

MINUTES of the FERRIES COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING
held on Friday 6 December at 0900 hrs
at The Glendoch Hotel and on Microsoft Teams.

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

Present:

Angus Campbell - Chair (AC)
Angus Campbell (AC2)
Bill Calderwood (BC)
David Herriot (DH)
Donnie MacInnes (DMacI)
Gail Robertson (GR)
Jim Porteous (JP)
Joanna Peteranna (JoP)
Kevin Peach (KP)
Kirsty MacFarlane (KMacF)
Rhoda Campbell (RC)

In attendance:

Blair Moglia (BM) – CMAL
Brian Fulton (BF) – CMAL
Morag McNeil (MMcN) - CMAL
Duncan Mackison (DM) – Chief Executive, CalMac
Robert Morrison (RM) – CalMac
Ailsa Stephen (AS) – CalMac
Chris Wilcock (CW) – Transport Scotland
Trevor McIlhattan (TMcI) – Transport Scotland

Apologies:

Murdo MacLean (MM)
Mary-Jean Devon (MJD)

1 GOVERNANCE

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies from Mary-Jean Devon and from Murdo MacLean.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

GR declared an interest as a haulier and AC2 declared interest as working in consultancy for CMAL for supplies and electric ferries.

1.3 Minutes of meetings held on 13 September and Matters Arising

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

1.4 Actions from previous meeting

Matters marked as closed to be removed from the list.

2 FUTURE ROLE OF THE FCB

2.1 Tri-partite discussion on the role of the Ferries Community Board

AC opened the discussion, reflecting on 7 years as part of the Board. It is a significant investment for members in terms of time and contribution. He noted some of the experience and skills of those in attendance. We [the FCB] have spent the majority of our lives living and working around the ferry services. This Board is a unique and valuable tool. We have tried to work hospitably and engage with the various organisations, and we want to continue to do this. We remember where the Board began and its purpose. He read a statement from the Young Islander's Network (YIN) to reflect the FCBs shared view on lack of output from consulting.

He continued; we have great concerns about where this process is going. Where will the community voice fit into the new setup? At the pace we are moving, there has not been the opportunity to have assurance on this. It does not need to be a Ferries Community Board – but there must be a way of enhancing the community voice.

DM began, from a CFL and DML perspective there is absolutely a desire to have a Community Board, or a version of it. It is very important for many reasons, and historically, that is why it was created. Where are we now, and where do we want to go? The Community Board has moved away from the original Terms of Reference, and this has gained momentum in recent years. As CEO, I need to engage with the Board, knowing clearly what the terms and sponsorship is. What has fuelled the change in direction for the FCB, is the exceptional pressure that the network is under. Therefore, there has never been as much of a desire to tackle issues properly. As that pressure has mounted, that has changed how the Boards act and we must find a way to bring them back together. For me, the Board is a conduit for information and passenger information, not an oversight or audit body that reaches into the organisation.

AC commented on moving away from having 'CalMac' in the FCB name was important from the start. The changes we made to the title, to become an independent Board was to emphasise that communities can speak to us. It was done with the necessary approval when it was proposed. We have the right to express the views of the community and ask for accountability and a response to what communities raise with us.

DM replied, having discussed this with our Chair (DML), his view is as I have described. This has not landed with the DML Board and is not understood in those terms. It is understood that there is a degree of independence, but the scale of it has not been codified. This is the part we need to be clear about.

AC raised the concern of being seen as a tool of the organisation, or too closely linked to the organisation.

DM said that within the role of accountability, we need to be clear about appropriate insight information and how that accountability is exercised and the way it is. I am not in disagreement with you, we just need to be clear on these aspects.

CW gave the Transport Scotland view and reflected on Ministerial feedback about this. The FCB are very much valued and welcomed the FCB having its independence. We do not see the organisation as a tool of any other body. If that was the case, it would not be workable for anyone. The independence is exercised in a trusted partner space. We can work on how to support the FCB by the organisations involved and give some thought into what this might look like – future structure and appointments for example. Ministers are keen to find a solution that works. Strategically, having that voice, is extremely helpful. He gave the example of having a resilience vessel as an example where the Board's influence was very important in resisting the temptation to put a vessel on a timetabled route. There is a list of future issues where the community voice would be very much appreciated.

AC agreed that a resilience vessel is something that the FCB has recognised from the beginning. The political pressure to use it for a route is not helpful for anyone. The FCB have proven that we can think in that strategic space. Under-22 Travel, Connectivity, health service provision – all big issues that we are keen to push forward, ensuring capacity is driven by island needs and not the operator. We have given evidence at Parliamentary Committees and have had good Ministerial relationships.

CW said that a challenge for us all is the time it takes for progress to happen. That is underpinning all of this, and the view of having the Minister's ear is something that I see the Board as having very strongly. There are ways to strengthen that, and the Cabinet Secretary is happy to meet and work on that basis. The Board helps to keep items on the agenda, and this is a key function.

AC added that Erik Ostergaard had encouraged the FCB to continue political work due to the level of interaction we get.

BF commented that the FCB mattered to him as being involved in the introduction of the Board, 7 years ago. For context, it was not the construct of CalMac wanting the community voice. It came from visits to the islands in the bid stage of CHFS2. There was a lot of engagement and consistent feedback was that they were not listened to, and they needed a voice, directly to the DML Board. Beyond that, we have a term of reference and we can try to work out what that should now be. But those terms were built from consultation with islands, councils and community councils. We recruited based on those terms too. There needs to be strict ownership and strict governance. There was never the notion that it was a CalMac owned body – it was always independent, just not by name, at the beginning which was a lesson to learn. Unless you bring the governance along with that independence, it can change to a separate entity entirely, which it cannot be. It needs to move properly from one space to the next. Finally, CMAL were not part of the thinking around the Community Board. It has been of great value to have direct access to the Community Voice, and we have taken a lot away from it. We engage far and wide and do it in the context

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of Ferry Stakeholder Groups. From a CMAL perspective, we will engage with whatever construct the FCB takes.

AC agreed – it is important to have a Community Board embedded in the new contract, in some form. It should be a recognisable part of the set up. It is difficult for Board members to go back into their own communities and speak about strategic topics. It is challenging to take negative news back to the community. We ask all our members if they are prepared to do this.

TM noted that all parties recognise the role of the FCB and suggested regularising engagement in the shorter-term and tightening up governance. We formally reference the FCB in the contract and the fact that support will be provided to that group. For example, an innovation group where the FCB can inform and bring forward ideas and proposals. When we sit down next week, we can hopefully provide more comfort around this. Nothing is set in stone, but we are reaching a more settled position.

CW said that there are differing views on the direct award. It gives so much more flexibility to Ministers to influence the contract as it evolves across the year, with the relatively strict contract terms that we currently have.

AC: flexibility is welcomed by the Board. We would be keen to understand how quickly changes can happen. On a direct award, we reflected on the consultation that 72% of communities did not support a direct award but we were pragmatic, and we start work on how to make that arrangement the best it can be for the needs of communities.

CW reflected on some of the communications with the Board of late. In some cases, we are still evolving our thinking on parts of the contract – it is not the case that these are decided before we come to you. They are still being worked on and it is still within the gift of the FCB to feed into how the process will work.

AC commented that business as usual is not acceptable to communities and want to see change sooner, rather than later.

JoP said that it is positive to hear of the commitment to having a Ferries Community Board. I am encouraged to hear about the innovation group, however the reason there are frustrations from the Board come from the time taken. We have waited so long for vessels and have had empathy for CalMac being so stretched. We just want basic things, such as communications and being able to book a ticket. These issues make it difficult for us to operate at a strategic level when the basics are not fixed.

BC commented on this period being a proving ground, to change or adjust our understanding on how we collectively work to improve. We hope that we can provide positive impetus to decision making and we need to feed into the replenishment of the service. We are looking at how we can constructively input into decision making. While it may come across as harsh, the reality for communities is uncertainty.

CW expressed a preference for engagement – having the tripartite in the room, as we have collective responsibility. What worries me most is the view that people think with all the new boats coming in, that this is the end of the story when it is not. The voice of the FCB is needed to remind and bring home the point that the job is not done.

AC agreed that the best format seems to be having all parties together, and we have tried in recent meetings to go in that direction.

MMcN reiterated CW's view, being clear that the work is not done, and significantly more funding is required. The later funding comes, the more that is needed to deliver the same, with inflation. In every conversation we have with Transport Scotland (TS) and with the Minister, we make the point that more funding must become available. We are conscious that the second stage of the SVRP is critical now and we make the points on a weekly basis. We are all in violent agreement that there is a place for the FCB. Understanding what we want the Community Board to be, what the voice is and how it will be expressed is important. It is critical to understand how the Board are perceived by communities – this is something we can collectively look at and work on. It is critical that the governance and support given to the Board is worked on urgently if it is to fit into the CHFS3 contract.

RM commented on the positive discussion and positive agreement about the continuation of the Ferries Community Board. The importance of having the tripartite together to discuss, agree and conclude is a huge step. Finally, a great part of my new role is a closeness that you have not had with the operator. He alluded to the role that BF held previously, and this is a gap that needs filled. We are committed to filling that gap and giving some leverage to work on the frustrations.

KMacF commented on the long-term trend of communities not feeling heard. This is a legacy that will take time to turn around and communities recognise some of the constraints. CalMac are the first point of contact for complaints, and we sympathise with that. The FCB have been drawn down into the operational points. It should be strategic discussions about issues that we feel will have widespread benefit. We recognise the frustration of our own communities that the operational is not being sorted and we are astonished at the creation of a new website and app. There are more important things to be sorted. The structure of CalMac and the structure that will go forward to the new contract is an important part of where our communities see their future. The staffing and running of CalMac is something that I believe is critical to get right at community level. How can people engage with CalMac, and how can CalMac respond? People are conscious that there is a lot of work to be done before October.

JP added that it is good to see a willingness from CalMac to make positive changes, and we are seeing those happening. Engagement has improved in some respects. Going back to our purpose, and the credibility of the Board – it is important to have it defined. We must have the same credibility and purpose defined with communities. There needs to be positive reconstruction on the purpose of the Board, and we need some positive PR behind us – perhaps involving the tripartite. We can be a sounding board for the website and from a community perspective, we can input into projects such as Ar Turas. We did offer to help but were turned down.

AC reminded the Board that they underestimate themselves. The consultation done across the network produced many times the response that Transport Scotland achieved at some of theirs. I agree, we must look at ourselves and see what we can do to support. We should do more community meetings.

DM spoke personally, expressing that he was proud to take on CalMac, but it is a challenging time, and not a straightforward task. We need to find a way to separate tactical day to day discussions where input is needed, and the long-term strategic ones. There are a whole range of questions around competence, capability, what has happened in the past and the rate of organisational change, and all its components. I am happy to expose the organisation to this and to being challenged. The booking system for example – how is it reviewed and reflected upon? What is the best way to independently review it.

JoP noted the agreement for the need for a Board, but also the need for Change. Given the time pressure, she suggested engagement with Scottish Futures Trust to support the right group of representatives from TS, CMAL and CalMac to workshop what the future should look like. [Action]

RC [in Teams Chat] commented that she was encouraged by the positive comments towards the work of the FCB and its integral part within the new contract. Communities need reassurance that their voices are heard and acted upon. One of the priorities going forward is guaranteed investment in the service and vessels.

CW and TMcl agreed to reflect on the idea of an independent workshop facilitator.

BF commented that we must also consider Ferry Committees when workshoping this. It cannot be done in isolation but there should be a broader piece including the FSGs as well.

CW said that TS have been looking at how to best engage – out stakeholder engagement strategy. We have had feedback about Ferry Stakeholder Groups, and there is something to be done around how we engage on a network-wide level with a wider range of people. During Covid, we had a good setup with the 4 local authorities and for some time, we have been thinking of how we can evolve this to have the 4 bodies represented in some way – Scottish Government, TS, CMAL and CalMac. I view getting the FCB correct as coming first.

BF agreed, that supports the strategic top level. Due to there being such a diverse group of Ferry Committees, if you do not also recognise that, people can get drawn down into operational conversations.

CW agreed, and plugging the gaps where Ferry Committees do not exist.

GR commented on trust waning over the years. We should be allowed to ask questions and have actions fed back from the operator. It is difficult to draw a line between operational and strategic.

DM said that the difficulty is presenting a solution to a problem, but the recipients of the message do not agree, it may not be a case of not listening. Not listening is not the same as one party not liking the answer that they have been given – particularly with tactical issues. We must get to a point where we can have a plan and execute it with trust and confidence. We must respond to fact, rather than opinion and it can only come from a place of genuine expertise.

GR commented that the expertise can come from people in the community. Not all is opinion – a lot of it is fact.

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AC commented that CFL release press statements that the Board do not agree with and do not act upon. We do have the right to comment. Ferry provision to the islands and lifeline services do not belong to one group – they belong to us all. The mechanisms to provide this service invites us all to comment on it. We have been under pressure to do more public meetings.

AC2 discussed transparency and accountability. This is where some of the community frustration comes. How successful is the CHFS contract and how do we audit what CalMac do. From a community point of view, where is the challenge? Who can see the performance and criticise it for improvement? As a Board, we struggle to find this information and when people ask us questions about CHFS2 extension and its considerations, we have no answers. Where is the transparency around decision making related to CHFS?

DM said that this is what needs to be defined. Clarity around that, so that I know what holds me to account and you need confidence that that activity is being discharged in the right way. That piece is what is missing in the remit. It was not anticipated by the original Board terms of reference but is something that can be designed for the future. We need to get to a point where that information is circulated, and those responsibilities are discharged in a way that gives confidence and acceptance.

BM expanded on the point made by JoP about workshopping. I am unsure if we are inclusive of all the other forums (Ferry committees, FSGs) – without trying to silo ourselves, is there a way we can go into the wider communities to gauge opinion on the FCB and using their feedback, as we did when the FCB was introduced.

AC asked, if you have a negative reaction where do you go with it?

TMcl commented that responses were negative, and respondents were not sure what the Community Board was all about. We need to work on that.

CW agreed – something is needed, an annual report or a list of what the FCB have been engaging on and what has been delivered as a result. Partially or through influence.

RM referred to the Terms of Reference, which mentions a bi-annual report.

CW said that it is about providing the support to allow the FCB to do this. Not to ghost write or write on your behalf, but to support with the production of that report. We underpin this with the administrative/technical/comms support. This would not be to influence, just to support in getting the message out.

MMcN returned to the point on trust. This comes from everyone having a different perception of what the Board do now. I would welcome a workshop with everyone in the room to discuss. We want to avoid a battle of emails and drafts. There will be occasions where we cannot agree, inevitably, and occasions where one or other will have to compromise. Collective responsibility is very important though, even when there is disagreement, even if our outcome is only 60 or 70% of what we want, we need to back it internally and externally.

AC agreed, having the organisations there with equal trust would be a large step forward. It would be useful to set aside a day for this.

DH commented that the last meeting, in Stornoway was a low point. Very few stakeholders in the room, low attendance from our own board and communication since then has been slower than previously. It makes a very big difference having everyone in the room and this morning has been positive from this point of view. I like the idea of working with the Scottish Futures Trust.

CW asked if there was a process for the tripartite to offer agenda items or information for the workshop. How will we record the meeting?

AC commented on agenda-setting. We want to start that process earlier and allow space for people to prepare but also, we welcome suggestions from anyone around the table if they have something helpful to share. It is still our agenda, but we want to keep it most relevant.

CW expressed that there is always the desire to be out on the network attending the meetings in-person. Greater notice would be appreciated to allow us to send someone to be there in person.

AC agreed, online meetings are not as effective. We will be setting dates at the end of the meeting today. Every second meeting we tend to go out on the network, with every other meeting in Glasgow or

Greenock. The logistics for travel is difficult, but a sign of commitment from the Board. It is a nice opportunity to have meetings on the side with different communities and expose them to us.

DH said that the last meeting in Stornoway, with local stakeholders was very good.

BC raised the point on the survey and how we get people to know about the FCB. We need to have clear governance and a clear constitution. From that, we can then promote this. Rather than going out now and asking about the past. Lots of our communities have survey fatigue. Joanna's suggestion to workshop would be good, and an independent facilitated session to put forward ideas. Other ferry groups exist, but when we look at who is involved from a contract information, local authorities are listed. They do not talk to communities. The whole mode of operation needs to be clearly reviewed to see if it is appropriate for the direction we are heading. It does not matter who the parties are, we have operator, suppliers and politicians. The community voice needs to go into that forum. I hope we can get a date for the workshop.

3 CHFS3 AND CHFS2 EXTENSION

TMcl provided a summary on process with CHFS3.

Work is ongoing on the specification, and we have a session on the 18th of December with the community board team. We want to reset and hope to get more regularity into our meetings going forward to ensure we have a good way of communicating where we are in the process. Meeting with Cabinet secretary next week about the due diligence process. This exercise is now largely complete, and we can share more detail on this after the meeting with her. From that process, which was complicated, nothing to suggest there is any legal impediment to pursue direct award came up. We have assurance stages to go through yet, but we have the green light from the due diligence to continue down this path. We will now be discussing with CalMac in more detail the service requirements. A major part of this is the workstream headed by the sponsorship team at TS (which looks at the Teckal governance arrangements). The work on that is well underway.

He continued, the other major part which is still to complete is the subsidy control assessment to be undertaken for the direct award by the Competition and Markets Authority. This is now well advanced, and we have engaged with them now on several occasions. It has formally started, and we expect the formal report by 17 December which will complete that process. There is the possibility they will ask for an extension, but we do not believe that to be the case.

Finally, how do we engage going forward? We hope to put in place formal webinars and hope that these might drive attendance for those who cannot get to certain locations. We will talk to you about timing and design of those sessions. My team are working with CWs team on streamlining this with other engagement happening. We take on the point about consultation fatigue. Overall, we are in good place and feeling more comfortable with the extension in place to get us to October. Having due diligence exercise complete also is comforting.

AC thanked TMcl and asked about Governance.

TMcl clarified that this is separate to the governance to the Ferries Community Board. This is more about the approach for sponsorship for the project to ensure it runs properly.

KMacF asked about stakeholder engagement in the first half of 2025. What areas of the contract will TS be seeking views on?

TMcl a range of things, but it will more be a way of providing updates. There seems to be uncertainty on where we are in the process, the timescales. We want to put that out so that people are aware of the process. It is not a case of shutters down at this point, we are remaining flexible as we go.

KMacF asked if it will be possible to show how this is a better arrangement?

TMcl confirmed – yes, an assessment will be shared on the differences between CHFS2 and CHFS3.

AC2: People on the ground are interested in if the service will be better/worse, how will it change? The transactional questions we get every day – how CalMac are going to be held accountable to the community. The service specification.

CW replied, there are technicalities involved in making improvements with a new contractual arrangement. In parallel, the future of services will be driven through the island connectivity plan and community needs assessment. Those will drive whether there is a step change in services. The contract will help underpin what is there and identify the lived experience by adjusting KPIs- what is not working.

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If the webinar is just about the contract, and there are improvements in there already, but wider questions on ferries etc is more to do with the island's connectivity plan.

AC said that this is crucial. What is the mechanism for communities to take change to the table. It's important because timetable consultation, for example, cannot be changed by much but is technically the mechanism. It will be good to draw this out in the next period.

JoP highlighted that Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is undertaking a major piece of research on regional transformational opportunities. This will be published in January and might be worth the FCB being in contact to ensure there is access to this. These opportunities will map out the economic growth anticipated in the upcoming period, which I would hope, would feed into thinking around ferry services.

CW confirmed that there is regular engagement with HIE on various business cases.

AC2 added, communities have growth aspirations and the economic case for more ferries, changes to timetable should reflect economic growth and expectations of the community. Can you commit to that?

CW the needs assessments take some of these things into account. CW offered to speak about how these will work at a future agenda [Action]. Completed Gourock to Dunoon one so far, but to have someone from my team to come along might be helpful. Board agreed.

AC said that a question was asked about capacity going forward, how is it measured? The answer was that we talk to the operator, but there are lots of things happening that might not be best captured by the operator. How do we ensure that the process captures all the information, to know what the needs will be?

CW said that we use projections using as much information as we can. We work closely with HIE, but these are the kind of things we factor in. When developments and economic opportunities come along, they might not take place, or other things might dwarf them. There is also something in the communities needs assessment which might tell us we need more or fewer services. It is not one size fits all.

AC2 if the assessment outcome is that we need more ferries, more questions come of that – who will pay for this. There are opportunities in there but now we are so constrained. Community benefit is a key element in growing the services.

AC said the economic return will benefit the government as well and this isn't necessarily captured. Particularly as budgets go down and the focus is on this only.

BC commented on publication of regional performance measures – the newly introduced regional scorecards. We cannot talk about KPIs yet due to the conflict of interest with new KPIs in the contract. We asked what the current KPIs are and are awaiting a response. The scorecards have been published but they are not comprehensive and do not reflect what we need. We wonder what the value is between the regional scorecards versus a route-by-route scorecard. What is driving your action plan for this?

TMCI said that there was agreement that there needs to be more transparency. We discussed the themes for improvement and what some of the new measures could be. What I took away from our workshop earlier this year, is that we are broadly in agreement. We made a move to test KPIs before we reach CHFS3. This has been an improvement on where we were at the start. The next stage is to do a review, and we want you to be part of the discussions. In CHFS3, they won't be set in stone, but we can review as we go. We are still at the start, and we will continue to work with you on this.

BC said we wanted revised KPIs that we could monitor and adjust as we go. But what we have is less. The monitoring and performance data will be led by who? There needs to be a level of appreciation of what is being measured.

BM said that Elaine Crossan (head of customer insights at CalMac) attended an FSG meeting this week who took an action to have a separate catch-up call to discuss specifically what you are talking about.

AC said that from an FCB perspective, we would hope to be involved in these kinds of conversations. [Action – check with EC – can this be shared with FCB].

DM: in the run-up to CHFS3 we need to establish what the measures will be and what data will be provided. We will do what we are told and produce what we can, but effort needs to go into defining it and we can move on. This is something we can contribute to, but we can only reflect the data on what we do.

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BC said that timescale is not favourable. We had prepared a list of what we thought might be useful – what is a KPI and what is raw data. The two do not match and it is interesting to hear that it was raised in a stakeholder group, but this is network wide.

AC said we need to focus on the high-level reporting.

CW the fundamental part is how we use the data to drive improvements.

AC2 asked about service specification – is this defined? What format does it take?

TMcl confirmed that it is set out as a series of schedules with legal wrap-around. We can have more discussions after the upcoming meeting.

AC this will start a process of what can be done. This is a reset, and we can take it from there.

3.1 BUDGET

CW updated on budget. The budget bill will be debated in parliament and everything I have here is draft, not confirmed until the process completes.

He continued, for ferries we have seen an uplift in the budget of £100m total. Last year and for this current year is £435.5m. Current year is projected at £533m in total. This has several assumptions including increased number of ships, increased charter rates and crew costs. In a capital space, we did get a strong allocation in line with what we expected – this should allow us to take forward the projects we wanted to take to tender stage as well as continuing the buildout of ports and vessels that are currently in train. Next, we will sit with the operator and CMAL on what the allocation is based on October's assumptions. What changes are required since then, and how do we ensure projects are taken forward. Both CMAL and CalMac have been fortunate to have had continued progress on projects. The £100m uplift in ferries is significant. The other uplifts are in concessionary fares and bus services. The TS uplift is £170m, so a substantial portion of this is for ferries.

AC asked about under-22 fares.

CW said that this is not entirely in this budget. It is in two spaces – interisland free ferry services (Orkney and Shetland) and the interisland services on the CalMac network. Also, an extension on the ferry voucher scheme that exists now.

AC so we still don't have equality.

CW no but we are moving towards that.

KMacF asked if interisland travel is now everywhere – not just the Northern Isles?

CW confirmed that the Western Isles now has this.

KMacF asked about Coll, Iona. Only the Western Isles has been mentioned, has it been extended beyond that?

CW agreed to check [Action – KMacF agreed to email CW].

AC confirmed inter island meaning of not including the mainland.

BF said that from a CMAL perspective, this is a very positive budget, and we can imagine some of the detail around allocating this money.

4 CMAL UPDATE

BF began, we propose to continue sharing a report in advance and we hope you find value in it. We try to put enough detail in. There are a couple of parts in here about project engagement. Whilst we mention that the FCB has a part to play, stakeholder groups also have their place, but this is not the only engagement we do. We also have project engagement with specific islands and stakeholders.

BM added, next week we have the Mallaig > Lochboisdale new vessel engagement. We have details on that which can be shared for distribution in your local communities. If you are in the area, you are welcome

to join. Gasaigh engagement took place, and we also have an upcoming engagement in Uig about the old terminal building. This will be done via written correspondence, but should the wish be to have a formal meeting, that can also take place, but we are just adapting how we engage to suit different needs.

BF noted that there was not a great turnout for the Tiree Engagement. He asked DMAcl how this can be improved.

DMAcl did put the engagement into the local paper, but said that in the current climate, more people are more concerned about the vessel update rather than the infrastructure.

JoP commented that she attended the Gasaigh engagement and reflected that it was incredibly well attended. It was about both infrastructure and the vessel, which attracted a good number. It would be interesting to hear in due course what the general feedback was.

BF said that CMAL do island community impact assessments and we will capture every question asked, all correspondence and then this is published on the website. The purpose of this is to see the answer to your question – it is not about turning up and paying lip service.

AC said that when you do find that there is a disadvantage on a certain island, how do you mitigate it? That process has not been tested through a proper system.

BC asked if CMAL were aware of any discussion to consolidate infrastructure across the network. Most of the vessels are covered by CMAL procurement but a plethora of private ports. We have new vessels coming in, but still have a tender out for port infrastructure. Is there something in the new contract that will start to bring this together, so that port infrastructure is started to be viewed as part of the service?

BF replied, certainly there is a dialogue and link between the vessel side and infrastructure side for the ones that we manage. Both sides run at a different timescale though as vessels are managed in a prescriptive way with yards. When it comes to ports, we have a dialogue with port owners and there are workgroups set up. An Argyll infrastructure group, for example, which we sit on and work closely with to dovetail all of this. It is not part of a contract, so to speak.

BC said that from an island perspective, ports are the same as the ferry – part of the service.

BF agreed. Brodick has been ready for years.

MMcN agreed, when we can control it, we try to make sure the two dovetail. Infrastructure projects are always on a longer timescale because of the processes involved. The issues we have with SSEN for example, what is achievable within the SVRP timeline. We are working hard to persuade them that these are priority projects. Colleagues in TS are also putting pressure on, but they still sit outside of our control and are a real challenge.

AC said that this is one example of where there is an infrastructure provider sitting outside of the structure of a collective service being delivered.

BF said that CMAL are talking to SSEN at the highest level but also engaging at a political level too.

BC said that there are updates on CMAL ports, but no information on privately owned ports. If we are collectively taking responsibility for the service, the general feeling is that port infrastructure restricts the operator's ability to provide a service.

BF said that some of these groups come to FSG meetings, and we can update to a high level on third party ports, but only at that level.

AC2 asked about the cascade plan of vessels. In what sequence will they retire?

BF confirmed the only one retired is the MV Hebridean Isles. There is a disposal plan but there is a plan to hold on to a resilience vessel until 2030 until we can get major and small vessels inline. The oldest does not necessarily go first – MV Isle of Arran is still going strong and will be required for a while. Definitively, only the MV Hebridean Isles will, and has been, retired. Those decisions are made as they come. Once the vessels become a resilience, let's not get the expectation to get them up and running to fill gaps because otherwise you are back at square one. Everyone must bear this in mind when there are one or two vessels in layup. There are costs associated with having vessels in layup – depending at what level of readiness they are.

AC2 asked when the community voice will have a say on these options?

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BF said that they will be discussed at this forum, but they certainly take place between CMAL and CFL.

RM agreed, we need to have strong resolve to retain the flexibility on having a resilience vessel, as they will be needed.

MMcN said that while £100m is welcome, it is not enough. Significant funding is required, and we need somewhere in the region of £700m (in last year's prices). We need to keep the pressure on making it clear that further money is required. This will not take us very far.

BF agreed – to have a fleet of a certain average age, it does not stop and there needs to be constant flow.

AC said this does not consider growth either. He concluded the agenda item and asked if there were any final thoughts on the discussion.

DM thanked AC. Today was genuinely helpful. None of the conversations we must have at the moment are easy, but if we can focus on some of the simple, structural questions and bed them into CHFS3, I am optimistic that you will get value from your time. I am pleased about that and appreciative of your personal contribution. I recognise that you are in a difficult position, and you need answers to take back and we need to work hard to get the balance of that right. Thank you.

RM added; the Area Manager recruitment continues. We re-advertised 3 vacancies, and these are now closed. We will be going through this to complete the posts, and this is going at a reasonable pace. I hope in my new role to have these managers personally meet each community board member. He thanked AC for some of the content for the CalMac Website FCB section – outdated information has been removed now but if the Board could help with this, as well as a summary of Board achievements, we will have the site updated to reflect this. Finally, we hope to be able to facilitate some visits on MV Glen Sannox – we would like to extend this to the community board members. We would be glad to accommodate if anyone wanted to be part of that.

AC agreed to discuss the content for the website in the session later. It was a good conversation today, discussing our fears going forward. We had a good meeting last night too, and we need trust and some help along the line. Some of the things we have discussed today are good – a facilitated meeting. Who is taking on the responsibility of this going forward from today?

DM proposed that this is a TS responsibility as it leads towards CHFS3 and informs the design of that.

JoP agreed to take action to approach TS about this [Action].

AC said we are due a refresh in terms of membership and asked CFL for some assistance from an HR point of view – advertising etc.

RM agreed, this is something we can fully support.

BF asked about the order of defining FCB structure and recruitment?

AC said that perhaps the answer is to get some structure to what we are doing – conversations with TS for example and put a signal out that at a specified time in the future, we will be recruiting. We need to do this soon. The contract work is back on track and the meeting next week is a starting point – a reset opportunity. I welcome that we have a defined place in the new contract which is progress for us. We welcome TS willingness to come out with us on the network and when there are things happening, it is nice to have a member of the community board as part of the discussion and we are willing to do that.

BC said it would be nice to have dates and timelines for progress that we need to make from both a TS and Board point of view.

AC concluded the first part of the meeting and thanked TS, CMAL and CFL representatives.

--- Lunch Break ---

5 FCB NEXT STEPS

Meeting resumes 13:19

AC addressed the Board on some of the actions from the morning's session, dates for future meeting and website achievements.

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The Board agreed to use the first few paragraphs from document regarding the FCB structure to submit as background on what the purpose of the FCB is. AC agreed to speak to Robert. [Action].

KMacF suggested adding a timeline on where representation is, and how it is flowed and changed over time.

The Board discussed content for the website and agreed to show the Board member's names and where they come from. JoP suggested purchasing a domain name for @FCB, or similar, email. AS to liaise with GR and JoP on details [Action].

Dates for future meetings were agreed, with proposed locations as follows, each with a pre-meeting on the evening before:

- Friday 7 March – Tiree Trust Office [Note; potential to invite local YIN members]
- Friday 2 May – Glasgow Area
- Friday 5 September – Mull
- Friday 5 December – Glasgow Area

JP returned to earlier discussion regarding budget. It is good news that there is an increase, but it was not mentioned what this would be used for because of inflation.

AC said that hopefully there will soon be the opportunity with the Minister to discuss this.

KMacF raised a strong feeling that the Board must be able to ask about this and get a response.

JP agreed, the booking system will be a major cause. Nobody could book tickets for Islay in June. When we asked why the volumes were down, nobody seemed to see the reason. We have spoken to our local Area Operations Manager and raised this as a potential area to pay attention to with your Deputy, and finding out the reasons and trends behind it. A commercial business would do this.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY BOARD – Jen Johnson

AC welcomed Jen Johnson to the meeting, Communications and Public Affairs Director at Colleges Scotland.

JJ provided some guidance on how to build a communications strategy, and how to articulate messages.

The Board expressed that their hope was to improve their identity across the network and spread awareness of the work that they do as an independent body. Feedback received is that communities do not know the FCB and what their role is. We want to be free to convey what we want to say but have limitations in what can be said due to all the parties involved, and political elements.

JJ asked what the top priorities are for the Board – PR is not just about visibility, but it should be used to help your delivery of something. She outlined the main requirements for a strategy.

1. Everyone must agree on what we want to achieve.
2. Plan – spread the work among your group and agree responsibilities before you proceed.
3. Resource – use your people, tools, social media channels.
4. Risk – what would impact our success? Loss of events, people, political risk, changing scenarios.

JJ talked the Board through considerations for an example strategy to achieve influence on the topic of free under-22 travel. This involved consideration of budget timelines, open letters, debate requests and other suggestions. She suggested pieces of work that could support this endeavour such as commissioning research and an economic assessment on the true value of Under-22 ferry travel. There are other groups who could support this goal – the Young Islander's Network, Fraser of Allander and Webber Shandwick, as examples.

She continued to delve into the Board's current position and used the in-room flipchart to display ideas and process for communications strategy.

She concluded by offering to review future communications plans. The Board considered the creation of a logo with a strapline.

AC and the Board thanked JJ for her time. It was great to hear from a professional and it was extremely interesting.

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AC concluded the meeting, by commenting that this meeting was a gamechanger on how we proceed. It needed to be like this because everything would continue as it was. He thanked all attendees for their commitment and time.

--- Meeting Ends---

REVIEW OF ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS


Meeting concluded with thanks to all for their contribution.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Friday 7 March 2025

2025 MEETING DATES

Friday 7 March
Friday 2 May
Friday 5 September
Friday 5 December

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No.	Action	Owner	Status
1	RELIEF CREWING BC noted that relief crewing may be incorporated into future Ferries Plan discussions however it was recognised that it was not practical to discuss it now and the cost may be prohibitive. It could be raised during recruitment for crews for 801 and 802. C/fwd.	AC	Update 13/09 – Discussion to continue, with 801 and 802 in mind.
2	ROUTE PERFORMANCE DATA Possibility of separating route performance data for Coll & Tiree to be investigated.	DM	Update 13/09 - it will be possible to do this although there may be some limitations around carrying data (can show passengers shipped but not necessarily landed). When statistics are published in the coming months, each port will be reported individually. Should this action be updated?
3	CMAL REPORTING & EXPENDITURE TRACKING KMacF asked whether it would be possible to include a timeline on planned projects. A graphic to show plan, vs slippages. KH and BF confirmed resourcing was there to do this and agreed to try new ways of presenting this information.	KH/BF	Update 15/08: Our interactive map has experienced problems. We were populating it with all CHFS Ports (be it ours or 3 rd party) and all vessels. However, the programme was overwhelmed with data and a more powerful alternative was found. We are now reconfiguring it all over again. Further details can be discussed at the meeting. 13/09: update during meeting.
4	FAIR FARES ENGAGEMENT CW took action to go back to TS colleagues for an update on what the engagement there would be for the public on the fair fares piece of work.	CW	
5	TIMELINE OF NEW CONTRACT WORK AC asked if it would be possible to share an outline and timeline of work on the new contract.	CW/TMcl	 CHFS3 - Indicative Timetable - FCB - 12 Please find linked submission above. Propose to close.
6	FCB CONTACT POSTERS FCB Contact posters to be created, updated, and put back up for greater visibility – ferries & ports	AC	Update 13/09: Decision made to show where the FCB fits in to the tri-partite arrangement. Information on the posters to show what each body does. Propose to close – combine with action 24?
7	SMALL VESSEL REPLACEMENT – WEBSITE INFORMATION AC2 asked if information could be added to the CMAL website about the small vessel replacement plan to alleviate fears. KH said that this can be done.	KH	Update 15/08: The SVRP website information is being updated. We are continually updating it to reflect progress. Last updated mid-July. Propose to close?
8	EBOOKING FIXES & AR TURAS MEETING	RD/DH	Update 20/08: We will shortly be able to publish to the FCB an update to the one previously delivered in March 2024. This update will explain the changes and fixes we have delivered through this year.

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	RD agreed to share a list of fixes [eBooking] with the FCB. DH agreed to prepare this detail for sharing. Meeting to be set up for Ar Turas concerns.		
9	CARRYING STATISTICS Carrying statistics to be provided for the network, and/or a date by which they can be provided. No data has been provided since May.	DM	Update 13/09- Statistics are now available on the website for 2023 (annual report). Specific data requests can be made to CalMac, should you require information for specific routes, or vehicles. https://www.calmac.co.uk/article/7308/Annual-Carrying-Statistics https://www.calmac.co.uk/article/7308/Annual-Carrying-Statistics linked to action 2?
10	ACCESSIBLE VESSELS AC2 asked if entryways and seats could be modified on vessels for greater accessibility. Ramps for example, or folding tables. RD agreed to investigate.	CalMac	22/08: All current vessels were designed and built for accessibility as regulation required at the time and are updated if regulation requires. Changing rooms have been added to some vessels recently, to improve accessibility, an example of modifications that have taken place. There are no current projects in planning to modify vessels for accessibility reasons. All newly built vessels include accessibility requirements as per relevant regulation and are designed and built. Propose to close.
11	CONSULTATION RESULTS LK agreed to share plan relating to community needs assessment. Communities need to know that their needs have been accurately collected – can this be published?	LK	JK and BG presented this on 13/09/2024 Propose to close.
12	CHFS2 RECONCILIATION EXERCISE CW agreed that CHFS2 has not been scrutinised or audited to the degree it should have. Before the end of the contract, it should be reconciled. CW agreed to pick up on this and take it away. A reconciliation and reflection on management of the contract, to cover resourcing levels, structure, etc.	CW	
13	TEMPORARILY UNBOOKABLE MESSAGING – ONLINE JP offered feedback on when booking is temporarily unavailable. Messaging to say that transfers are being made and it is worth trying again later. This may prevent people from giving up entirely when unable to book. DB agreed to take this away and explore how this can be done.	DB	20/08/24: Over the coming year we are investing in improvements to our customers' booking journey, particularly when they are making that journey online. The ability to show more meaningful messages to customers, depending on the status of the sailing they are trying to book on, is something we are currently investigating with our colleagues at eDea
14	THIRD PARTY & LOCAL AUTHORITY NEEDS BC asked if there was a resource that showed third party and local authority needs in one place. KH offered to provide a whistle-stop tour of the third-party ports, as a regular attendee at meetings with the three councils that own most ports.	KH	

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15	FEEDBACK FROM CEO VISITS KMacF asked if there was a collation of feedback received from the combined CMAL, TS and CalMac visits around the network. DM offered to take this offline and explore what an update on this might look like.	DM	
16	BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BM discussed bi-monthly newsletter to communities impacted by vessel enabling works. Offered to add FCB to the distribution list – FCB agreed.	BM	
17	JOINT FCB/DML ACTION – FOLLOW-UP PB and AS agreed to follow up on DML Joint Board Meeting action regarding eBooking issues and fixes.	AS	
18	RAASAY PRIMARY SCHOOL TRAVEL ISSUES The Young Islanders Network raised a concern by Raasay primary school for getting the boat to school. BC offered to find out more about this issue and the Board agreed to help take this forward.	BC	
19	FACILITATED WORKSHOP WITH TRIPARTITE AND SCOTTISH FUTURES TRUST After agreement from all parties, it was agreed that a workshop should take place to workshop what the future of the FCB should be – structure, appointments, remit. JoP agreed to approach TS to propose this, as it aligns with the CHFS3 strategy.	JoP / Transport Scotland	
20	COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS CW offered to speak about how community needs assessments will work at a future FCB meeting. Action was taken to add this to forward agenda. CW suggested someone from his team come along to present to the Board.	CW	
21	CALMAC INSIGHTS After discussion about insights being presented to an FSG meeting recently, CFL took an action to explore insights that would be of interest to the FCB. RM and AS to check with Elaine Crossan, Head of Insights to see what can be shared with FCB.	RM/AS	
22	INTERISLAND TRAVEL KMacF asked if inter-island travel was now available everywhere, as she had only read of the 'Western Isles' now having this. KMacF agreed to email CW to clarify where this applies – e.g. Coll, Iona.	KMacF / CW	
23	CALMAC WEBSITE INFORMATION The Board agreed to use the first few paragraphs from document regarding the FCB structure to submit as background on what the purpose of the FCB is. AC agreed to speak to RM.	AC	
24	FCB CONTACT DETAILS AS to liaise with RM and colleagues at CFL on purchase of domain for @FCB, or similar, email addresses. AS to liaise with GR and JoP on progress.	AS	