

**MINUTES of the FERRIES COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING**  
**held on Friday 01 December 2023 at 0830 hrs**  
**at Clayton Hotel, Glasgow and by video 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)  
Angus Campbell (AC2)  
Bill Calderwood (BC)  
David Herriot (DH)  
Donnie MacInnes (DMacI)  
Eleanor Logan (EL)  
Eoin MacNeil (EMacN)  
Gail Robertson (GR)  
Jim Porteous (JP)  
Joanna Peteranna (JoP)  
Kevin Peach (KP)?  
Kirsty MacFarlane (KMacF)  
Mary-Jean Devon (MJD)  
Murdo MacLean (MMacL)  
Rhoda Campbell (RC)
- In attendance:** Kevin Hobbs (KH) – CEO, CMAL  
Brian Fulton (BF) – CMAL  
Morag McNeil (MMcN) – CMAL  
Blair Moglia (BM) - CMAL  
Robbie Drummond (RD) – Chief Executive, CalMac  
David Hamill (DH) – CalMac  
Diane Burke (DB) – CalMac  
Chris Wilcock (CW) – Head of Ferries Unit, TS  
Ailsa Stephen (AS) – CalMac  
Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Transport (MFT)  
Thomas Meikle (TM) – Private Secretary to Minister for Transport
- Apologies:** Ida Holmstrom (IH)  
Trevor McIlhattan (TMcl) – Head of CHFS3 Procurement, TS

**1 GOVERNANCE**

**1.1 Apologies for Absence**

**1.2 Declarations of Interest**

GR declared an interest as a haulier.

**1.3 Minutes of meetings held on 01 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 BOARD WAY FORWARD**

**2.1 Future Structure**

JoP explained that a small subgroup had been working together, reviewing what the FCB is and its future direction – considering some things coming down the line. Several different options have been considered and their pros and cons. The real purpose for taking the report forward was to ask for thoughts and ideas, and to generate discussion.

AC added that this is an opportunity to redefine the FCB as its own identify, away from CalMac and working more closely with TS and CMAL.

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AC2 commented that he would like to see the board as totally independent, but it may not be practical to do that.

AC replied, just now, CalMac is providing support as per the contract, and total independence would mean a different arrangement.

EL said that the subgroup went through it systematically and felt that they still wanted to have the accountability into the Minister, but not into an operator. Not TS either because they're non-regulated public body. You go straight down the non-advisory structured formal route with Minister hosting.

AC added that the FCB has evolved to be different from most other organisations now. Ministers can change.

KMacF added that with the government going down a direct route at the moment, there is an advantage and short-term opportunity to raise this with the Minister. The FCB need to be able to speak out more. Previously, there was an expert ferry group which was very outspoken and eventually shut down. Can the FCB expand where it is just now, with Government approval?

AC said that it is a balance between lobbying activity and the publicity side of it. Care needs to be taken on where the FCB lands with that.

DH added that there is currently no pressure from the government on the FCB.

EMacN thanked Joanna for the useful recap on the report. His view was to ask; how do we process to the community? Where the FCB are now is the best option. The closer you get to a non-government group or any other structure that's closer to the government and indeed the Minister, takes you further away from the community. We should not distance ourselves too much from CalMac. Yes, there is sometimes frustration and the feeling that we are treading water, but I do not feel as if we are controlled by them. The best option would be to stay more-or-less the same, with a few changes.

AC: A good point Eoin.

JP commented that it was a very well set out paper. On the status quo, nobody is quite sure of what the outcome of Neptune will be – if the organisation of the operator will be the same as it is now. Where we are now is where we can most influence. If we are mentioned in the CHFS contract and CalMac is the operator, then there is an onus on the Government and on TS to keep that going. One of the negatives in terms of being a quasi-government organisation means we will have less control and publicly voted. The public appointment process – I agree, would be a barrier, and certainly could get lost and restrict the publicity that we're able to put out (notices, press releases etc) because we would need to clear them with government before issuing anything and this would detract from being an independent organisation. The question of 'are we too big?' - perhaps we are now. In the cons, we have lost administrative support. It's difficult to get admin support. If that is corrected, it adds to the value of the status quo.

AC replied, the organisational side is on the backburner with TS and CMAL. The contract will be the main concentration. It has been said that there is space for a community board type organisation being more clearly defined within that.

EL added that there are things that need to be changed, or to stimulate change. We are not getting meeting information in advance to prepare properly. It's unacceptable. We should list these and push for them.

AC answered, we can ask for them but there is nothing to make it a duty.

EL said that there is an onus on the FCB as well to improve.

BC commented that the structure distances us from community specific issues. Ministers change frequently and that could end up having political complications. With the contract, there should be an opportunity to specify the procedures of the FCB for us to be effective. Providing format stays the same.

AC added that the FCB will not be the only community voice coming through this way. There are already people saying that we are not the most representative group – keen that we position ourselves in the best place to serve communities.

RC mentioned that a lot of people think that the FCB is part of CalMac. The influence with the Minister has been a huge success in the status quo.

AC agreed and added that the FCB has built a good relationship with various Ministers across the piece, showing that it is a credible organisation.

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KMacF commented that the paper is excellent. We should aim to do more of this as it builds our credibility. This consolidates credibility and shows a power for real analysis and taking action. The other thing to consider - to counteract the doubts that are being put out there to undermine us - is to take the plunge, put our credibility on the line, and do some survey work. Maybe half a dozen communities on a specific issue. More evidential background needs to be produced on the views we put forward.

AC agreed - evidence based is important, and the other point is having more conversations across the network. In consultation, people liked to have direct conversation and confidence that they know what we are talking about. This as an organisation need a wider approach. Perhaps it can be done in the new contract, a series of activity like that, pulling information together.

JP added - great idea. We have made great progress of late with the Minister. To remind you, we had an identity in that we had calling cards and we also had posters in the offices and on the ships which highlighted the community board and the members that people could contact. We need to re-establish identity in a way like that – to show that we exist and what our purpose is. Accessibility for the public.

AC commented that on the Seaforth, people approached to ask about ferry matters, but someone did ask where the poster went. It hasn't been up for 18 months, and this shows that people recognise us through the poster being there. It all helps. We can see about getting that back in place [Action].

JP added; calling cards too - to give out at functions and make it easy for people to contact us.

AC agreed - if we do it, we do it as an independent organisation, not with CalMac on it.

RC said that the poster on the Harris ferry is so out of date and it's a shame. It would raise the profile. She raised her concern over the volunteer commitment to raise our profile. It is fundamental to get out and know what's happening.

AC: Maybe it is about approaching councils and getting a slot on some sessions. Explaining what we do, the new contract and try to introduce wider participation and reacting to consultation for example. Need a dedicated place for the Board. There is a discussion required around the Terms of Reference, board numbers, and how a chair is appointed.

BC said that things have moved on - is 4 meetings per year still what we need? We could get a meeting set up for January to focus on where we want to go. People have no knowledge of how we work, and it is up to us to come up with that.

AC2 added that the Terms of reference, roles and responsibilities - that fundamental part is in the contract.

AC agreed and said that putting it all down in a document is something I want sign-off from the Minister on. Let's take it back and produce a paper after a meeting in January to say this is where we want to get to.

BC: yes, to say 'this is how we believe we should be represented'.

AC yes, that's important.

EL mentioned that last night's meeting (with the Young Islanders Network (YIN)) was a good example of how we engage and how everyone takes responsibility for this. Maybe we should do more stakeholder mapping?

AC agreed - it shows we have a path into hearing different voices, the disability group too. I suggest we invite the chairperson along to a meeting and we build relationships with that group as well. Anything else that we see too - there are ways to weave in.

KMacF spoke about level of commitment – it is important that people come to a meeting and express a view. In the minutes, it looks as though only 4 or 5 people drive things forward. Because we are being observed, maybe we should take a vote to show wider views?

AC replied, some matters may come to a vote, but usually when you cannot get consensus. As Chair, I always try to do that.

EL added that it is sometimes difficult online, to hear, or to jump into the conversation.

AC agreed - for the quarterly meetings it is preferred that we get together in person.

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MJD agreed with KMacF. This committee has what most Community Councils do not have - passion. You get people that come just for a bit of status and ego, but this is the first Council that I have sat on where every person has passion about what they are doing.

DH added his experience, that so much discussion is around the booking system. He expressed that it would be inappropriate for him to comment too much on the topic because of lack of experience. He would not talk for the sake of talking.

AC said that it is sometimes good to step back and have a view from someone further away – who is not as involved.

BC agreed that this can be helpful - sometimes those who feel the pain need to hear the bigger picture from someone who isn't impacted the same.

AC: the leader of the Council has the right to speak on behalf of the Council. I try to make sure what I say is consistent with the group.

JoP agreed to take the feedback aboard to develop the report [Action].

### 2.2 Reporting on Young Islanders Network Meeting

AC began, it was a productive meeting where both organisations gave some information on what they do. They have done a report for Transport Scotland (TS) on the islands and have asked that we share it with the FCB. They were very aligned on issues, expressing it slightly differently, but immediately spoke on themes like local decision making on what ferries provide, transport connectivity, food, and other onboard facilities.

MJD added that there used to be a facility at the parliament for young people who had done work on a subject - that is perhaps another way of getting a way across. They were young and passionate. They would be invited to talk about their topic.

AC said that it was agreed to make it a permanent feature to engage with them and having something like that on a regular basis - sharing agendas etc. would be of benefit. A two-way feed of communication.

KMacF asked if there were meeting minutes. This is evidence that we engage. It shows that the young people see us as working towards what they want. [Action: minute to be shared as attachment with FCB minutes].

AC confirmed minutes taken. Naomi (Senior Development Working – YIN) said it was a very positive response from the group afterwards. As we get more used to each other, there will be more confidence to sit around a table.

### 2.3 Meeting Frequency & Place

AC asked if the group was comfortable with the current meeting set up, how subgroups and worked, with specific items held online.

EL suggested the group take this away for a holistic view.

AC asked if it was the best use of time - coming to Glasgow when we could be in another location, meeting with wider groups. There are benefits to being out to the network, doing some consultation and work with communities.

BC added that the meetings elsewhere have been quite informative, businesses on Uist from the last time was good. It shows that we turn up and we do this.

AC: we still have the hybrid option. It can be anywhere.

JMD commented on how people know about the board - education is needed for communities to let them know that we exist.

AC agreed – if a couple of us go out and join meetings, have some presence. There are benefits to this.

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KMacF further added; it would be best to hold our meetings out on the network. It's a shame its not everywhere we host a meeting because of sheer logistics, - no hotel big enough for example. Is there a list of places we can go?

AC added, we have been to a few places. It's important to make it hybrid.

### 3 CMAL UPDATE

#### 3.1 CMAL Update Report

KH updated on the Islay vessels. They are coming on well and every milestone so far has been met, or met in advance of when the milestone was originally envisioned. They are all on time, the 4 vessels. A caveat: the difficult thing with ships is doing all the piping and electrical wiring. The small vessel replacement programme is progressing on time. You may have seen false reports about a 2-year delay. We had the RDM with Transport Scotland a week and a half ago, with minor questions. There is hope to get that over line w/c 4<sup>th</sup> December but it is likely to be in the new year now. Shipyards tend to shut down at Christmas. MV Glen Sannox has now been joined by Glen Rosa. The project is still ongoing, and you will be aware of the quarterly updates, with the next one expected mid-January. The vessel is still destined to go to drydock on 18<sup>th</sup> December - it's final dry dock before sea trials.

He continued; Gourock – Dunoon – Kilcreggan. Gourock is ours, Dunoon and Kilcreggan belong to Argyll & Bute Council. We are keeping up momentum on the all-electric solution but it's proving more difficult than we thought. On MV Carvoria – we are waiting for a statement of requirements from CalMac. It is disappointing not to have a response yet. MV Alfred is being chartered for a further 6 months. This will be of benefit it certainly was during the summer) although that was proven to be very benign, and the Alfred has not performed anywhere near as well since winter hit. It's been helping Lochmaddy/Tarbert Harris. Uig is still closed and MV Alfred has been laid up for a few days because they would not sail due to sea conditions.

BF updated on port infrastructure projects:

We put a note in our report about the action for providing a timeline for projects. An interactive map is being created. It is more of an internal-facing document and will not be as detailed, but it should cover off what the FCB are looking for. We eventually had opening of Tarbert terminal on 9<sup>th</sup> October - the Transport Minister opened it. It was a good event albeit long-awaited. George Leslie was awarded works for Port Askaig and Colonsay. Ground investigation works now completed at Port Ellen. Environmental surveys are now being completed and the harbour revision process has commenced. On the small vessel replacement programme – it's not just about the vessel build, it's also about port infrastructure. We are working with SSEN, given the remote location of some locations, and having early conversations to make sure there is power supply. Colonsay works are nearing completion now. Little Minch routes: Lochmaddy is substantially complete -we are involved in a project management basis. Troon is now ready to go, with a temporary completion certificate valid for 6 months. In general terms, there has been quite a bit of engagement. Yesterday we kicked off the naming competition for the two Little Minch vessels.

AC, returning to the Small Vessel Replacement programme, asked for clarity that work is still on the programme originally set out?

KH replied, when the infrastructure improvement programme was issued, the original £580 million (now £695 million) was planned year by year what would happen. This was agreed in 2020. We had originally considered that we would be at a point where we could spend substantive money. CMAL basically spends its own money doing concept design, tender activity and visiting yards in relation to these projects. What has happened is straight forward. An allocation of money in the 23/24 budget. We decided to do more concept design work, more motion sickness study and CSG modelling. A lot more work upfront to de-risk the project for the shipyard. It reduces their timescales to quote and reduces the amount of work that each one must do individually. That happened with the islay vessels and the two Little Minch vessels also. This has caused a delay and that cannot be denied. We hoped to sign a contract in Q1 of 2024 but bearing in mind all the additional work we have done; delivery of vessel will be quicker because they have the answers before quoting. If you have an allocation of money in a financial year and you roll it forward to the next year, it will be lost and taken back to the central treasury. This is a shifting of money, not a shifting of programme.

AC: so, we can still say to communities that the ships will be in the water on the same timescale. There is huge concern about the existing vessels not reaching the point of the new ones coming in. There is no plan to put the timeframe back.

KH confirmed. The contract signing will be 6 months later and the money to do that is now reserved to the 24/25 budget. The actual end delivery date of all these vessels and port works associated is still

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absolutely on time. We are intensely engaging with SSEN on grid capacity. I'm not totally confident about which routes get the vessels first. We cannot have a vessel turning up and no ability to charge them. These are not hybrids and will be 100% electric. There is a small hybrid element - a few hundred litres of fuel if batteries have not charged up, but most of the time these will be purely electric. There may be some shifting of the phasing of which ones come in first.

AC said that is something to feed back into community discussions - thank you.

AC2 asked, in terms of the dates for the first vessel coming in 2026, is that still the delivery plan?

KH: Yes.

KMacF recalled a discussion about SSEN at the last meeting and these concerns were raised. She asked; is appropriate that this comes out into the public domain and that communities are be made aware of the issue just outlined? Is this the time to be upfront about this?

She continued, is there any way we can have analysis on how the electric vessels we have are performing, battery issues etc? The public needs more awareness on the effectiveness of electric vessels and the three that we have now which are dual power. The SSEN hook-ups is another public awareness issue.

KH replied that the challenges with port infrastructure projects are things outwith our control. Harbour revision orders, environmental impact assessments etc. Building a vessel from scratch is under the control of shipyard and us. There are no concerns about the build – it is important to flag that we rely heavily on a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider of power. The direction of travel is zero carbon and we have been working closely with SSEN. If we consider at any point that it is going off track, we will communicate to the Board and to the public too. We can get Aggreko diesel generators to power the vessels, but 100% electric vessels powered by diesel generators is not where we want to be. There is no way we will have non-operable vessels, but SSEN are telling us clearly that they will be able to meet our aspirations for those connections. If it turns out that it needs further work next year, we would still put new vessels on them but with the embarrassment of temporary diesel generators on the quayside. As far as current vessels, they have performed well. When they were developed the energy density of batteries meant we could only achieve 1/3 of a working day. The Raasay vessel had a battery meltdown about two months ago and batteries are off the ship, currently awaiting new ones. Part of the small vessel replacement programme is to have spare batteries in inventory, ready to replace. Over a period, energy density and how it discharges, deteriorates, as with your mobile phone.

AC added that there are examples of projects not coming through because of lack of power in Stornoway. Is there anything we (the FCB) can do to assert some pressure?

KH said that CMAL met SSEN at director level face-to-face and said that it is clear everyone will be impacted if power is not provided. Cost is already in there and we know it will be millions to get the connections. That is in the business case already as part of port infrastructure improvement programme. All the current ports with charging capacity will need upgraded too. When you look at big ships, for Aberdeen overnight passenger ferries there, that will be £1.6m just for the power. This is just to get a transformer in place and enabling it to connect to the ships.

AC2 raised the point of media concerns; is there something on the Small Vessel Replacement Programme website to alleviate some of the fears?

KH agreed that this can be done [Action]. We have ferry stakeholder groups next week and the week after. We will be talking openly about it, hoping to settle the wider communities as well as community board.

BF added that CMAL challenge the press but can certainly put the detail on the website if people will go to it.

AC2 added that there is nothing online to say that everything is still on course.

KH: through course of next week, we can find some suitable words to push back on news outlets that are falsely reporting.

EL mentioned that the board will welcome the interactive map when it comes. A community engagement plan openly published would be good too. It will be complex because of every situation around the small vessel replacement plan, but having it published openly so that the committee can contribute would be helpful. An invitation will be extended from Gigha to come and chat with us about progress.

BF replied, on our community engagement plan, we have a map that covers every aspect of engagement that we do. When you dip down into each individual project, they have their own stakeholder/community map within that.

MJD returned to the point about Raasay vessel batteries; Over the last while we have had boats tying up, awaiting spare parts. Whose responsibility is it to supply spare parts?

KH answered, if we look at it completely technically and within the charter party, this lands fairly and squarely with CalMac. It is up to them to hold the spare parts. They have a warehouse and sub-warehouses elsewhere with some critical spares. The real difficulty is with critical spares believed to be difficult to get hold of, with long lead times. This is a judgement CalMac must make, although CMAL do get involved. There is about £50m of spares in the network and sods law always says the one bit that goes wrong, is the one you do not have a spare for. Spares for MV Loch Portain, for example, were used in drydock and then put on back order when more were needed. Do you want engines in a warehouse that might never be used, letting it become scrap? It is a difficult judgement call. One of the issues around the pandemic, Brexit and supply chain is that when a spare is used, the lead time for a replacement spare is extensive. What might have once taken a month, may now take 6.

MJD thanked KH for his answer.

KH added that via the resilience funding for CalMac, a pot of money now exists of £6m per year and we are identifying long lead time items and getting them ordered. Sometimes they break before the order arrives. For MV Loch Portain, CalMac were promised spare shafts from Singapore via air freight for November, but they are now delayed until end of December. People are not happy about it, but I'm not quite sure what can be done.

AC surmised; it comes down to having spare vessels for cover.

JoP commented that although at short notice, the consultation run in South Uist recently was done in a very good way. We [FCB] participate in a lot of consultation on many topics and there is a wide variation in consultation quality. The engagement from your staff was very good and it was excellent to see the turnout from the community and the discussion on MV Lord of the Isles replacement.

KMacF added that from the previous report, there was consultation on the MV Isle of Mull replacement too. She raised the point that Coll and Tiree vessel replacement and port infrastructure improvements are not scheduled until phases 3 and 4 of the Island Connectivity Plan (ICP). There is concern about this because it is so far away, and last in line. The timing is vague and there are serious port changes to be made, according to CalMac. The community needs assessment from TS seems to have disappeared, so we have not had the opportunity to raise this point. Is any of this firming up in terms of your timelines?

KH replied, yes and no – it goes back to interactive map. One of the concerns is always that there has been good progress made in terms of 6 new vessels (major). At government level, we have concerns that we hope you could help us with. Certain people within political parties might think that money thrown at it is a job done but this is continual, and we are trying to emphasise this. There are 53 lifeline ferry ports and we are very aware that investment is needed – not only in vessels but ports too. It all goes hand in hand. We are talking to Government about this.

MMcN said she had a meeting with the permanent secretary a couple of weeks ago and made the same point. If we do not concentrate on the next 10,20, 40 years we will end up in the same position. It is critical that nobody sits back and thinks 'job done'. We need to talk about how to keep an old vessel on hot layup. This is something we have not had for years now. It is not a complete answer to the spares problem, but it would certainly help in circumstances where there is a long lead time on a piece of equipment.

KMacF thanked KH and MMcN. There is a perception that expenditure has been allocated and there are new ships coming forward. The perception is therefore "job done", so thank you for pushing that it is not "job done" – it is continuous investment. We cannot get a new vessel unless we sort the infrastructure. People are beginning to think in the case of Coll, Tiree and Colonsay that they will be forgotten about, and no money will remain. A frightening prospect for people.

AC said that TS will join the meeting in the afternoon and the Minister too. These are things they have heard from us before, about a programme of continuous improvement.

AC2 asked for CMAL's view on which vessels are kept, and which are suitable for refurbishment. What are the next steps, and where is that discussion?

KH answered, until new vessels start coming along (and that is not too far away) . The conversation now is to have one major vessel spare and in the small vessel replacement programme there will be some too. Broadly speaking, there is an understanding that there will be a major vessel kept in hot layup until we are satisfied that the job is being done. Our current projections for the next 5 years requests £900 million. If that is afforded to us then we can deliver what we need to (MV Isle of Mull, MV Lord of the Isles, MV Clansman, MV Hebrides). If we look at the highs and lows of expenditure, it is around the year 2032 that we reach a steady state. Nothing has happened since 2000 - inadequate investment so now it is a

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great sum. We have told the government what we need and that it is not "job done", but it gets us to a steady state replacement from that point onwards, including 3<sup>rd</sup> party ports.

BC mentioned that MV Glen Sannox is moving to dry dock shortly. Will that be under her own power, or will she be pulled up?

KH confirmed that she will be taken by tugs. During dry dock some systems need to be proven. Once proven when it comes back home it will be under its own power by February. They have run the main engines, run the gearbox on neutral, run the shafts, and run the propellers.

DMacl commented on ticket office upgrades and gave feedback on the Tiree shelter. We eventually got a shelter but it is not used because of its location on the quay. We have to go back and look at a minibus solution as the only way forward.

BF commented that this was disappointing to hear but not entirely unexpected. The solution is a minibus up and down the pier, but this was investigated, and it is not in CMAL's gift to do it – it is within the operator's gift, and they are not going to do it. It was £10,000 so perhaps some signage would help, but by the time you get there anyway you would be drenched from the weather. On the point of the new build - I have seen plans for the new office which at the moment is going to be on the site of the current office. It is not yet at the stage of procurement, but the design is well on as part of the traffic management piece. There are some traffic counting measures in place as well, which is a survey that goes on in advance. The shelter is not ideal, but if it's particularly difficult conditions at least there is something.

DMacl said that he would raise the point with RD later in the meeting. Seeing elderly people going down the pier is not good.

AC commented that this is an example, from a customer perspective, where public money has been spent and it has not solved the problem. All our feedback and getting us more involved in decision making, but it was not taken into consideration.

RC raised the point of the successful opening in Tarbert – it was well attended.

GR asked about the new linkspan at Lochmaddy; it is supposed to increase flexibility and accommodate the new little Minch vessels. Can they operate before it is in place?

BF confirmed that there is no problem with the vessel going in stern-in, but it cannot go in bow in. The changes are for flexibility.

GR asked BF if he was confident that it will be done.

BF replied, there is no degree of confidence. The business case has gone in, and we await the outcome.

AC: does that mean that the £695 million that we spoke about is allocated and there is no spare money in the system for things like this? These are specific asks, and we know how strapped for cash they are. So, this is a bigger ask?

KH said that there was some flexibility on it but after 2 years at 10% inflation, we were worried some things would not be delivered. We are doing everything we can to get as much value for money as possible. £100m is now £120m. We need that boosted. The Little Minch vessels were ordered 8 months after the Islay ones, and you would think - why were they not ordered together? The money was not there at the time. The delay of 8 months has added £11 million to the pair of ships. If we went to buy those ships today, hypothetically, knowing today's market we could be looking at another £12 million for another pair in addition to the £11 million that we had to pay when signing contract last January.

AC said that we [the FCB] often get asked what can be done, and we can now go back and say its fully allocated and fully used. It helps people understand that anything new must be rooted into government.

DMacl returned to the point about the linkspan at Lochmaddy - it would be straightforward to go stern or bow in first. There is good reason why the ferry berths bow-in to Lochmaddy and stern-in to Uig, and if the linkspan is not replaced before the arrival of the new ferries, then there will be disruption to the service in poor weather conditions.

KH said to speak to Uisdean about that.

A final question for MMcN from AC:- one of the pieces of work is looking at how we can influence the new contract. Are you looking at how we can improve things in that contract?

MMcN answered; we had a conversation about this at the Board. Project Neptune has been completely side-lined for this direct award piece. It is about how people behave. We absolutely recognise that the



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tripartite, and people talk about the tripartite agreement, which does not actually exist. It does not set out the parties' obligations, and we need to start working much more closely so that everyone is clear and transparent on duties. The FCB is great, but we need to continue to work on community engagement. If we can get those two things working better and new vessels in the water, hopefully communities will see the benefits of that. We are working with TS and the Minister and having regular meetings in relation to this. The direct award will give us some challenges, and we will have to look at some of the things we need to do in terms of chartering, maintenance and repair, etc to make sure that it is as robust as possible. The timescale is very short, and it has not yet been decided whether it will be direct award. Given it is now November, and October 2024 is the end of contract. The concern is that they will run out of time, and the only option will be to extend.

AC added that this is the feeling around the table also. He offered to help with any community engagement – we will make ourselves available and have conversations around that.

MMcN concluded; if the government decided tomorrow that they were not going to go for a direct award, it is too late to go to tender.

### 3.2 Fergusons & New Vessels

### 3.3 Investment Programme going forward incl. Small Vessel Replacement Programme

## 4 COMMUNITIES REPORTING

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### 4.1 Communities Reporting (Verbal)

DH (of Bute), updated on the Colintrave / Rhubodach ferry. Recent breakdowns resulted in the Portavadie ferry being withdrawn a few times, which affected commuters. It was unfortunate that CalMac could not organise a passenger charter for this route. This will be the end of the overhaul period now. Not being able to just walk onto a ferry without having to pre-book in some situations feels like we are going backwards.

MMacL (of Lewis) noted that the general feeling from Lewis on the new contract is that there will be more of the same. We are encouraging councils to come forward on consultation. Nothing more to report – all about the contract.

AC commented that he had not spoken to anyone who thinks direct award is a good decision.

MMacL added that the consensus seems to be that it was poorly organised, and the timescale was not great. If there is going to be a consultation, they should time it for after work. People will not come back out when it is dark.

BC (of Arran) noted technical and weather disruptions. Ar Turas continues to be an issue. Recent interruptions had no provision to convey foot passenger travel to alternative ports.

AC asked if CalMac could not get buses to match the capacity of the boat?

BC said that even for the maintenance period, there would still be issues with trailers, etc. There are a lot of concerns about moving to Troon when MV Glen Sannox comes in. Now we are at a stage where we believe Troon will be in condition on time. CHFS3 discussions and consultation are happening during the day, and the request was for it to be at night.

KP (of Ullapool) updated the Board; operationally, everything is ok. People are dejected with the ferries, TS, CMAL and CalMac. There is no sign of change. A direct award is more of the same.

AC said that the only thing we can do is to put something through in the new contract, but it is an established way of working and we cannot underestimate what it will be. Real change must come through with everybody involved.

KP added that it seems to be the easy option – even a two-year extension shows lack of planning.

RC (of Harris) updated on the opening of Tarbert port. KH and BF were there, and it progressed well but it was delayed. The Sound of Harris vessel can only sail at the moment if it is very calm waters. There is a push to get these two ferries replaced. There are capacity issues when MV Loch Portain is replaced by MV Loch Bhrosda, which is smaller.

AC added that there is a case to increase capacity on the Sound of Harris.

RC added that there are lots of questions on what the contract means. It is important that we promote these .

KMacF commented that people have fatigue when it comes to consultations because nothing happens.

JoP (of Uist), said that she would focus on interisland travel, as GR and JoP are from the same area. A common thing the community speaks of is challenges with interisland connectivity. Adding to what RC said about the sound of Harris, there are real implications because of transport of goods across Sound of Harris – goods for schools, care homes etc. This all comes from Stornoway, and travels down. The amount of trade across the islands is significant and it is having a real impact. At the same time, there are fewer flights. There has been a lot more disruption on the Sound of Barra also, which is generally a reliable route. Hospital appointments are a key thing – people are challenged to get appointments on time, or at all.

GR (of Uist) followed; the interisland links are ridiculous. We have the MV Loch Portain on an interisland route, and she can only sail when conditions are flat. MV Alfred is in place, but it is not well advertised and is running quite empty at times. We then have the Uig closure and the delay of MV Lord of the Isles in dry dock for the Lochboisdale route. This is covered by MV Isle of Arran, which can only operate in daylight hours. One route affects every other route, and there is a lot of disgruntlement in the community. Communications and Ar Turas continue to be an issue, and the direct award is concerning.

RD joined the meeting and added: we agree – there is a real shortage of capacity here. We asked Transport Scotland to put more capacity there and they said no. The inter-island routes are very constrained. It is worth pursuing, and it is a real tight spot – even with full deployment in the summer.

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AC said that this would be something to raise with TS later in the meeting.

JP (of Islay) commented that the community is looking forward to the new ferries. There is good engagement with CMAL over the developments and progress pictures are shared at regular intervals, which are published in the local paper to keep the community informed. Argyll and Bute council (ABC) owns Port Askaig, and they contrast with CMAL on their engagement – reluctant to engage. The problem is that we are dependent on Port Askaig being completed by October next year because we know Port Ellen will not be. There is a lot to be done and we know the rate of progress. Positively, we are pleased that CalMac listened to us about the issues with block bookings. The management of this will return to the port offices which will be a major improvement. Negatively, it has been recognised that Islay should have two vessels in operation. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, CalMac publicly announced overhaul plans to say that MV Hebridean Isles would be re-joining the Islay service from 30<sup>th</sup> November. In the days after that announcement, we had been engaging with CalMac to get an up-to-date timetable and we did not understand why it could not be done. MV Hebridean Isles now has a problem and is stuck in dry dock in Aberdeen, so we currently have a single vessel service in December which is not enough. In January, the plan from CalMac is to provide a single vessel service and we have asked for extra support. The final point affecting us is not having statistics from Ar Turas on demand utilisation. It is difficult for us to have visibility on what is happening, and we have feedback from the community to say they cannot get space. Port staff are doing a great job under extra pressure. We appreciate the work that they do, and their patience. Every time I am at one of these meetings, we all commend the port staff – it continues to be great – please pass on our thanks.

RD commented on MV Alfred – we are looking at what we can do to supplement sailings in January. He thanked JP for his comments on port staff.

EL (of Gigha), echoed DH's comments about lack of capacity around small Argyll ferry system. When we had lots of road closures, Kintyre was effectively cut off by road closures. Again, commending staff for getting us on and off the ferry safely. There was a slight impact on the timetable, but it takes time to get people on and off. We are all bearing that in mind, and the word we have had is that it won't be fixed soon. There are the usual issues with the weather, and there was a short-notice issue at Tayinloan to say that the ferry would be off due to berthing in the dark. This was soon resolved, and the ferry finished its run.

EMacN (of Barra) seconded the point around inter-island connectivity - particularly in relation to hospital appointments. The issue is as much to do with NHS as it is with ferries, and consultation timings are not good. We have people with serious health issues, and it takes about 5 hours to get to a 10- or 15-minute appointment, which could involve overnights. There has been no sympathy from the Health Board, who blame the Council on setting timetables etc. It has pushed our new community council to re-establish the transport committee. We have two new community councils. For Ar Turas there has been very little kick back – lots of support for the CalMac port staff as always in terms of how they handle the transport. The issue we have had recently is the early ferry leaving at 5am. That means people must get up at 3am to check in at 4am. It has only been for a few occasions but we're entering the odd frosty period in December-January and its worrying that our gritters do not go out until 5am, so people will be driving on ice. EMacN spoke of his involvement with the Western Isles Council Community Transport Strategy. Although it is community transport, it will impinge on public bus and air travel. He promised to report back.

DMacI (of Tiree) reported good service – the weather has been smooth. There were rumours going about that the Barra link was being axed next summer but hopefully this is just a rumour, as it is an important link for Tiree. The heating system on MV Clansman has experienced issues. For a 3.5-hour journey, it is either too hot or too cold. The release of the last week of the winter timetable release caused some grief. The island has lost a lot of spectators and competitors for the Tiree Wave Classic which has caused some pain for event organisers. Next year is the 40-year anniversary and they hope to have early dialogue with CalMac to support the event and have an extra Saturday sailing. The shelter is in the wrong place and not used at all. All that funding, for it to not be used – the island needs a minibus service. It has been a total waste of money which is unfortunate. There was an issue with bookings between Christmas and New Year, but Finlay sorted it. Lastly, we were happy to see MV Caledonian Isles now fitting at Tiree and Coll. It was great to see her coming in. The port staff at Tiree are great – especially with elderly folk.

KMacF (of Coll) seconded DMacI's earlier point about the link to Barra. When you are trying to represent a network, or a particular island, anyone anywhere is within their rights to write to CalMac. It has been quiet on Coll recently and this is a good opportunity for port staff to familiarise themselves with Ar Turas – there appears to be greater confidence among them. A good spell of weather has brought service reliability right up. In the community, there is a palpable sense of relief, and it is only then when you realise the anxiety that you usually carry. 3 livestock producers have had their bookings cancelled due to weather and we had a meeting with the NFU – they were clear that this is something which must be reviewed because CalMac's own guidelines have not been interpreted correctly. Livestock should only be cancelled because of weather, and everyone must remain seated. Agricultural haulage seems to be at the bottom of the pile. Together with Tiree, Mull and Iona, we have been working with CalMac and TS on the new

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Islands Essential Travel pilot which has gone down well. Unfortunately, it has been too quiet to properly test it.

RD commented that the principle has been set for the essential travel pilot - when we get into the summer, it can be properly tested.

KMacF added that the Christmas period will also be a test. There is some scepticism that it will work, but this is just the first stage.

BC said that he was not familiar with the details of the pilot.

KMacF replied, we have 12.5% of deck space for Coll and Tiree which is essentially held back for 10 cars, for a week. Mull and Iona have totally different travel culture. 10% of every single sailing with a 3-day release. The terms that CalMac are still not able to prioritise any type of customer. It will be a stage-by-stage process to see how we can make it work. Many ideas were abandoned, and the first thing to do was to drill down on which customers should be eligible. We and CalMac have kept the PR low-key. We did not want to advertise this to everyone. When the booking data comes in, we can see from a person's post code, the origin of the booking and then some form of analysis will inform whether eligibility is tightened.

BC added that some of that data could be used for medical appointments etc. He said that he was pleased to see that different islands have different setups, for their individual requirements.

KMacF added that it is a worthwhile project. She concluded by mentioning working with Colonsay on a few issues, including the daylight-saving issue which restricts resilience measures. Colonsay have lost Monday sailings during the drydocking period – which is 25% of their entire service. This happened back in April or May too. One thing that continues to be of disappointment is the Area Operations Manager (AOM) not setting foot on the island. She was off unwell for a period, but other places have important people at their meetings all the time – it would be nice to get a two-monthly or quarterly arrangement with our AOM. It would be nice to know that there was some interest – it is just a couple of hours of their time, and it does not require a great cost in view of what is happening elsewhere. [Action: RD agreed to check in on this].

AC2 (of Cumbrae) reflected that the onshore defence project is ongoing and there is a lot of mess. From a ferry point of view, there have been a lot of breakdowns. The reliability issues that others are seeing, are shared by us. This includes one breakdown on Sunday – a sunny day with nowhere for stranded passengers to stay. We have resilience team questions and need defined responsibilities. Another big issue is the ticketing system – huge frustration on how the system works and its overall effectiveness. We have protested and gone to the Minister. The community is disappointed with CalMac staff not knowing what the Minister has said. .

RD replied that CalMac have responded on a number of occasions to explain that there are a number of things mentioned not within CalMac's gift. These things sit with the Minister.

AC2 said that there has been no information about anything and raised the issue of season tickets.

RD disputed this to say that CalMac have responded multiple times on this subject and will continue to respond. We cannot have tickets valid for 6 months – it is not practical.

AC2 it was not a good meeting and did not show a willingness from CalMac to come back with answers.

RD said we have come back with answers time and time again.

AC pointed out that Ar Turas is on the agenda and asked that the community reporting continues.

MJD (of Mull) reported that this is has been the worst year she remembers. The community are having the usual issues of bookings showing as full, despite having capacity. There is an example of a customer going to the mainland for chemotherapy and there is a view that this is discrimination – a word used so often. She added a further point about bus connections - why when tourists go away, are locals left to wait out in the elements?

RD replied, we don't run buses. We do work with bus companies, but we can only connect to where there is a bus. If those services do not exist, unfortunately we cannot create them

AC added that we need a joined-up transport system and that should be the responsibility of all providers. The YIN feedback from last night was that people must devote several days to attend a one-day event.

MJD asked if it is policy to put an ambulance on instead of passenger cars? A medical car?

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RD answered, we always prioritise medical vehicles – certainly a blue light. We always prioritise those.

BC added that Arran faces the same problems in terms of travel connectivity.

RD said that the issue isn't interconnectivity if the services aren't there to connect. There are not enough services to connect to.

MJD and KMacF raised the situation on Colonsay as part of reporting (Monday ferry withdrawal) and issues on Lismore.

### 4.2 Sub-Group Reporting

**LUNCH (12:10 – 12:45)**

## 5 CALMAC UPDATE

### 5.1 Ar Turas

AC welcomed CalMac attendees, Diane Burke and David Hamill to the meeting.

[Action to share presentation].

David Hamill presented information on the Ar Turas Programme.

RD added that we recognise it has not been as smooth as we would have liked. We are well on track to get the system stable. Here, 'system' means software, network connectivity and staff usage. We are putting lots of effort into the control that staff have and on their training. It is a live system, and if you make a change, it is permanent. Our business processes have changed, and we are learning. When the system reaches stability, we can look at what we and customers might wish to do differently.

AC commented that the community offered to test the system at the start. It is a fear, and all the time people are seeing sailings booked up and are unable to get on to it. He shared his experience of travelling twice to Ullapool – a full ferry and he was the 23<sup>rd</sup> vehicle to get on. Better utilisation of deck space is needed, and the evidence we have is that this is not happening. Where do we go?

RD replied, those are not system issues - they are business rule issues. Late cancellations, giving notice etc. Some of these things have been flexible CalMac rules in the past. They were ok then, but not now. We need to change the rules in which we operate. If the ferry is fully booked, then it should sail full. We have introduced 24-hour notice cancellation, we need to look at commercials and their demands.

DB added – we hear it all the time. We get photos of deck space and we have interrogated the system to make sure the coordinates are correct. The system will calibrate and tell us how to maximise deck space over a period.

AC asked about charging customers for changing.

RD: there is no way of mandating people to pay and turn up. It is not a system issue.

AC said we want to understand more. There were real reservations about this system, and they have all come true. It is hurting places.

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RD replied, if people cancel last minute, that is not a system issue. It worked that way in the past, but that level of freedom cannot work now. Car decks have always sailed empty.

DB said that she wants every space on that deck used. We are still seeing space held back because people are worried about overselling, and then having to deal with that. A whole number of people can access the system at port level and close out space. This is not finger pointing – it is about supporting colleagues to feel confident in allowing the system to do what it needs to do and not interfering with it. The system is very different from Compass, where you cannot manually manipulate things. Everything is programmed and measured, and we need to allow the system to be open and to trust it. Speaking to colleagues on a particular route, that was their concern. It's about making sure that processes are adhered to internally and that we use the system in the way it was designed.

BC said, we have been trying to educate people that it does not work the same. We understood that this was a one-rule-for-all system. In the old system staff could change things.

DB agreed - that is where we started, but feedback is that we need to be able to make changes at a local level. We listened to that staff feedback and allowed them to do that. Now there is responsibility not to hold space back.

JoP asked [in Teams chat] if it would be possible to bring forward a presentation that shows the data that demonstrates cancellations on each route? When they are being made and the numbers? [Action – answer to be provided].

BC asked what incidents and issues have been reported across the network that have not yet been identified? The community has lost visibility of what you can do. An online system should be online. There is more to this. The system was so much more and so much better.

JP added, we were sold this system on the basis that it would be a seamless transfer. As Bill said, we are 6 months after implementation and you are still producing papers saying we want to identify, evaluate and understand requirements. Surely the requirements are understood by now. We spent a lot of time with your staff on the Compass side going through all the statistics to help you and to help us to manage and understand the service. We got to a stage of having a package of dashboard statistics, which for us, were extremely useful. They have now disappeared. We also had some stats on block bookings and so on. If you [CalMac] are going to be making any more changes, talk to the ferry committee – engage, because that has not been happening. We have hauliers on our ferry committee – let us talk about how we can once and for all get it right with a proactive input from us. In the previous system, a customer could book for Islay, and it would tell you what sailings there were for each port. The new system makes you book for either of the two ports, not just for Islay. This causes a lot of wasted time for those making bookings and for staff. Our AOM was aware of that, sympathised, and actually proposed a workaround. What are the non-resolved issues and are they still there or will they be dealt with? This is a big deal for us. Can we get a timescale on statistics?

RD replied, absolutely. We know exactly what is going into our new release and can give you a list of all the changes. Some of them are marginal changes and we still need to work with our staff to make sure they're using the system the right way. We will work with you, Bill and everyone else to understand what more you would like to say. We can give you a list of fixes, but they are around the margin. We will get that to you. [Action] We cannot get statistics right now because we are not closing sailings down the way we should. That sits with us, and we need to make sure it is happening. We are aiming to get those back as soon as possible. We want to share capacity with you, last minute cancellations etc so we can illustrate the impact it has and how we manage it.

JP we can help.

RD: I agree.

KMacF raised a new point; it was brought to our attention that half of over 65s cannot use the internet – this is another aspect of the Ar Turas system. No-shows are only a feature on part of the network. Port staff reserving two cancelled lorry spaces – this is vital to us when we get one ferry a day. The standby queue will be separate, and they will take up these spaces. These are conceptual issues of concern. We desperately hope it is not 'one-size-fits-all' solutions because some communities must do things a certain way or they risk losing money because of the actual structure of the booking system.

RD added that the pilot, for example, is working. That is an example of flexibility to do things on an individual basis.

DB commented that staff need to be able to access and manipulate the system for this kind of reason. We want in general for the system to be used in a way this it was designed.

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AC suggested a separate one-off meeting about Ar Turas to have a proper discussion. This would be useful, as there is general discontent with the system. [Action].

RD agreed - we can do that. I will emphasise again that many of the problems are not system related.

DB returned to Jim's point about community involvement. We [CalMac] need to act on visibility of detail and asked David (present) to prepare this detail for sharing [Action as above]. We have an improved test environment now with eDea and it is about how we engage with you on that. Maybe there should be a separate conversation and a way to engage you in that test process. We are very keen to move it on to a more positive space. We do not want a system that does not work for us. We want to engage with you and give you comfort.

RD further added about engagement, particularly on the contract award – what exactly will that look like? We will engage in a very open way to make sure the contract works. We will work with what the Minister, TS and communities say. The process has not properly started yet but we will embrace it. What exactly will be in that contract to allow more flexibility? The Minister wants it to be more community focussed and less commercial – it will be good to see what that means.

AC added that time is very short, and we are concerned that it will lead to more of the same culture of management.

RD agreed - it is very short. He said he shares that concern and agrees that the contract needs to be more flexible – it is very tight now.

AC: we want to ensure there is a monitoring and measuring side to it.

RD said that it is not CalMac that says no to these things. Some of the issues mentioned for example – more services on sound of Barra, Transport Scotland denied this service, not CalMac. How will that reflect in a different contract? There is a lot for discussion. We are entirely supportive of a community focussed direction. The other thing to speak about is this difficult financial period. £600m needs to be found from this year's budget and we have no insight into it. We do know that budgets will be challenging. We want to make sure that investment goes where it needs to, and we will work with you [FCB] to enhance it and to make sure that the economic case is put forward. The cost of ferries and operations is only going up. It will be challenging over the next 10 years.

### 5.2 Maintenance Programme

RD explained that CalMac was in a difficult period from March. The Executive were meeting twice daily to manage the crisis. There were more challenges around some of the smaller vessels than usual. We have managed to work our way through that, and now into dry dock, things are going broadly to plan. Some delays are now emerging that we need to work through. MV Lord of the Isles was due out yesterday, but some there has been a delay, and this will push the schedule back by a week and a bit. Finlay is working on the implications this will have on the routes. MV Hebridean Isles is due to depart today after some challenges around oil pressure on her main engine. We are working through that, and it has implications for Islay. We are in touch with Jim and Islay Ferry Committee. MV Alfred is still used for now, but as we get over Christmas, she will be needed as a backup so she will be fully utilised.

He continued; this is already the most complex time because of the state of vessel maintenance. We can only work with what we have. £45m was spent on maintenance this year. It used to be 2 weeks, and now it's 3, then 4. We are working on principles of how we deploy in the future. We cannot continue to be this stretched, where the slightest issue causes chaos. We run at maximum all the time, and because of that, we cannot always deliver. MV Alfred is 3 years old, and Pentland require 12 hours of scheduled maintenance per week. CalMac gets zero. We are preparing a paper with principles that should be followed in the future. Running at maximum all the time can only lead to failure.

GR added that MV Lord of the Isles is delayed with MV Isle of Arran now covering (restricted to daylight hours). She asked for an update on MV Isle of Arran.

RD replied, there is no update. It is a radar issue.

He added; we need flexibility in a contract to allow us to make decisions. We have no space to do anything.

GR: If there is no maintenance planned what do engineers do onboard?

RD said that maintenance is ongoing all the time. There are pre-start-up checks, and it takes 1.5 hours pre-launching and running engines. The ships are run every day with daily maintenance and checks, but this does not go as far as stopping the vessel and taking a good look at everything. If you go back years, timetables will allow for a spare afternoon to devote to this.

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AC2 asked what happened to nightshift maintenance?

RD said that if there is an incident, engineers are brought in.

RC added the point that vessels are being used to the maximum, whilst communities are asking for more.

RD replied, there are more vessels coming with greater capacity, so we recognise that we cannot reduce services. In our paper, we say that all ferry companies decide on mid-life extensions. We are already at the stage where it would be worth doing some mid-life extensions, but we have a small window to do it. Some vessels are beyond that and it's no longer financially viable.

AC: that's the case we've been making with CMAL and maintenance.

### 5.3 CSAT Reporting

### 5.4 Live-Aboard Crew Options

### 5.5 Communications | Drop-in Sessions Feedback

DB proposed that a workshop is set up, arranged for January to scope communications properly. Participants should be agreed – a subgroup? [Action]  
CalMac can offer dedicated resources – head of communications, head of customer experience and customer information manager.

She continued; this would be a good way of making sure the FCB have live sight. It is important to agree membership of the workshop and how we take that forward. We will provide the dedicated resource - senior level decision maker. We will govern it internally through the CSG [which Gail and Bill attend], and externally through this board.

AC asked if this group would work in a confidential space. The fact that these groups are working, and we have a closed room arrangement embarrasses us – it is important that we agree to avoid any misunderstanding.

AC2 commented that the FCB cannot share some things with the community or what the FCB are doing.

DB suggested perhaps at the workshop we can agree the scope, and asked if the group were agreed with this approach? She asked that the FCB let her know who the participants should be so that it can be set up.

JP asked if this segment of the agenda should include drop in session feedback. Will the people who attended the meetings get feedback? Some were expecting responses. Will that happen separately?

DB commented that this is a separate discussion, but we can look at it as part of stakeholder engagement then we would absolutely look at that.

JP asked BC, who attended the drop-in session on Arran if attendees got their feedback.

BC confirmed that formal feedback had been circulated.

### 5.6 Update | Advance Standby & Route Prioritisation Matrix

## 6 MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

AC welcomed the Minister for Transport, Fiona Hyslop to the call.

MfT began by sharing that she was happy to be part of the meeting and hoped that it had been productive thus far. This is an opportunity to speak with you once again about the CHFS3 award. The opportunity to meet you [AC] in person on the day that the award announcement was made was much appreciated. There has now been a short period for reflection and time to digest what has been announced. For



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reassurance – although officials have been taking part in engagements to date, that will continue and thanks to those who have helped to facilitate this to date. It was a good meeting yesterday with the Unions.

MfT continued; we are aware that there is more than one community on an island and travel distances are extensive. Everything is subject to a due diligence in terms of financial and legal risks. The tender for this went out on 24 November. We should be able to appoint by end of this year. We are on track for that. The other area that you may want to consider is the role of a Ferry Committee Board in what goes on continuously into the next contract – it is something we would be interested in progressing. There is also something around the role of more formal mechanisms within Council areas and Island areas. I [MfT] have met with leaders of the affected councils and asked them for a lead officer to work with. What is the role of community Councils? Is this something that works continuously alongside? We can return to this point in future meetings, but it is important to have on the radar. The main concern is getting the contract and awards right. The role of a ferry committee board in what goes on, continuously in the next contract.

She continued; CMAL will have already covered the small vessel replacement programme and they will have updated you that all is on track. The recent issue is when we would be able to provide the first funding for that, and it was always going to be at the end of financial 2024, on the plans that CMAL already had in place. It has just been moved into the beginning of 2025 that is not a change to the programme, just when we anticipate the funds will need to be released. It does help us in a very pressured position, and it doesn't disrupt the process or the timing of what we already intended, in terms of the programme. That probably covers the question of funding, but there may be other day-to-day issues discussed earlier in the meeting.

AC thanked the Minister for her comments. He added that we [the FCB] have continued conversations with communities since the announcement and it is fair to say that most of the communities have a view on the direct award. There needs to be an emphasis on how we get a contract that actually deals with the issues communities care about. We are keen to do that, but time is short. We have already had some of the consultation meetings and we haven't yet had the chance to speak with Chris [of TS] yet in the meeting. You referred to the vessel replacement programme, and we asked CMAL earlier today for assurances and to raise the question of changing financial commitment, not a change in vessels coming into the water. The other issue you mentioned is the future of the Community Board. We reviewed a paper today about how we could work in a better way and should have this completed for February. That would be a good input to yourselves on how the Board should work. We are keen to maintain the community voice, but also to make sure that there is an emphasis and duty on us to do all we can and engage with different sectors. Last night we spoke with the Young Islanders Network, who had some fantastic ideas. This will become a staple part in how we work with them going forward. The main thing for today was to get a feel for bringing the service closer to government. Naturally, there is an opportunity to bring change. What will happen with the structure of the tri-partite?

MfT: Over the next year I want the focus to be on making sure we get a new contract in as good a place as it can be, but also making sure that CMAL and CalMac operate at getting these vessels in and doing so productively. Whatever happens, we want to see a change with how transparency and accountability works so that there is a far more collective ownership of issues, and shared resolution of issues. What the Teckal compliance approach will mean, is that the Scottish Government is required, and would need to have a position on the Board and be able to drive a lot of the changes that we want to see. This also means thinking through some of the feedback, how it is managed as an organisation and what the remit is of senior management to get the right level of focus, resilience, and responsiveness on an area basis. We want to see that sort of change happen, and a decentralised kind of position that is more responsive to common sense views on what should run and when. You know the local issues in your area – livestock moves, festivals, you name it. In terms of the structure aspect, through the due diligence work we want to identify the risks, particularly in relation to share of assets. I [MfT] want to make sure I know where we sit with this because making decisions about the organisation and how the organisations work closely together. CMAL and CalMac are quite different organisations, and having brought different public sector organisations together, it is usually the culture and style of different organisations that is the big challenge. Organisational change cannot get in the way of delivering the main services. This doesn't mean that it won't happen, just not in the next 6 months.

AC commented that what communities want to know is that there is a cohesive official body working there to give accountability back in a clear line of responsibility. We see different groups passing the buck from one to the other.

MfT replied, there is work underway on the inner structure within the existing setup, but this work has not yet been seen and it may help us in terms of making sure you know who to go to. This is a very practical point, that relevant bodies are actually meeting on a weekly basis to make sure that everything is in place for the movement of the new vessels as they come in over the next year. It is really helpful to hear what your priorities are in this.

KMacF mentioned that the MfT statement to parliament contained 'culture change' as a caveat to direct award. That at least was welcome. We are agreed that timescale is short, and this has been expressed

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by more than one person here today. We have had the pleasure of working with your TS officials at two meetings so far on CHFS3. We are agreed that the accelerator needs to be put down on that to start getting a forum pulled together. As Angus said, we met with CMAL and had a conundrum. It was disappointing to hear the same prejudice against catamarans and the same finger pointing blame game. Assuming we work with the same people, how will a culture of change be brought about? To me, it needs to be opened, so we all understand what we are dealing with.

MfT: On the point of consultation – agreed, this is a limited time, and we need to press ahead. As of last night, I approved a formal consultation that will now be issued to allow wider input generally as part of that structure. We are now looking at what the regular check ins are – with Councils, Council Leaders, FCB, Unions. We need to look at freight, haulage, and flexibility. One of the discussions yesterday was about timetabling more flexibility to make sure empty vessels at unsociable hours aren't sailing. This may vary route to route, but we need something more responsive. In terms of the culture change – it cannot be personalised. It would not be responsible to personalise things. It is a key responsibility of the board and organisations to ensure they have a management in place that reflects the cultural change that we want to see. It is about attitude, approach and how people work together. There is a world of difference between a commercial only contract driven by pre-determined and locked in timetabling where you get penalties for not meeting – it should be about public service. This is a conversation to be had with the Chair of CalMac. If that gives the shape of how you effect change in an organisation, that is very important. Remote-removed mindsets should not be in senior positions for a responsive contract.

AC: On the point of assets and community needs, we have to be aware that both sides count.

MfT: yesterday afternoon we wanted to make sure that everyone understands the new contract is about community need. It has to be defined clearly so that there is a common understanding on what that is, and this is what my officials have been bringing to bear in short order.

BC added some background to the feedback FCB have been getting. It is welcome news that there is change coming, and welcome that 'community input' has been referred to multiple times. If the culture is set by senior management – how do we influence that culture change without doing any structural change?

MfT replied, I do think structural change is the challenge for the organisations affected. The decision for that is the Board that I appoint for several different organisations. I cannot and will not be in a position of personalising anything for an individual or group of individuals. This is a major change, as a new contract and we as a government, need to focus on the Board itself. That is as much as can be said on it.

BC said that he appreciated the answer.

AC said that a big ask from consultation was on decision making and management structure being more evolved over time. Is it possible to change this as part of the contract?

MfT said yes, the opportunity ( and with 6 new vessels too) is there. There are challenges with the age of vessels and reliability. That will change. You will have more insight, but currently there are 3 different areas within the CalMac operation, but they operate it as a system. Some greater grouping of networks that are more decentralised would give a more responsive performance and to articulate this in the contract would be a good thing. There has been a period of 4 or 5 different devolved areas, and they were far more responsive in need. Your input would be very helpful. Everything centralised to Gourrock, and decisions being taken there, decentralising would make sense, but you would need the resilience of extra vessels to do that effectively. What would that look like from your point of view?

AC it is around the 'one size fits all' approach to decision making. Local people on the ground know what is going on. The other side is having managers out and about on the islands, making decisions based on lived experience. Better use of resources and better outcomes for everyone.

MfT: it may be new staff or new management across the piece. It is difficult to change people's existing contracts, but recruiting new people, you can stipulate that you may be required to relocate. It is easier to do in the future, but you have a good point.

AC said that he sees this as an evolution – not a blunt instrument changing jobs etc. How to influence the system over time and do it in a logical way.

MfT commented that you do not have to physically be in a place to contribute at a senior level.

JP asked what MfT sees a relationship between DML and CFL being. Need for structural review?

MfT said that this may be part of the solution on what we come up with, but we may want to rethink and feed into Chris if you have any thoughts on that.

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EL asked that at Board level, there is islander and lived experience. We have capable people on our islands who can be useful in a Board context.

MfT agreed – you are eyes and ears and can spot talent and encourage them to apply. Please do that, it is important.

AC commented that the Board have been doing that, recognising skills. It is important that people feel confident to employ and we encourage them as much as we can and will continue to do so.

MfT apologised to Joanna for not being able to visit Uist but promised she would return at a time that made more sense.

GR said that communities are not totally behind the direct award. Fear is real, we cannot continue with what we have in place and that fear is reality and we cannot continue with the operator like this in how it is managed.

MfT: this is not business as usual; this is change.

AC thanked the Minister for joining the meeting.

MfT thanked the Board and expressed that she hopes to continue this relationship.

## 7 TRANSPORT SCOTLAND UPDATE

### 7.1 New Contract – Lifeline services

CW welcomed to the group and mentioned that the Minister had largely covered the first two TS agenda items.

AC agreed but said that he would like to continue the conversation on the new Contract and consultation prospects. The Board and communities seem to be of the consensus that the new contract will be more of the same, but the Board are keen to feed in and understand TS position on what they see it looking like.

CW began, this is a valuable exchange to have that open conversation. On the consultation events, that is not the be-all and end-all of consultation. There is clearly a way to go for consultations to happen.

BC added a point about communication between CalMac, CMAL, TS and the ferries community Board.

CW commented that meetings between these groups as one has gone well in the past on strategic issues. He asked if there were ways to do this differently. This could be a format we adopt going forward. Is there something we can do to steer that in a strategic direction?

BC replied, there is not just one approach because islands all need a different service but whoever comes on to these Boards should have previous knowledge and understand communities. People should know the history and where people sit. It's important to know that and understand the audience.

CW: That is the challenge set for CHFS3 – getting the correct resources and without Trevor here I can only speak for my side of things.

KMacF added that she is a member of one of the sub-groups for CHFS and admitted that without knowing legal side of things, can we get a steer from someone? What do you envisage doing at TS? Is there a marine contract you can take off the shelf? Will you take the existing contract and tweak it, or is there another way? We must start saying to people, here are your choices. This will get the focus, and then apply it to the network and see what route by route needs are in detail. Is there a structural starting point?

EL asked what parameters can be influenced and what cannot. People being consulted and giving input – what happens with feedback? It is the golden thread of 'this is what you told us before' so we know there is an issue. We need to know the parameters of what can be changed and what communities can influence and what they cannot in the contract going forward. If we are not able to tweak the contract in the way that communities want, it leads to disenfranchisement.

GR added that it needs to be very carefully managed.

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EL said that it must be framed in such a way that shows problems are understood and give an email, posters of how to get in touch with the right messaging.

AC2 added that we [the FCB] would not want to lose track of requests.

JP commented on the question of who to engage with. Islay just had a drop-in session with your people [TS]. The few people that went used it as a complaint session as they were not quite sure what it was about. It would be surprising if anyone at all had read the CHFS contract, and there does not appear to be a summary document for people to understand what they would like to change or keep the same. The general public tend to use the ferry committee to some extent, and it acts as a central point to them negotiating and discussing with the various parties.

CW said that he would have to check with the team but that we need to speak to the wider community, through ferry committees or directly, but from that there are business groups, transport forums. That is the discussion we are having now, and we share in that viewpoint.

AC2 said that discussions need to be structured around what people need – service provision, communications, whatever else. These things as opposed to format and what needs to be done differently. More focussed topics.

CW said things like price, people see as being set through the contract, about fares and we would certainly benefit from feedback on topics like that specifically. We want to look at previous contracts, which we've just done (in 2020) and some amendments were made. A review of what worked well. This contract before the direct award is a more branched review of the contract and it shared from the inside to get your head around. What we do is set out 5 or 10 things of what you would like to see differently, from the point of view of the operator as well as communities. A controversial one is; should the contract low mid-life extensions for vessels? Some vessels for example are at the stage where they would benefit from that.

AC mentioned that in looking at the life of a vessel, speaking of mid-life extensions. Who takes decisions on that? Are you happy now that maintenance of vessels and finance available can be addressed in the contract. What would that look like?

AC2 asked, how much development of these things are you thinking?

CW said that this would be something discussed in consultation. Using this to draw up themes from community consultations.

AC2 asked how the Board and community feedback can be collected. Running out of time, can we help to gather feedback from communities on aspects of the contract.

CW the Minister for Transport and the First Minister have both said in public and in parliament that this cannot be business as usual. Whatever we get out of this must be different. How we get there, the timeline and what it looks like, all needs a lot of work, and we will dedicate a lot of resources to that and as part of the due diligence process. In a direct award situation, it won't necessarily be the case that we say to CalMac there you go. From an official's perspective, the ability to change it is needed so that it's not as rigid a structure. We will need to set that out and see what that means.

AC said that we need to be able to make changes.

CW mentioned that his team are working their way through the themes raised by communities and being flexible is part of this. It is an extremely tight timeframe for this, there is however a reality of whether we can get it over in that timeline. We want to deliver something far better and its important to get it right.

KMacF we are aware that we are not the only people as communities who would want it changed. There are other forces out there who might like to look at that contract and suggest their own changes. How do we implement it?

CW said that he does not want to mis-sell this, it needs to be costed and checked completely for feasibility. But you [KMacF] are right, there are others who would like influence.

Discussion continued about the structure of DML and CalMac, and whether this will be defined in the contract. CW referred to what the Minister said about structural changes and management.

KMacF asked when we speak of 'culture change', nobody is under any illusions as to what we mean. When you start playing around with the phrase, is there any way of finding out how many managers they have?

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CW said that there is a lot to keep track of. Project Neptune has been put to the side for now, the final item on the agenda was investment budgets.

AC added that there are constraints on government that are very serious for budget.

CW said that of course money has been invested in Islay vessels and this has been committed. Our last business case for small vessel replacement programme must go through. The Minister has made clear that it is tight, and in my experience, the tightest it has ever been throughout the years. CalMac, CMAL and TS are clear that these are not one off spends, it must be continuous investment. From our perspective we are still pushing forward with vessel designs and keeping on top of projects. Confidence that we are in a good space with this. There is list of asks and we are clear that it is continuous.

GR commented that the way it is understood is that CalMac asks TS if they can provide extra capacity and that the answer is no.

CW mentioned that one of these requests is the mez deck and some of the money for extra capacity has gone into the MV Alfred.

GR asked if there had been any request to support with the current issues.

CW said not to his knowledge, but that he would take this back to check it wasn't two different things, the current capacity issues and what he had in mind.

KMacF raised a point about Colonsay Monday sailings and agreed to share detail with CW [Action].

AC thanked CW for joining the meeting and CW requested that invitation for next meeting is sent in advance.

**7.2** Consultation Process / Project Neptune  
Covered in section 7.1

**7.3** Investment Budgets  
Covered in section 7.1

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No.	Action	Owner	Status
1	<p><b>RELIEF CREWING</b>                      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.</p>	AC	Item to remain on action list for discussion later.
2	<p><b>TS UPDATE</b>                      Possibility of separating route performance data for Coll &amp; Tiree to be investigated.</p>	RD	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> BC offered to contact CFL to ask for data for Coll &amp; Tiree to be broken out. Dashboards are established; nothing will change until the new system is in place for fresh data.                      BC agreed to add small isles to his notes. –  <b>CFL confirmed data will be reported from August</b></p>
3	<p><b>HARBOUR DUES - COLL</b>                      KH agreed to follow up with BF regarding harbour dues paid.</p>	KH	
4	<p><b>CMAL – CUMBRAE ENGAGEMENT</b>                      KH agreed to follow up with team regarding engagement around improvements to Cumbrae Slip – weather resilience.</p>	KH	<p><b>Complete.</b>                      This was completed and engagement has taken place on several occasions with very positive outcomes. Engagement with the Ferry Committee and the public will continue throughout the project.</p>
5	<p><b>NOTICEBOARD COMMUNICATIONS</b>                      RD to explore providing CalMac communications in a format better suited for printing on noticeboards, i.e., a PDF printed with the information in a way that customers should see it.</p>	RD	Stewart Maxwell (Director of Communications) has been in touch with KMacF. Brand design team working to provide a version in pdf for major comms which will allow for local printing or for posting on local online accounts. This cannot be done for all communications.
6	<p><b>AR TURAS – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE</b>                      BC agreed to share a list of issues with RD to respond/escalate as required</p>	BC	<b>Complete.</b>
7	<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>                      RD to arrange communications workshop with a subset of individuals, including commercial director and comms team to establish what is required from stakeholders of all kinds – commercial, islanders, tourists.</p> <p><b>Update 01/12/23:</b> Proposal to hold a workshop on communications to be arranged in January. Purpose: to scope communications properly.                      - FCB to agree participants. AS can arrange.</p>	FCB/AS	
8	<p><b>CMAL FCB REPORTING</b>                      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.</p>	KH/BF	CMAL now working on an interactive map of the network which details timelines of forthcoming projects.
9	<p><b>FAIR FARES ENGAGEMENT</b>                      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.</p>	CW	

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10	<b>GIGHA SPECIFIC NEEDS – FERRY BERTHS</b> ICP; there will be a significant change in how the ferry berths at Gigha. CW confirmed that the plan is available in terms of vessel and port infrastructure, but that consultation has not yet happened. CW asked EL for specifics on what needs raised from a Gigha perspective.	EL	
11	<b>EXPENDITURE TRACKING</b> Re: tracing the expenditure of the £695 million as the project progresses. Where can expenditure be viewed as time goes on, given slippages such as those mentioned? CMAL offered to add financial element to the project’s timeline. KH took action to speak with TS on how to relay this information.	KH	This is part of the interactive map [Action 8] preparation and options on how to present the information are being considered.
12	<b>PRIORITISATION MATRIX FEEDBACK</b> PB agreed to return to the subgroup regarding prioritization matrix feedback. Can show the level of detail and where specifically feedback has come from. Subgroup can review before any decisions are made. PB agreed to schedule the subgroup meeting.	PB	Information included in CalMac pack for meeting on 1 December 2023.
13	<b>TIMELINE OF NEW CONTRACT WORK</b> AC asked if it would be possible to share an outline and timeline of work on the new contract.	CW/TMcl	Paper – to be discussed 1 Dec.
14	<b>FCB CONTACT POSTERS</b> FCB Contact posters to be created, updated, and put back up for greater visibility – ferries & ports	AC	
15	<b>BOARD WAY FORWARD REPORT</b> JoP agreed to take feedback on ‘Board way forward’ discussion to develop the report.	JoP	
16	<b>SMALL VESSEL REPLACEMENT – WEBSITE INFORMATION</b> 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	An update will be placed on the project page shortly, expecting presentation of the funding decision in January 2024.
17	<b>AOM VISIBILITY - COLL</b> KMacF raised the point of AOM visibility in Coll. Suggestion made for two monthly or quarterly arrangement to visit. RD agreed to check on this.	RD	
18	<b>ROUTE CANCELLATION DATA</b> JoP asked (in Teams chat) if it would be possible to create a presentation that shows cancellations on each route? When are cancellations made and what are the numbers?	RD	
19	<b>EBOOKING FIXES &amp; AR TURAS MEETING</b> 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 specifically to share Ar Turas concerns.	RD/DH	
20	<b>COLONSAY SAILINGS</b> KMacF agreed to share details on Colonsay Monday sailings with CW.	KMacF	

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21	<b>CARRYING STATISTICS</b> 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.	RD	
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