMacF asked if there would be meaningful consultation on the proposed cancellation policy. RD replied that full consultation would be run through the formal ferry committee process.

PB said she was hoping to go out from next week for meetings with ferry committees to get feedback on the proposals so that we can make sure this is fed into what we are proposing.

It was pointed out that Diane Burke had committed to giving a breakdown of cancellations by route. The Board would like to have this information.

RD replied that the pack for consultation will address the data information point.

AC commented that all Community Board members should be included in the consultation as not all members are included in ferry committees.

PB shared a presentation on timetables and discussed the idea of setting up a short life working group to look at the issues around timetables in a more holistic way. She is looking for volunteers to join this group.

AC will ask members to self-nominate on to this group and advise PB. It would be good to maximise the geographical areas represented.

AC2 asked for thoughts on making the process more transparent. PB replied that this is the type of feedback we need. If this is something we need to work on and improve we will work with you to do that. RD commented that the important thing to note is that we have TS buy-in to this. We have put the case to them strongly that the system is broken, and we want to change it. We don't want to tweak around the edges, we want to fix it properly.

RD shared slides on Ar Turas.

The company is working on a timetable for implementation. Go live has been delayed due to the inability to carry out training due to Covid.

AC2 asked if we were now looking at the winter timetable for starting this. RD said the company did not want to commit to a date because we want to do it properly and consult with everyone. We are working through the process, but we are almost at a point where we can come out and communicate.

AC2 asked if there was a point to implementing it on non-bookable routes. RD replied that the company had explored all of the opportunities, but it would be too difficult system-wise to have our staff operating two systems.

AC2 said it is important that the company communicates with the communities to manage expectations as their thoughts were that it would be in place for the summer to make things better.

BC commented that this is a customer facing system. The sub-group working with Robin offered to do a beta test on the system. If possible, can this be incorporated at a fairly early stage? Having been involved in this before, a beta test brings out things that may not otherwise come to light. RD thanked BC for the offer and was keen that customers were using the system and seeing where the flaws are. We will make sure this happens.



## CONFIDENTIAL

JP said the Board also had one or two questions about, for example, statistics and how utilisation may be reported. Is there any way of bringing out unmet demand? There are a couple of loose ends we didn't tie up. Could this be referred to Angela/Robin? RD asked for them to be referred to him and we will get that set up again.

KMacF asked if an assurance could be given that every small island community will be visited to trial or show this system to people. RD replied that the logistics are still being looked at, but the aspiration is to go out to every community.

AC thanked RB and PB for their attendance.

## 4 CMAL UPDATE

KH and BF joined the meeting.

KH had previously circulated a list of items to be discussed. He advised that every 6-9 months the CMAL representatives would provide a detailed update, but today will just cover a bullet point list of changes.

### Tiree

BF advised the shelter is being put back on the pier and should be in place by the end of Q2.

### HYSEAS III

String testing started at the beginning of December and will be complete by the end of Q2 2002.

### MV Utne (Loch Frisa)

There will be a two-week period in drydock pushed back to mid-March meaning all contingency is used up to have her out before Easter. Components are coming from China. The vessel is destined for the Oban-Craignure route. Cllr Mary-Jean Devon will be leading CMAL's naming process and the local primary schools are involved. The competition winner will be attending as will the winners from the 3 age groups of the art competition. The winner of the competition will also receive £1,500 to donate to a local charity as part of CMAL's CSR Fund.

### Islay vessels

KH is involved in contract discussions in London today. He has visited all of the relevant yards in Europe to ensure everything is done properly. The preferred bidder will be announced at the end of March. The first vessel is expected in the second half of 2024 and potentially the 2<sup>nd</sup> one will be ready in early 2025.

### Mallaig-Lochboisdale

This entails a replacement for "Lord of the Isles" and also some work on Mallaig harbour and at Lochboisdale. Fender works are being completed at Lochboisdale in order to extend its life until Gasay is formally opened.

### Gourock-Dunoon-Kilcreggan

Concept design should be completed Q2, 2022.

### Brodick old pier

Mobilisation expected this month. Work should take 4 months depending on weather. KH advised a planning application for a permanent toilet block has been submitted, but there is insufficient water supply resulting in an application to drill bore holes, which is a concern to SEPA, etc. BC offered to write a letter in support of the application. KH welcomed any support but advised there have been no issues so far.

### Castlebay ferry terminal building

Should be completed within Q1, 2022.

### Claonaig toilets

CMAL has committed to make sure there will at least be a temporary solution in place for the summer season. This will be on either side of the road. The main build will be on the site of the current waiting room.

### Colonsay fender repairs

These are almost complete.

### Gourock-Dunoon

Work is on track and will ensure resilience of the port.

AC2 asked if Gourock would be able to be used as a port of refuge for 801 as well as the Bute ferry and BF confirmed this was the case.

## CONFIDENTIAL

### Troon

Installation of new fenders and decking should be complete by the end of March. A temporary terminal building will be on site during May 2022. This will allow work to be done at Ardrossan.

### Small vessel replacement programme

The first reference group meeting has taken place. This group will meet quarterly and then a decision will be taken on what the cascade of reference groups is going to be. The first tranche will be 6-7 small vessels. There is no priority list, but Largs-Cumbrae is near the top. CMAL may group some together with regard to consultation. Three slightly more complex vessels will be classed as Euro B.

CD joined the meeting

EMacN asked if CMAL have a programme to install or upgrade electrical vehicle points. KH advised any port being upgrade will have charging points included. One issue is that some places do not have a lot of capacity, which is a primary consideration. CMAL are doing what they can as quickly as they can. All of the existing chargers are being replaced – the company has received a Government grant to do this.

DMacI asked if Loch Frisa was still within budget and if she would have shore-based crew. If so, are there any issues with that? KH replied that costs are within budget. The vessel has 4 cabins and they will still be useable. CFL usually have people ashore but they have said they would rather not use the cabins. From the deck side there are enough people to have shore-based crew, but there is an issue with engineers. CFL have tried very hard to get the crew totally shore based but if there are not enough people with the relevant tickets on the island there is nothing that can be done.

JP said that one of the topics that came up this morning was the need to continue to look for 2<sup>nd</sup> hand tonnage to improve resilience throughout the fleet. Is this something that is being led by CMAL or CFL? If it is CMAL, is the remit for what you are looking for a fairly broad one?

KH replied that CMAL lead on this. They have 7 different ship brokers looking for ships. KH went through the process of how they analyse the ships. If they find something that becomes interesting, they have to get CFL and TS involved. Funding is required to buy the vessel, carry out any work required on it and then run the extra vessel. The 7 brokers cover the globe. Over the last 4-5 years we have been offered around 600 vessels. About 50% of these fall away quickly as being not suitable. For the other 50% we approach the brokers to ask for further details, General Arrangement, propulsion details, etc as well as classification details. At that stage we lose about another 40%. We then go into deeper detail, so we look at the gap analysis and where it is going to be brought from. In the past 5 years we have visited 12 vessels and out of that, we have bought one.

EO added the challenge is that ferries are a special breed of ship and sometimes they are made for specific routes and are kept there until they are at end of life.

JP said we spoke earlier about the possibility of a freight boat rather than a passenger ferry. KH confirmed they were looking at everything, but freight boats are more difficult than ferries and he wasn't aware of any that would fit any of the ports.

CMAL are keeping an eye on Arrow which is likely to become available in 18 months' time.

AC asked if any consideration was being given to building freight vessels across the piece. KH replied that CMAL have a full-blown ferry design for replacing Heliar and Hildasay.

These could then cascade to other routes. Consideration is being given to freighters and that would provide cascade opportunities for the Northern Isles.

### Fergusons

It is hoped to have an indication of how long the delay to the vessels might be within the next couple of weeks. Any delay to 801 has an impact on 802.

AC asked if there were any issues with warranties. KH replied that, by now, most will have expired, but the suppliers have to warranty the equipment. If the shipyard provides the warranty, they are responsible for fixing anything that goes wrong. The MCA will not issue a passenger certificate to a ship that is not safe.

DMacI asked when the clock started ticking on the Lloyd's 5-year certificate. KH replied that ships have to go to drydock before they go on sea trials. The docking might take longer. This is allowed for in the plan provided by the shipyard last year.

BF advised that a further update is due to be given to the Parliamentary Committee at the end of March.

## CONFIDENTIAL

### Cascades

AC asked where the decision making on vessel cascades sits. KH replied that, according to the contract, it sits with CFL. The way the build programme is going, he could see a requirement for a spare vessel for the balance of this decade. One of the new Islay vessels will mean Finlaggan will be surplus to requirements and it will be CFL who will decide where that goes.

KMacF said we have discussed as a Board that we would try to understand this information and go back to our communities. There is not much light at the end of the tunnel. If and when 801 and 802 come into service what difference will that make? 801 is to replace Isle of Arran, 802 is destined to go up to Uig, although there is some push back on that. KH said CMAL are pushing very hard for more money and will be placing 2 orders for 2 ships in March. Looking at probably Q3 2024 to get the first Islay vessel and Q4 2024/Q1 2025 for the second. We will keep looking for second hand tonnage but, if nothing appears, people are going to be waiting approx. 30 months.

DMacI commented that TS had said this morning if they could get the money there was a possibility of another two Islay type vessels and asked if the yards CMAL are looking at would be able to accommodate that. KH said they had narrowed down to one yard and they would be able to do it.

AC2 asked if the new build vessels had accommodation to be able to run 24/7 if they had to. KH confirmed that they did not. AC2 queried if that limited them for future-proofing. KH replied that doubling up on everything adds a lot of weight to the vessel and can affect the carriage of freight. CMAL was asked to do that for Loch Seaforth but have not been asked to do it now. If we renew the fleet as quickly as we can then you won't have the problems you have now. The ships are capable of running 24 hours if you take the crew element out of it. 801 and 802 are built for single crew.

AC expressed his appreciation to KH and BF for their input to the meeting.

## 5 COMMUNITIES REPORTING

### Uist

Major issue has been disruption due to technical issues and has been made worse by weather and Covid. The other big issue is consultation for the outage at Uig. The closure has been put back. We are at the end of February and nobody can plan because we don't know when it is going to happen. People are not happy with the way it has been handled and feel CFL should have had plans in place.

RD advised that CFL is still waiting for timescales to be agreed. There has been some discussion about when the work is going to happen, and we have advised we are not going out to consultation until we know when that will be. We have asked Highland Council to confirm their timetables and then we can go out to consult.

GR asked if it was the case that until Highland Council and the contractor came back with information there would be no proposals put forward and RD confirmed that was correct. The company cannot consult if we don't know what we are consulting on. Any pressure the communities could put on Highland Council would be appreciated.

AC suggested he might bring this up at his meeting with the Minister.

JoP asked if Highland Council had given any indication when they might respond to CFL. RD advised dates had been given but had all been missed. He assumed they are going through a negotiation with their contractor.

AC pointed out the Board is to have a Western Isles meeting with the MSP and the matter could be raised there.

KP said his understanding was they were looking at 20 weeks, possibly 18 weeks, over the winter period, but they had not come back with the dates yet. He suggested approaching TS & CMAL to find out who the contractors are and push it that way.

With regard to second-hand tonnage, KP asked if there was another ferry company who could operate alongside CFL. RD replied that, if a company had spare tonnage, they would have leased it to us. The fact is that they don't have ferries that will fit our shallow ports. EO added that companies cannot commit to a charter because any spare tonnage has to be available to go into service at very short notice.

### Islay

JP advised there are some timetable issues going on. Exceptional growth has been seen in the commercial area, but we are not seeing that reflected in any additional allowance in the timetable.

## CONFIDENTIAL

We attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> reference group meeting about the new vessel due in 2024. There is a slight concern that there is major work required on one of our ports which is not due to start until the end of 2024. We have raised this as an issue and await developments.

We have spoken locally and with CFL and others about freight boats and night freight and these discussions which are ongoing are all taking these into account.

CFL local staff do a great job and CMAL have been very good on the communication front with regard to the new ships.

We are suffering because of resilience issues – we currently have a one vessel service instead of two.

### Bute/Cowal

There was a long period in the winter when we were down to a half service.

Loch Dunvegan has been re-engined and is proving more resilient on the Colintraive-Rhubodach service.

Weather has not affected us as much as other areas.

Capacity – our main haulier has indicated the potential for more runs this summer.

DH asked if there was any movement on Covid cleaning restrictions. RD advised that cleaning is not the issue. It is staff having to isolate through Test & Protect and having to find alternative crew. DH raised the 25-minute turnaround times and RD advised this would change from 25 March.

DH apologised for what had appeared in the press about services becoming bookable, but noted it highlighted the depth of feeling surrounding this.

A ferry committee meeting had taken place and attendees were grateful to Tommy and Alison for taking part. A good discussion took place on the timetable.

### Small Isles

The community had been badly affected by tidal restrictions because of the need to dredge the approach to the Small Isles. The Council has committed to doing this, but it has not been done yet, so more disruption is expected.

The timetable has been a complete disaster.

Lochnevis has done a double run in the summer for years, but we were told in December that it cannot be done anymore. CFL had commissioned a report by Safety at Sea which confirmed the double run was no longer possible because the vessel is older, and the run is too long. Following strong representation on this CFL has gone back to TS and we understand they are proposing to add a double crew. The first problem is to find a crew that can man the Lochnevis and the other issue is the timetable for the vessel on Saturdays is about 2 hours later than last year.

People would arrive on the island in the afternoon and then the ferry would not come back until after 2300 hrs. Why can't we all sit round the table and sort things out quickly?

On the positive side, we have dialogue with the Area Manager and Port Manager on a regular basis which allows problems to be sorted out. We can explain the issue and at least there is a dialogue which is really useful and helps with communication.

### ICIA

We have been told that freight and volume will remain the same, but the transparency we were expecting through the ICIA is not happening. CFL seems to have been allowed to do what they want because they are not legally required to undertake an ICIA. We are in the process of writing our response to the freight team and will share this with the Community Board.

RD advised that he was supposed to have had a meeting with Kate Forbes MSP today. We think we are getting to a solution on the Small Isles which is equivalent to what they had before. On the ICIA, we will subscribe to the principles of the ICIA, but these principles are really unclear. There is a lack of good evidence, but we will continue to work with the Islands Team. The rest of the network is on hold and we are going to go out and consult properly.

CD pointed out that the Lochnevis is struggling to meet the needs of the community. It is appreciated the company has lots of issues, but we need to start a conversation on replacing the

## CONFIDENTIAL

vessel and having a vessel that is dedicated to freight. RD replied this was in the VRDP in 2014. The company is aligned with you on that and can take it forward with TS.

AC commented that the ICIA has not been properly tested. TS have the responsibility to make sure it is done correctly, and you have the right to go to government about it. RD replied that the company is trying its best to align to the requirements. CD replied that what is coming back from CFL now is not what they said at the start.

### Tiree

Main issues are weather and Clansman being in dock for an extended period. A lot of weather disruptions have been experienced which has been very frustrating for the community as there have been days where it has been flat calm and the vessel has been sitting in Oban. There have been issues where extra ferries have been put on at the last minute which were not bookable through the website. People had to call the call centre and there were issues getting through and the lines closed at 1900 hrs. There was frustration with communications not being issued early enough to make people aware of extra sailings being put on or ferries being cancelled.

DMacI suggested looking at moving drydocking periods around next year. RD replied that vessels can be moved forward, but not back, however, it is very challenging to move vessels around and, in addition, they are spending a longer time in drydock.

DMacI raised the issue of changes to fares which meant it was costing a fortune for a local from Tiree whose vehicle measured 6.3m to go back to the mainland. RD advised that this had been referred to TS who had advised there were to be no exceptions. It is TS who set the charges.

### Arran

BC said the approach on demand management is perceived to be penalising everyone. CFL must know the usual offenders so there will be a request to take that approach first. Pet limitation are another issue, particularly for day trippers.

We are going to lose our primary berth in Ardrossan for at least 2 weeks in March because the linkspan needs significant work. The secondary berth is the oldest one. We have been advised Gourrock is considered an alternative port, not a port of refuge. When we get the new vessel, we probably won't have it in service until late 2024/early 2025 so our service is going to be restricted for the next 3-4 years.

There was a trial last year on meals – grab a bag and go. It was thought not to be the best option but during the refit the servery was changed, and you can now get your breakfast on a plate or in a bag, which has gone down well.

### Benbecula

JoP advised that GR had covered most of the points. The main thing to highlight is that both of them were invited to a meeting in North Uist and the strength of feeling is running high and they are planning on doing some radical things – exactly what is unclear at the moment.

### Lewis

MMacL said the main issue has been cancellations due to adverse weather. Increase in cost for motorhomes has been welcomed.

Over the summer there is a bit of worry about capacity issues and how that might be impacted by the ticketing system as it might not be so flexible. He also commented on the lack of a voice from anyone from the islands on the DML Board.

CFL are being pilloried for things that have nothing to do with them. People do not know the difference between CFL and others – education is required.

### Harris

RC said there is despair and frustration in this community as there is across the whole network with continued breakdowns, Covid and weather. There is frustration that no solutions are being offered by TS or the government. Questions around second hand tonnage are growing – is it a funding issue? People are looking for a realistic update on when the new vessels will be in service. Issues specific to Harris are the Hebrides breakdowns and the overlap in drydock for Loch Bhrusda and Loch Portain. Weather has had a huge impact. This is understood but frustrating on top of everything else.

Reduced capacity on summer timetable due to reduced use of the mezzanine deck. Pre-Covid timetable needs to be reintroduced and it is believed this is being reviewed.

There has been no offer of an extra sailing on Ullapool-Stornoway during the works. There is no capacity to take traffic from Harris. It is believed there may be a solution in March.

There is a continued push for a 2-vessel service on the Uig triangle.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Community also despairs at the lack of island representation on the DML Board.

RD said the company understands the feelings expressed. Many of our people live in the communities. We want to work with you to take the message to TS because that is where it needs to be heard.

### Barra

EMacN mentioned Barratlanic and the Co-op and highlighted how the weather and disruptions have affected them. They are laying off staff and cutting hours.

With regard to weather windows, EMacN wanted to thank CFL for putting on a sailing at 0230 in the morning – this was gratefully received.

He also thanked Gordon McKillop, CalMac and RD for much needed funding for the communities.

### Coll

KMacF highlighted a new issue on Coll, where the Skipper had announced he was sailing, but he was only going to Tiree and sailed past Coll. You cannot underestimate the damage a missed call can do to an island. When people think the ferry is just not going to make any effort to berth it can cause frustration. We have to try to think out of the box and find something which would be more resilient. We need a breakwater in Coll.

### Cumbræ

AC2 had lots of concerns about Ar Turas but thinks a solution has been found. It is frustrating it will not be in place for the summer.

No contribution from CalMac to toilets that crew have to use.

Covid breaks to be removed from the timetable.

Season tickets cancelled – people are still campaigning and discussing how to take this forward.

Biggest frustration is the issue of weather windows.

Community missed out on timetable updates – this is being taken up with Demi.

### Kintyre

IMacF commented that this has been an interesting and comprehensive meeting.

Two meetings were held in Oban and Tarbert and it was apparent how little people understand the effect disruption has on the islands. Is there something we can do to raise awareness amongst the general population on the mainland? AC commented this point was well made. More understanding of what the impacts are would be beneficial.

## 6 SUB-GROUP REPORTING

### Communications

IH has circulated a paper about communications issues and would welcome comments on this.

### CalMac Website

The Board is still referred to as the CalMac Community Board on the website. RD will have this fixed.

RD

### Socio-economic report

AC had passed round a note from the consultants and dates were given when they will be out in the network. The next meeting with the consultants is due next Thursday. AC to be advised of any issues in advance of the meeting.

All

EO asked for an update on the socio-economic report. RD will pass the report to EO.

RD

### Proposed joint meeting

A joint meeting between the Ferries Community Board and the DML Board will take place in June.

### Impact assessment information gathering

KMacF said there is a desire to get a more detailed handle on these costs – weather cancellations, technical cancellations, people not being able to get a booking. The compensatory

## **CONFIDENTIAL**

scheme that CalMac has is probably under-used. We are trying to work towards real figures and develop a simple programme that could be applied across the board.

AC thought it would have to be tested in one area and terms of reference would have to be drawn up.

KMacF said there is a definite push from the community to start looking at some form of compensation for the very real losses being suffered, which look like they might go on for a number of years.

BC asked if this was something that could be put to the people who are doing the socio-economic report. AC will have a conversation with the consultants. It might also be work having a conversation with HITRANS.

## **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AC looking to interview someone to give a bit of added representation in the Board. The interview process will be done over the next month.

EO said he was happy to have been invited to this session. It has been a long day, but extremely fruitful to listen in to the debate and get a feeling for the sentiments conveyed from the islands.

He has been in office for 1½ months so it is still a steep learning curve.

He has attended his first DML Board meeting and one other Board member has still to join.

He wanted to acknowledge that there is significant frustration. If there is a perception that CFL is doing nothing, then that is something we need to change.

DMacI said we expect significant increases in traffic in the summer which will add to the pressure and the need for communication when we have sailing disruptions.

EO said a lot of this is dealing with symptoms and we will have to do this for a while.

Short term challenges include operational efficiencies, crewing issues, short term charters, second hand tonnage, freight service and night service. The root causes are many years of under-investment in the fleet and delays to 801 & 802.

We have the challenge that there are 3 different organisations working to provide the service to the islands. EO will put efforts into making these 3 organisations work together and put as much pressure as possible onto TS to get additional funding.

With regard to Board representation, if TS want to appoint people from the islands to the Board, it is at the Minister's sole discretion. The company does not have any influence on that.

My intention is trying to get the DML Board and this Board to work closely together as you can convey how the situation is in the communities and engage with the rest of the Board in CalMac to try to improve things.

AC thanked EO for attending. All members appreciated that he had spent the whole day with us. This gives us comfort that our messages are getting through. We take a very positive attitude to making things better. We want to walk alongside yourselves, TS and CMAL and help to make it better and our frustration is that sometimes this offer is not taken up. We want to use our time to make a constructive contribution. If there is anything this Board can do to help, be assured of our willingness to do it. Our sights are set on having a better outcome.

No further business was raised, and the meeting closed at 1620 hrs.

## **12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for 27 May 2022.