

Improving every journey



Delivery plan
Marketing plan

Published 1 October 2026





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Executive summary

At Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac), our marketing strategy is designed to inspire travel, support communities, and improve every journey across Scotland's west coast. This customer-focused marketing plan outlines how we use data, partnerships and creativity to deliver campaigns that connect meaningfully with both existing and potential travellers.

Through integrated marketing activity — spanning multiple channels including social media, email, website, onboard platforms and more — we help to promote the destinations we serve, the experiences available, and the people behind the journey. Our campaigns are informed by customer insight and booking behaviour, ensuring that every message is relevant, timely and effective.

We work closely with tourism partners, island businesses and event organisers to support local economies and manage seasonal flow across the network. Our proactive approach allows us to respond quickly to changes in demand, ensuring that marketing activity remains agile and impactful.

All campaigns are measured against clear performance indicators, including farebox growth, engagement levels and brand sentiment. This ensures value for money and continuous improvement across all activity.

Our dedicated Brand Marketing team delivers this work in collaboration with stakeholders across the business. Supported by robust planning, procurement and reporting processes, we are committed to delivering a marketing strategy that reflects our values, supports our customers, and strengthens the communities we serve.

Together, we are improving every journey — one campaign at a time.

1. Introduction

CalMac plays a vital role in connecting Scotland's island and coastal communities. Our marketing strategy is designed to support this mission by promoting travel, encouraging tourism, and strengthening the relationship between our customers and the places we serve.

This plan sets out how we will deliver customer-focused marketing activity that is data-informed, integrated across multiple channels, and aligned with the needs of travellers across our network. It reflects our commitment to improving every journey — not just through reliable and resilient transport, but through meaningful engagement, clear communication and inspiring content.

We recognise that our customers are diverse — from island residents and regular commuters to first-time visitors and international tourists. Our marketing approach is tailored to reflect this diversity, using insight and segmentation to ensure that every campaign is relevant, inclusive and effective.

By working in partnership with local businesses, tourism organisations and event coordinators, we help promote the unique experiences available across the west coast. We also respond proactively to changes in demand, ensuring that our messaging supports service resilience and customer confidence.

This plan outlines the campaigns, channels, partnerships and resources that underpin our marketing activity. It also sets out how we measure success — through engagement, impact and



value for money — and how we will continue to evolve our approach to meet the needs of our customers and communities.

2. Our marketing purpose

Our marketing activity is designed to support our wider mission: to deliver safe, reliable and inclusive ferry services that connect people, places and communities across Scotland's west coast.

We use marketing not simply to promote travel, but to:

- Inspire journeys by showcasing the beauty, culture and diversity of our network.
- Support communities by highlighting local businesses and their products as well as events and experiences.
- Inform customers through clear, consistent and accessible communications.
- Strengthen trust by sharing stories of our people, our progress and our commitment to service.
- Empower customers to book and travel when they need to by using demand and capacity data to help inform travel choices.

Every campaign we deliver is shaped by insight — from booking behaviour and customer feedback to seasonal trends and tourism data. This ensures our messaging is relevant, timely and aligned with the needs of both our passengers and our partners.

We take a multi-channel approach, using digital platforms, onboard media, social content, email and print to reach customers wherever they are. Our tone is warm, confident and rooted in the values of the communities we serve.

Marketing also plays a key role in supporting operational resilience. By promoting events, managing seasonal flow, and responding proactively to changes in demand, we help ensure that our services remain accessible, efficient and customer focused.

Ultimately, our purpose is to improve every journey — not just through transport, but through connection, inspiration and shared experience.

3. Campaign strategy

Our campaigns are designed to inspire travel, build trust, and support the communities we serve. Each one is informed by customer insight, shaped by strategic goals, and delivered across multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and relevance.

We run a mix of brand-led, tactical and partnership campaigns throughout the year. These are aligned with seasonal demand, tourism calendars, operational priorities and customer behaviour.

Flagship campaigns

Every journey starts a story (EJSAS)

Our core brand campaign, launched in 2024, celebrates the emotional and cultural value of travel across our network. It builds brand awareness, drives farebox revenue, and reinforces our commitment to improving every journey.



Where Next?

Our 2026 campaign encourages people to go further, stay longer, and experience more of Scotland's islands with CalMac.

People behind the journey (PBJ)

This campaign highlights the professionalism and dedication of our staff. It builds trust and credibility and also supports recruitment efforts across vessels and ports.

Digital migration

Promoting the benefits of our ticketing system, this campaign encourages customers to create online customer accounts and make use of our digital platforms to help plan their journeys.

Retail and onboard experience

Focused on increasing awareness and uptake of our onboard food, drink and merchandise offering, this campaign uses purpose-shot imagery and video, user-generated content and customer testimonials to build anticipation and trust.

Respect campaign

A targeted initiative to address abusive behaviour directed at our teams and promote a safe, respectful environment for both staff and passengers.

Spotlight and tactical campaigns

We deliver spotlight campaigns in partnership with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), VisitScotland and local businesses. These campaigns promote specific destinations, events or experiences, helping to manage seasonal flow and support local economies.

Tactical campaigns are also used to support wider business objectives — such as recruitment, service changes or community engagement — ensuring that all messaging remains consistent with our brand and values.

Channel integration

All campaigns are delivered across a carefully selected mix of channels, including:

- Above-the-line media (TV, radio, press).
- Owned digital platforms (website, app, email, social media).
- Influencer collaborations and user-generated content.
- Onboard and port-based media (screens, tannoy).

This multi-channel approach ensures that our messaging reaches customers wherever they are — and in a format that suits their preferences and behaviours.

Content planning and responsiveness

Campaigns are supported by a structured content planning process. These tools help us coordinate activity, respond to opportunities, and ensure that our messaging remains fresh, topical and aligned with customer needs.



We also use demand and capacity campaigns to respond quickly to fluctuations in demand or emerging opportunities. This ensures that our campaigns remain agile, equitable and impactful.

4. Channel overview

To reach and engage our diverse customer base, we use a carefully integrated mix of marketing channels. Each channel plays a distinct role in delivering our brand message, supporting customer needs, and driving awareness, engagement and revenue.

This ensures that customers receive consistent, relevant and timely information — whether they're planning a journey, booking tickets, or travelling with us.

Social media

We use social media to inspire travel, share updates, and build community. Each platform is tailored to specific audiences and content types:

- Facebook – People-focused content, destination inspiration, and retail promotions.
- Instagram – People-focused content, destination inspiration, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations.
- LinkedIn – Company culture, recruitment, and stakeholder engagement.
- TikTok – Short-form video content to engage younger audiences and showcase the fun side of travel.
- YouTube – Inspirational and people-focused video content and campaign storytelling.
- Twitter/X – Customer service updates.

Email marketing

Our always-on email programme delivers personalised, data-driven content to customers based on their booking behaviour, location and preferences. This includes:

- Journey planning tips.
- Destination features.
- Retail and product promotions.
- Service updates and seasonal offers.
- Promotion of key campaign messaging.

All emails are tracked using GA4 links to measure engagement and conversion.

Website and app

Our website and mobile app are central to the customer experience. They provide:

- Real-time service information.
- Booking functionality (via web).
- Destination guides and itineraries.



- Campaign landing pages.
- Accessibility and pricing information.

We continuously optimise these platforms to improve usability, accessibility and content relevance.

Onboard and port media

We use a range of physical and digital formats to engage customers during their journey:

- Onboard: Posters, tannoy announcements, tabletop displays, headrests, uniforms.
- Ports: Digital screens, posters, kiosks, ticketing materials, window displays.

These touchpoints are used to promote campaigns, safety messages, local products and customer information.

Podcast and audio content

Our podcast, Scottish Island Adventures, detailed further in the section below, has been featured in third-party airline entertainment systems and tourism partnerships – providing a platform with which to reach a wider range of travellers and audiences.

We are also trialling audio-only sightseeing guides on selected routes to enhance the onboard experience.

Influencer and partner channels

We collaborate with influencers, tourism bodies and local businesses to extend our reach and credibility. These partnerships help us:

- Promote authentic experiences.
- Reach new audiences.
- Support local economies.
- Respond quickly to emerging opportunities.

All influencer activity is aligned with our brand values and campaign goals.

5. Podcast and audio content

Audio content plays a growing role in how we inspire and inform our customers. It allows us to share stories, showcase destinations, and provide practical guidance in a format that is accessible, engaging and easy to consume — whether at home, in transit or onboard.

Scottish Island Adventures podcast

Launched in January 2024, Scottish Island Adventures is our flagship podcast series. It serves as a modern travel guide, designed to:

- Inspire travel across our network.
- Educate listeners about island life, culture and events.
- Promote local businesses and experiences.



- Build brand trust and emotional connection.

The podcast has so far featured interviews with islanders, tourism partners and CalMac colleagues, offering authentic insight into the places we serve. It is promoted across all digital channels and has been featured in airline entertainment systems, extending its reach to new audiences.

Following the success of Season 1 and Season 2, Season 3 launched in 2026 with a new thematic focus, including episodes on our people and history and heritage. Future episodes will include themed specials and seasonal content aligned with tourism calendars and campaign activity.

Onboard audio trials

Following the trial of an audio-only sightseeing guide on the Troon to Arran route, we will roll this feature out to other routes, with content tailored to local geography, history and culture. This will enhance the onboard experience by:

- Providing informative and entertaining commentary.
- Highlighting points of interest along the journey.
- Supporting accessibility and independent travel.

Feedback from this pilot will inform future rollouts across other routes, with content tailored to local geography, history and culture.

Strategic role of audio content

Audio content supports multiple strategic objectives:

- Customer engagement – offering value-added content that enhances the travel experience.
- Destination promotion – spotlighting island events, attractions and businesses.
- Brand positioning – reinforcing our identity as a trusted, community-rooted operator.
- Partnership development – creating opportunities for collaboration with tourism bodies, influencers and local voices.

All podcast and audio activity is aligned with our campaign calendar, content strategy and brand tone of voice. It is measured through listening figures, engagement metrics and qualitative feedback.

6. Events and tourism support

Supporting tourism and community events is a core part of our marketing strategy. As a lifeline service provider, we recognise the importance of promoting island destinations, managing seasonal flow, and working collaboratively with local partners to enhance the visitor experience.

Our marketing activity is closely aligned with the tourism calendar, ensuring that we spotlight key events, respond to local needs, and help customers plan their journeys around cultural, seasonal and community-led activity.



Island events and seasonal activity

We maintain an up-to-date events planner that tracks known tourism and calendar events across our network. This planner is reviewed quarterly and shared with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to ensure alignment and visibility.

Our campaigns and content are timed to support:

- Local festivals and cultural celebrations.
- Seasonal tourism peaks and shoulder periods.
- Community-led initiatives and promotional opportunities.
- Events that influence travel demand or require flow management.

Where appropriate, we run competitions, influencer promotions and spotlight campaigns to raise awareness and encourage travel to featured destinations.

Destination management partnerships

We host monthly meetings with DMOs, VisitScotland and other tourism stakeholders to share insights, coordinate activity and respond to emerging opportunities. These meetings inform our campaign planning and help us:

- Understand local priorities and challenges.
- Promote underrepresented destinations.
- Support recovery following disruption or downturn.
- Ensure equitable promotion across the network.

We also participate in tourism conferences and networking events, representing the interests of island communities and sharing best practice in destination marketing.

Proactive flow management

To help manage passenger flow during busy periods or following service disruption, we use demand and capacity campaigns. This approach enables us to:

- Deploy targeted marketing support to affected areas.
- Promote alternative routes or travel times.
- Highlight local experiences that encourage off-peak travel.
- Coordinate messaging with operational and customer service teams.

This ensures that our marketing activity supports operational resilience while maintaining a positive customer experience.

Community and business engagement

We actively seek out partnerships with island businesses, event organisers and suppliers to promote local products and experiences. This includes:

- Joint promotions.



- Influencer collaborations and content creation.
- Retail and onboard product features.
- Supplier showcases and testimonial campaigns.

By supporting tourism and events through targeted, collaborative marketing, we help strengthen local economies, improve customer experience and ensure our service remains responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

7. Partnerships and activations

Partnerships are central to how we deliver impactful, inclusive and commercially effective marketing. By working with tourism bodies, island businesses, influencers and third-party advertisers, we extend the reach of our campaigns, support local economies and ensure our messaging reflects the communities we serve.

Our activations strategy is designed to be flexible, responsive and aligned with our brand values. It enables us to promote destinations, products and experiences in a way that is consistent, credible and customer focused.

Strategic partnerships

We collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- Destination Management Organisations (DMOs).
- VisitScotland and other tourism agencies.
- Local island businesses and partnerships.
- Event organisers and coordinators
- Influencers and content creators.
- Third-party advertisers and sponsors.

These partnerships help us deliver joint promotions, co-branded campaigns and bundled advertising packages across multiple platforms — including digital, onboard and port-based media.

Activation channels

Our activations are delivered across a mix of owned and partner channels, including:

- Digital screens and poster sites at ports and onboard vessels.
- Social media collaborations with influencers and partners.
- Joint product development and promotional bundles.
- Retail and merchandise features across booking, travel and onboard touchpoints.
- Podcast and video content showcasing partner experiences.

We also curate itineraries and destination guides in collaboration with DMOs and local businesses, helping customers plan their journeys and discover new experiences.



Agency tissue model

To ensure our activity remains fresh, topical and targeted, we use an innovative agency tissue model. This involves monthly meetings with creative partners to:

- Share upcoming events, trends and opportunities.
- Review campaign performance and content needs.
- Pitch new ideas and assets for approval.
- Align messaging across all channels and platforms.

This model allows us to respond quickly to changes in demand, stakeholder input and customer feedback — ensuring our marketing remains agile and effective.

Commercial impact

All partnership activity is aligned with our commercial goals, including:

- Increasing farebox revenue.
- Supporting retail profitability.
- Promoting high-value experiences.
- Enhancing brand reputation and trust.

We work closely with our Finance, Commercial, Risk and Procurement teams to ensure that all promotional activity delivers value for money and meets the standards expected of the CalMac brand.

By building strong, strategic partnerships and delivering targeted activations, we ensure our marketing supports both customer experience and community resilience — helping us improve every journey across the network.

8. Insight-driven marketing

Our marketing strategy is built on a foundation of data, insight and continuous learning. By understanding how, when and why our customers travel, we can deliver more relevant, effective and timely campaigns — and ensure that every marketing decision is grounded in evidence.

We use a wide range of data sources to inform our activity, including:

- Booking behaviour by route, customer type and season.
- Customer account data, including purpose of visit and lifestyle preferences.
- Segmentation models aligned with VisitScotland's audience profiles.
- Route profiles that highlight demand patterns, demographics and media habits.
- Campaign performance metrics, including engagement, conversion and sentiment.
- Customer feedback from surveys, social media and frontline teams.

This insight allows us to tailor our messaging, select the right channels, and optimise the timing and tone of our campaigns.



Customer segmentation

We apply a rules-based segmentation model to understand the needs and behaviours of different customer groups, including:

- Lifeline and islander travellers.
- Commercial and non-commercial users.
- Leisure travellers segmented by interest and lifestyle.

We focus particularly on three VisitScotland-aligned segments:

- Adventure seekers – younger, experience-driven travellers.
- Natural advocates – nature-focused, value-conscious visitors.
- Food-loving culturalists – affluent, quality-focused explorers.

Each segment is targeted with tailored content, offers and messaging that reflect their motivations and travel preferences.

Proactive demand management

We use insight to identify fluctuations in demand and respond proactively. This includes:

- Monitoring booking trends.
- Listening to anecdotal insights from DMOs and partners.
- Deploying tactical campaigns to support underperforming routes or destinations.
- Using the demand and capacity campaigns to deliver flexible, responsive content during periods of disruption or downturn.

This approach ensures that our marketing supports operational resilience and helps manage flow across the network.

Test and learn approach

We continuously test and refine our marketing activity to improve performance. This includes:

- A/B testing of creative, messaging and formats.
- Monitoring engagement across platforms.
- Reviewing campaign outcomes against benchmarks and goals.
- Applying learnings to future activity.

All insight is shared across teams to support joined-up planning and continuous improvement.

By embedding insight into every stage of our marketing process — from planning to delivery to evaluation — we ensure that our campaigns are not only creative and compelling, but also strategic, efficient and impactful.



9. Measurement and evaluation

We are committed to ensuring that all marketing activity delivers measurable value — both for our customers and for the communities we serve. Our approach to measurement and evaluation is structured, transparent and aligned with our wider business planning and reporting processes.

Performance indicators

Our marketing activity is assessed against a set of predefined performance indicators, including:

- Farebox revenue uplift linked to campaign periods and promoted routes.
- Retail sales performance across onboard and port locations.
- Customer engagement metrics such as click-through rates, social shares, and time on page.
- Brand sentiment and reputation scores tracked through independent research.
- Conversion rates from digital channels to booking platforms.
- Reach and frequency across paid and organic media.
- Cost-effectiveness of marketing activity, measuring cost by reach.

We track our KPIs weekly, working with the relevant teams to obtain relevant farebox, retail and web data, as well as external partners such as DMOs for reports on their results to inform our approach. These indicators help us understand what's working, where improvements are needed, and how our activity contributes to overall service goals.

Campaign tracking and reporting

We use a combination of tools and processes to monitor and report on campaign performance:

- Google Analytics 4 (GA4) for tracking user behaviour and conversion across digital platforms.
- Social media analytics for engagement, reach and audience growth.
- Email campaign dashboards for open rates, click-throughs and segmentation performance.
- Brand tracking studies to benchmark reputation and trust over time.
- Post-campaign reviews to assess outcomes, learnings and return on investment.

All reporting is shared with internal stakeholders and used to inform future planning, budget allocation and strategic decision-making.

Continuous improvement

We operate a 'test and learn' model across all marketing activity. This includes:

- A/B testing of creative, messaging and formats.
- Real-time monitoring of campaign performance.
- Regular review cycles with our insight and commercial teams.
- Stakeholder feedback loops via DMOs, partners and customer channels.



Insights from these processes are used to refine our approach, improve targeting, and ensure that our marketing remains responsive to customer needs and market conditions.

Value for money

All marketing spend is subject to rigorous procurement and business planning processes to ensure:

- Competitive sourcing of services and media.
- Clear alignment with strategic goals.
- Transparent reporting of outcomes and costs.
- Ongoing optimisation of budget allocation.

By embedding robust measurement and evaluation into every stage of our marketing activity, we ensure that our campaigns are not only creative and compelling — but also accountable, cost-effective and aligned with our commitment to public value.

10. Resources and delivery

Delivering a customer-focused marketing strategy requires the right people, systems and processes working together across the organisation. At CalMac, our Brand Marketing team is structured to ensure that all activity is well-planned, insight-led and aligned with our wider service goals.

Team structure and capability

Our marketing function includes specialists in:

- Campaign planning and delivery.
- Digital and social media management.
- Content creation and copywriting.
- Partnership development and stakeholder engagement.
- Insight and performance analysis.
- Creative services and brand governance.

The team works closely with colleagues in Commercial, Customer Experience, Communications, Procurement and Operations to ensure joined-up delivery across all customer touchpoints.

We also engage external agencies and creative partners through a structured procurement process, ensuring access to specialist skills and value for money.

Planning and governance

Marketing activity is governed through our annual business planning process, which sets out:

- Strategic priorities and campaign objectives.
- Budget allocations and resource requirements.
- Procurement timelines and partner engagement.



- Measurement frameworks and reporting cycles.

This process ensures that all marketing activity is aligned with corporate goals, compliant with public sector standards, and responsive to customer and stakeholder needs.

Systems and tools

We use a suite of digital tools to support delivery, including:

- Google Analytics 4 (GA4) for tracking and performance measurement.
- Social media management platforms for scheduling and engagement.
- Content planning tools.
- Customer segmentation and insight dashboards.
- Collaborative planning frameworks such as the Agency Tissue Model.

These systems enable us to plan, execute and evaluate campaigns efficiently, while maintaining consistency and brand integrity across all channels.

Cross-functional collaboration

Marketing delivery is supported by strong collaboration across departments. Key contributors include:

- Customer experience – ensuring messaging aligns with service delivery.
- Commercial and retail – supporting product promotion and farebox growth.
- Procurement – managing agency and supplier relationships.
- Finance – overseeing budget and value tracking.
- Digital and IT – maintaining platforms and technical infrastructure.
- Communications – aligning internal and external messaging.

This integrated approach ensures that marketing is not a standalone function, but a core part of how we work together to enhance our brand, support our communities, and in turn improve every journey.

Ongoing development

We invest in the continuous development of our team through:

- Industry training and professional development.
- Attendance at tourism and marketing events.
- Collaboration with sector bodies such as VisitScotland and the Marketing Society.
- Internal knowledge-sharing and cross-skilling initiatives.

By maintaining a skilled, well-supported and strategically aligned marketing team, we ensure that our campaigns are not only creative and compelling — but also operationally robust, commercially effective and ready to meet the evolving needs of our customers and communities.



11. Looking ahead

As we continue to evolve our marketing strategy, our focus remains on delivering meaningful, measurable and customer-centred activity that supports the communities we serve and strengthens our brand.

In the coming year, we will:

- Deliver campaigns aligned with fleet upgrades, port developments and service milestones – including our new app and the introduction of various new vessels.
- Enhance our segmentation and targeting, using advanced analytics and customer profiling to deliver more personalised experiences.
- Strengthen our partnership model, working more closely with DMOs, suppliers and influencers to co-create content and promote local experiences.
- Improve measurement and reporting, with deeper integration of insight tools and clearer attribution of marketing impact.
- Support brand transformation, through consistent messaging, visual identity and tone of voice across all customer touchpoints.
- Strengthen our demand and capacity campaigns by employing an always-on focus on this area, swapping out destinations as appropriate.

We will also continue to invest in our team, systems and processes — ensuring that our marketing remains agile, inclusive and aligned with the values of public service.

By staying responsive to customer needs, tourism trends and operational priorities, we will ensure that our marketing continues to inspire travel and support communities we serve.

12. Conclusion

This marketing plan sets out how we at CalMac will deliver customer-focused, data-informed campaigns that support travel, tourism and community connection across Scotland's west coast.

Through a structured approach to planning, delivery and evaluation, we will continue to inspire journeys, promote local experiences, and strengthen trust in our brand. Our multiple channel strategy ensures that customers receive consistent and engaging messaging across every stage of their journey — from planning and booking to travelling and sharing.

By working in partnership with stakeholders, responding proactively to demand, and embedding insight into every decision, we ensure that our marketing activity remains relevant, inclusive and commercially effective.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to improving every journey — not just through reliable and resilient services, but through meaningful engagement, shared stories and a deep connection to the communities we serve.