

Improving every journey



Customer service and accessibility plan

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Executive Summary

At Caledonian MacBrayne, our customer vision is to provide a seamless, inclusive and accessible travel experience for all passengers. We want every customer to travel with ease, confidence and dignity, knowing that our services are designed to support equality, independence and safety.

This Customer Service and Accessibility Plan sets out how we will improve the experience customers have with us across every part of their journey — from planning and booking, to arriving at ports, travelling on vessels, receiving support from our teams, and connecting with onward transport where we are able to influence this.

We will do this by setting clear and consistent standards for customer experience and accessibility across our main customer touchpoints: our website and app, customer service and telephone channels, ports, vessels, and, where possible, multi-modal onward connections.

Our approach will be shaped by national and regional policy, including the Inclusive Transport Strategy and Scotland's Accessible Transport Framework. It will also be guided by customer feedback, customer insight, community needs, our Customer Steering Group and our Accessibility Advisory Board. This will help ensure that the changes we make are meaningful, evidence-led and focused on long-term benefits for customers and communities.

Through this plan, we will:

- Create a clear blueprint for a consistent and accessible customer experience across all locations, channels and customer groups.
- Use customer insight as a core part of business decision-making, turning data and feedback into measurable action that reflects customer and community needs.
- Deliver future-ready, multi-channel contact options, supported by skilled colleagues who can help customers resolve issues effectively.
- Develop brand-aligned retail experiences on shore and on board that improve customer satisfaction, engage communities and support revenue growth.
- Support delivery of key CHFS3 outcomes: ensuring accessibility, improving customer experience and increasing community engagement.
- Aim to establish CalMac as a leader in accessibility within the maritime industry.
- Demonstrate our commitment to removing barriers, promoting independence and ensuring that everyone can travel with equity, dignity and safety.

The action plan below summarises the improvements we will deliver across 2026 and 2027. Progress will be tracked and reported through our contractual and organisational performance reports.

1. Introduction

We understand that every journey matters. Our services connect people to work, education, healthcare, family, businesses, tourism and essential services across Scotland's island, peninsula and coastal communities.



At Caledonian MacBrayne, our customer vision is to provide a seamless, inclusive and accessible travel experience for all passengers — ensuring ease, building trust and confidence, and supporting equality and dignity.

This Customer Service and Accessibility Plan sets out how we will continue to improve the experience customers have with us across the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services network. It explains the actions we will take to make journeys easier to plan, simpler to book, more accessible, better supported and more consistent across our ports, vessels and customer service channels.

Our approach recognises that customers have different needs and expectations. Some customers travel with us every day, while others may be using our services for the first time. Some customers may need additional support before, during or after travel, including customers with reduced mobility, disabled customers, older people, families, carers and customers travelling in unfamiliar circumstances.

We want customers to feel informed, included and confident at every stage of their journey. To achieve this, we will continue to listen to customer feedback, work closely with communities and accessibility partners, and use insight to shape practical improvements across the network.

This plan is also an important part of how we will deliver the CHFS3 outcomes of ensuring accessibility, improving customer experience and increasing community engagement. By embedding customer service and accessibility into our everyday decisions, standards, training, communication and design, we will help create a ferry service that supports independence, dignity, safety and confidence for all customers.

2. Our commitment to our customers

We know that ferry services are lifeline connections for many of the communities we serve. Customers rely on us for work, education, healthcare, family life, tourism, business and everyday journeys. That is why customer service and accessibility are central to how we plan, design and deliver our services.

Our commitment is to continue to improve every stage of the customer journey by making our services easier to use, more inclusive, more consistent and more responsive to customer needs.

We will focus on practical improvements that help customers:

- Find clear and accessible information before and during travel.
- Book and manage journeys more easily.
- Understand what support is available and how to request it.
- Move through ports and vessels with greater confidence.
- Receive timely and clear communication, especially during disruption.
- Share feedback that leads to meaningful improvement.
- Feel listened to through stronger engagement with communities, customers and accessibility groups.



3. Protecting customers' needs

We will strengthen the way accessibility and customer needs are built into our decision-making, standards and day-to-day ways of working. This will help ensure that customer rights, legal responsibilities and accessibility requirements are considered consistently when we make major service, business process or infrastructure changes.

We will:

- Ensure Equality Impact Assessments — EQIAs — are completed and submitted in line with process for major service changes, changes to business processes and infrastructure updates.
- Embed EQIAs into governance structures, project approval processes and our usual ways of working across the organisation.
- Create a CalMac Travel Assistance Standard that demonstrates our responsibility to assist passengers with reduced mobility under retained EU Regulation 1177/2010, while also demonstrating our anticipatory duties to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- Create a dedicated area of the CalMac Accessibility Hub that explains legislation and regulatory responsibilities relating to accessibility at Caledonian MacBrayne.

This will help customers understand the standards we work to, the responsibilities we have, and how accessibility is considered as part of the way we plan, improve and deliver services.

4. Digital experience and service

We want our digital services to be easier to use, accessible and shaped by the people who rely on them. We will continue to improve our website, app and digital customer journeys so they support both regular travellers and people using our services for the first time.

We will:

- Create a continuous development approach to digital improvements, allowing key customer and user groups to actively participate in shaping and evolving the digital experience.
- Engage island communities in a visible and meaningful way throughout digital development, including through the Technology Steering Committee, Customer Steering Group and Accessibility Advisory Board.
- Support multi-modal travel by working towards a seamless customer experience for booking different modes of transport across Scotland.
- Work with transport partners, including ScotRail and Citylink, to align approaches and maximise the impact of API development to support seamless front-end integrations.
- Enable simplified booking flows and easier access to tickets after booking, using a mobile-first approach while avoiding additional effort or complexity for customers who book in person.



- Provide proactive and supported customer journeys from the point of booking through to travel completion, with real-time, user-friendly and easy-to-understand information.
- Ensure we meet WCAG 2.2 AA standards as a minimum across our digital platforms, and that accessibility requirements are built into all digital projects and change processes from the beginning.
- Where digital platforms or pages are not yet compliant with WCAG 2.2 AA, maintain a clear and prioritised roadmap towards compliance.

These improvements will help customers plan, book and travel with greater confidence, whatever channel they choose to use.

5. Accessible environments

We want our ports and vessels to be welcoming, consistent and as accessible as possible. We will set clearer standards for customer spaces and work with partners and specialists to identify improvements that support safer, easier and more independent travel.

We will:

- Create a CalMac Customer Experience and Accessibility Standard for port environments, offering clear guidance and best practice on accessibility features that must, should or could be included in line with legislation and best practice.
- Create a CalMac Customer Experience and Accessibility Standard for vessel environments, offering clear guidance and best practice on accessibility features that must, should or could be included in line with legislation and best practice.
- Review RNIB’s recommended infrastructure adjustments, prioritising safety and barrier-free access, and align these with CalMac Accessibility Standards where feasible and practical.
- Collaborate with RNIB to explore implementing a digital wayfinding solution — an innovative visual signage technology — to improve wayfinding and accessibility across ports and vessels.
- Review and improve how information about accessibility facilities is shared with customers before and during travel.
- Develop a proactive lift maintenance and resilience plan, including scheduled inspections, contingency arrangements, spare parts inventory and improved technical support for repairs.
- Create a dedicated area of the CalMac Accessibility Hub focused on accessible environments and the Accessibility Standards.
- Establish and roll out a CalMac Design ‘DNA’ standard for all customer spaces, including ports and vessels, to support consistency, brand recognition, quality of experience and accessibility across the network and infrastructure.

This work will help customers better understand what facilities are available and support a more consistent experience across the network.



6. Inclusive communication and customer journeys

Clear, timely and inclusive communication is essential to customer confidence. We will improve the way we communicate before, during and after travel, with particular focus on customers who require assistance and customers affected by disruption.

We will:

- Streamline and evolve pre-travel information, booking and handover processes to capture and respond to individual customer needs across the Customer Engagement Centre, Operations and Fleet Management for customers requiring assistance.
- Review the full end-to-end customer communications journey and deliver changes that improve customer understanding and build confidence in the service.
- Redefine the disruption communications journey by improving messaging, creating targeted communications that are sensitive to local context, and building improved quality and delivery checks so all customers are kept informed.
- Work with the Customer Steering Group, Area teams and Stakeholders to define the approach to network status communications, with particular focus on when AMBER status is used and what communications are associated with it to reduce confusion.
- Map key customer journeys to identify pain points for customers and colleagues, and identify continuous improvement actions.
- Review boarding practices across ports and vessels for customers requiring lift access, assistance and mobility aids, ensuring compliance with legislation, policy and operational standards.
- Deliver awareness campaigns encouraging customers to book assistance ahead of travel and increasing understanding of the support available.
- Implement feedback mechanisms to track and address customer experiences after travel, especially for customers who require assistance.
- Launch awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits of booking assistance in advance and increase awareness of the types of support available to customers.

These actions will help customers feel better informed, better supported and more confident throughout their journey.

7. People skills and capability

Our people play a central role in delivering a positive, accessible and consistent customer experience. We will invest in training, learning and support so colleagues have the confidence, knowledge and skills to meet customer needs across the network.

We will:

- Establish the Centre of Excellence as the central point for raising standards, confidence and knowledge through training and learning across front-line teams.



- Use the Centre of Excellence to support improved customer outcomes and more consistent service across the network.
- Refresh and bring in-house critical large-scale training so that Caledonian MacBrayne context, customer experience and service standards are central to the content and delivery.
- Include Disability Awareness and Assistance Training as a mandatory part of new staff inductions.
- Introduce refresher training whenever updates are made, ensuring continued alignment with best practice.
- Review training requirements for Disability Awareness and Disability Assistance modules for delivery through the Centre of Excellence.
- Conduct a disability awareness capability assessment across all departments to identify confidence levels, capability gaps and targeted development needs.

This will help ensure customers receive informed, respectful and consistent support from colleagues throughout their journey.

8. Insight driven improvements

Customer feedback, data and lived experience will help guide the decisions we make and the improvements we prioritise. We will strengthen the way we gather, understand and act on insight from customers and communities.

We will:

- Establish an Island Community Panel and launch targeted research to bring the voice of communities and islanders more strongly into Caledonian MacBrayne customer insight.
- Use this insight to guide decision-making and customer outcomes.
- Put customer insight at the centre of decision-making and design.
- Establish monthly Accessibility Insights reports to review feedback through RADAR and track progress on actionable items.
- Introduce assistance requests and complaints per passenger into monthly reporting metrics.
- Share tailored accessibility insights through the Customer Steering Group directly with Area Managers and operational teams.
- Share insights, customer feedback and lived experience stories through dedicated pages on the Accessibility Hub.

By listening more effectively and acting on what we hear, we will make improvements that better reflect the needs of customers and communities.



9. Partnerships and co-design

We know that the best improvements are developed with the people who use, deliver and understand our services. We will continue to work with customers, communities, accessibility groups, transport partners and industry bodies to shape better outcomes.

We will:

- Strengthen collaboration with Transport Scotland, MACS, PAMIS, RNIB and other key stakeholders to support accessible transport initiatives and secure funding for future projects.
- Deliver regular Customer Steering Group meetings with representatives from all areas of the network to review, input to and guide customer experience and digital improvements.
- Deliver regular Accessibility Advisory Board meetings with representatives from disability advocacy groups to provide ongoing business input and support effective delivery of the strategy.
- Collaborate with advocacy groups to expand our knowledge of emerging issues, including Dementia Support, Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland, the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme and Sands.
- Join and attend accessibility-focused steering groups, such as NCAT and UK Chamber of Shipping accessibility working groups, to help lead thinking across the industry.

This partnership approach will ensure our plans are shaped by specialist knowledge, lived experience and the needs of the communities we serve.

10. Awareness and recognition

We will share the progress we make and seek opportunities to recognise successful customer experience and accessibility improvements across the industry.

We will:

- Seek recognition through industry awards for successful accessibility and customer experience initiatives.
- Consider awards such as the Scottish and National Transport Awards and the National Customer Experience Awards.
- Use recognition opportunities to showcase our commitment to improving services for customers and communities.

This will help demonstrate the positive impact of our improvements and support wider learning across the maritime and transport sectors.

11. Measuring success

We will measure the success of this plan through our contract and organisational performance management frameworks using the key performance indicators outlined in Table 1.



Key Performance Indicator(s)		
Customer Satisfaction (OSAT)	Ease of Travel	Accessibility Complaints
Customer Trust	Complaints (per 100,000 passengers)	Accessibility Appreciations
Customers Using Digital Systems	First Contact Resolution	Delivery of Accessibility Audit Actions on Time

Table 1 – Key Performance Indicators

These measures will help us track progress, identify where further action is needed and demonstrate how improvements are benefiting customers and communities.

12. Conclusion

This Customer Service and Accessibility Plan sets out how we at Caledonian MacBrayne will continue to improve the experience of customers across the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services network.

It reflects our commitment to providing a ferry service that is accessible, inclusive, reliable and responsive to the needs of the communities we serve. From digital improvements and accessible environments – to clearer communication, stronger training, better insight and meaningful partnership working – every action in this plan is designed to help customers travel with greater ease, confidence, dignity and safety.

We will continue to listen to customers, communities and accessibility partners, and we will use their feedback to shape improvements across the network. By embedding customer service and accessibility into our everyday work, we will improve every journey and support a ferry service that customers and communities can rely on.