

MINUTES of the FERRIES COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING
held on Friday 27 May 2022 at 0930 hrs
by video/audio conference

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

Present: Angus Campbell (AC) - (Chairman)
Bill Calderwood (BC)
David Herriot (DH)
Ian Macfarlane (IM)
Jim Porteous (JP)
Gail Robertson (GR)
Angus Campbell (AC2)
Donnie Macinnes (DM)
Eoin MacNeill (EMacN)
Camillie Dressler (CD) (part of meeting)
Ida Holmstrom (IH) (part of meeting)
Kirsty MacFarlane (KMacF)
Murdo MacLean (MMacL)
Joanna Peteranna (JoP)
Kevin Peach (KP)
Rhoda Campbell (RC)

In attendance: Jenny Gilruth MSP – Minister for Transport
Thomas Meikle – Deputy Private Secretary to Minister for Transport
Chris Wilcock – Head of Ferries, Transport Scotland
Richard Hadfield – Ferries Strategy, Transport Scotland
Laurence Kenney – Ferries Unit, Transport Scotland
Kevin Hobbs – Chief Executive, CMAL
Brian Fulton – Head of Business Support, CMAL
Morag McNeill – Interim Chair, CMAL (MMcN)
Robbie Drummond (RD) – Managing Director, CalMac
Pauline Blackshaw (PB) – Head of Operational Planning, CalMac
Andrina McCrae (AMcC) – Executive Assistant, CalMac

ITEM		ACTION
1	GOVERNANCE	
	AC welcomed everyone to the meeting	
1.1	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> AC advised CD would join the meeting later.	
1.2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> GR declared an interest as manager of a local haulage company.	
1.3	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2022</u> It was agreed that these minutes were an accurate record of discussions.	
1.4	<u>ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u>	
	<u>Relief crewing</u> Action to be left open.	
	<u>Loose freight</u> Message received from CD indicated a positive reaction to progress on this matter. RD advised there is a debate to be had about items that cannot be considered as small freight. Attention will now turn to Raasay. The priority had been to resolve the lifeline aspect. There are other areas that need to be looked at and this will be addressed following consultation.	
	<u>ICIA on Under-22 travel</u> As TS are responsible for setting fares, RD suggested this was a matter for them to deal with. To be raised later in the meeting.	
	<u>Updates on Glen Sannox – CMAL website</u> Action closed.	

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Drydock schedule

RD advised the paper has been finalised and can be looked at in more detail outwith the meeting. He also pointed out that time in drydock is increasing which will lead to further changes in the timetable.

RET Review document

Link to the document circulated prior to the meeting. Action closed.

TS slide deck

The slide deck used at the September meeting was circulated prior to the meeting. Action closed.

TS organogram

This document is still to be received. To be raised again with TS.

CMAL update

The slide deck used at the September meeting has been circulated. Action closed.

Online presence of the Board

Ongoing. Report of the sub-group has been circulated.

Prioritisation of islanders

Following discussion at their informal meeting, the Board's view is that this should be dealt with on a route by route basis.

Availability of minutes

Action closed.

Joint meeting

Discussion took place on the proposed joint meeting between CalMac, CMAL, TS and the FCB and it was agreed it would be good to have everyone in the same room to have their views available at the same time. An agenda would be prepared rather than having an open meeting. AC

Funding for food storage

KMacF advised the point she had made at the last meeting related to the possibility of smaller islands using funds from the Islands Bond scheme in a different way, such as providing food storage facilities. AC advised this would sit with the Islands Team and he will forward contact details to KMacF to enable her to contact the team direct. Action can be taken off list. BC appreciated the sentiment behind KMacF's idea but pointed out that the Islands Bond is designed to help with de-population. Re-apportioning it for another reason may not be well supported. AC

Ar Turas

JP advised that the next meeting has been deferred to next week. A number of items are still outstanding from the last meeting in June last year. Robin Scorthorne is producing minutes which JP will circulate. JP

Communications

IH has circulated a paper for comments. All

Website

Website has been updated. Action can be closed.

Socio-economic report

AC advised that the consultants hope to have a final draft of the report ready by the middle of June. A joint meeting will be held with the FCB prior to issue. RD has forwarded a copy of the initial report to Erik Ostergaard. Action can be closed.

Crewing

RD advised that a paper on resilience options has been provided to TS. There are 8 options listed, including relief crewing. The Community Board would like to contribute to impacts assessment. RD advised that would have to be driven by TS.

Joint meeting – DML Board/Ferries Community Board – 15 June

AC hoped as many members as possible would be able to attend this meeting in person. A room will be available at the venue from 1400 hrs to allow people to get together in advance of the meeting.

2 TS UPDATE

CW, RH and LK joined the meeting.

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CW advised he planned to give a brief update and then focus on the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP). This has been a particularly challenging time across the network and he thanked everyone for their engagement to try to get things moving and keep people informed.

There is a lot of work going on around the new vessels and infrastructure as well as providing support to the Minister, updating Ministers and dealing with CFL on resilience and with communities on other matters. There is ongoing scrutiny around supporting the Parliamentary Committee around 801/802. Consideration is being given to resource required to move things forward.

On the ICP, CW said there is a lot of work to be done between now and December. Vessel programme, fares and getting a community needs assessment are the priorities.

With regard to the level of engagement around the ICP, TS are keen to have the right level, but conscious of communities saying we have been telling you this for a long time, don't come out with a blank paper. What might come out for consultation may have some suggestions that we have heard from people but this will not stop us considering other aspects.

All parties need to realise we have to take into consideration affordability of service to users and what can we commit to be able to fund over the life of this Plan. The Plan has to be deliverable.

AC said the Board was very aware of the economic situation. The Board did respond to the economic recovery plan led by Kate Forbes MSP. Unless we have investment in ferries many other aspects of the Plan will not work. We would be looking to build on the £580m and have ambitions to grow the service to meet the needs of what might be there for the next 10 years. Revenue is required to support it.

BC advised that he had been made aware that NETZET were looking into ferries and were looking for a contact. He asked if this was TS or Islands Team based. CW replied that the Public Audit Committee is looking at the Audit Scotland Report on the 2015 decision piece. TS were contacted by the NETZET Committee Clerk asking for dates around the ICP. CW has not been in touch with Islands colleagues, but will pick this up.

AC commented that, as the Board had been approached, they should submit suggestions to the Committee.

KMacF commented that there are various questions around hybrid ferries. It would be interesting to see how environmentally friendly they are and what their operating performance is like. It was noted that there would be people who would be sceptical about going down that route.

Data on every specific route is the way we see improving communications with CFL and TS. Tiree and Coll are in the same data set in terms of route performance. Is it possible that TS could find a way of separating the data so that we get specific route data for Coll as opposed to Coll and Tiree?

CW replied that, with regard to small vessel replacements, we are looking at moving towards all electric. For medium to large vessels, options around zero carbon are outwith our grasp.

In terms of new vessels, we are looking at moving to partial battery power. RD added that IMO sets the law and there are very stringent requirements around current vessels and future vessels. We have been engaging with Interferry who have very detailed understanding of EEXI which covers how you show your emissions. Our vessels only just pass and may not pass going into the future. Coruisk does not pass. Mitigations need to be put in place. This is now the law and vessels can be taken out of service if they do not comply. RD will share information with attendees. RD

RD will make enquiries regarding the point made about data for Coll and Tiree. RD

RC referred to the timescale for budget review and asked when a decision is expected. Delighted to hear 2 vessel option is in the mix. She asked if there was funding available for mezzanine deck reinstatement. All the problems they have are down to lack of resilience. The urgency to have extra money and extra tonnage was reiterated.

CW replied that, with regard to the mezzanine deck, TS are still in discussion with CalMac around costings. A range of options will be looked at.

With regard to budgets, TS are in the internal process just now. It is a very challenging space.

Ordering another 2 Islay vessels is something TS is exploring. More work is required as to whether these would be the right vessels. At the moment there is a vessel deployment plan

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which has 801/802 coming in. If these vessels and the models we are using right and the Islay template is one we could use and shorten the design period, this would be productive.

JP asked if there was going to be a review/amendment of the new CHFS contract and whether the Board would have the opportunity to feed into this. Some of the community board were involved in the original contract around fairness and transparency but there was no input to its terms

CW replied that TS are currently looking at the shape of the next contract and how it is delivered. This is at an earlier stage than we would have liked. Outline government structures do have a stakeholder input at an earlier stage than before so we would see the community board as having a key role as one of the stakeholders. RD agreed the communities should be fully involved. The whole nature of the contract is going to have to change. It would be very difficult to tender on the current structure because of the increase in vessel maintenance costs. This would apply equally to CalMac and anyone else who might want to get involved. CW agreed this would need to be built into the new contract.

KMacF thanked CW for his comments. He is obviously listening to a lot of the views around new tonnage. It is only 10 years ago that Coll and Tiree got a dedicated vessel. The concern is that we see CMAL commissioning vessels that will not be flexible in terms of where they can go. CW replied that having vessels that can be flexible and resilient is a long held aspiration. The work done around the Islay vessels is a good example of this.

AC2 commented there is a lot of work to be done on the flexibility piece. Vessels are capable of operating 24/7 but this cannot happen because of crewing issues. More consideration needs to be given to this. More vessels will help but how the vessels are operated needs to be part of the mix. AC added that shore based crew is a subject that should be discussed at the joint meeting involving TS/CMAL/CalMac and the Board. CW said the challenge is how we transition to that given the experience we have had with trying to source crew for the Loch Frisa, as well as accommodation for them. AC commented that shore based crew does not mean they have to come from a particular place; it is about having accommodation for them in that place. RD advised he has a detailed paper laying out some of the issues, which he will share. RD

AC asked where the IIA for Under-22 travel sat within TS. LK replied that this has been completed and published on the SG website. He will share the link. CW added that there are two wider bits of work being done. One is around fares structure on public transport across the piece. It is intended to look at fares with a wider context in the ICP. LK

With regard to an outstanding action, LK confirmed that he has located an organogram and will circulate this to members. LK

3 ISLANDS CONNECTIVITY PLAN (ICP)

RH advised it is hoped to have a draft plan in place by December 2022, however, while this is a milestone, it will not be possible to have everything complete in the next 6 months.

RH took attendees through his slide deck giving an overview of the ICP and also the National Transport Strategy. The priority is to focus on vessels/ports investment plan due to restrictions on resources.

RD referred to the slide on long term investment in vessels and the separate report on service needs. He is unclear how you can deliver a vessel strategy before you have established service needs. The process needs to start with service needs and pricing and that will drive future investment needs.

JP referred to the document on sustainable hierarchies and noted there was no mention of commercial vehicles. This needs to be built in somewhere and acknowledged. Delivery of commercial goods on or off islands is a vital aspect.

AC2 was nervous of the fact that, if it takes 6 months to a year to get the ICP published, any discussion about investment will be delayed until this is complete.

CMAL seem to be determined to have like for like replacements. Resilience does not appear to be included in this.

RH referred to the point made by RD and AC2 about sequencing. In an ideal world you would start by looking at the service and needs of the communities and what the fare structure would be then you would get the vessel and shore infrastructure, however, the need for investment is so pressing that we cannot wait. We have around 20 vessels in the programme. We now need to move on to deployment of the vessels in the programme and then look at the longer plan. Having

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the strategic overview document out in draft and the long term investment plan out for consultation at the end of the year is a priority.

The vessel projects and port projects have long lead times. If we set out the plan by the end of the year, the community needs will come after that before CMAL go into the procurement process.

With regard to AC2's final point, generally CMAL are looking at like for like.

LK pointed out that JP's point about sustainable hierarchies is about personal travel but consideration does have to be given to sustainable options around freight.

CW added that TS may not be doing this in sequence, but a lot is based on work they are already engaging on. TS need to set out the vessel replacement programme and infrastructure that sits around it. This will be subject to change as opportunities arise.

DH commented that, looking at the plan for replacing vessels, a 30-year-old Coruisk which is currently failing IMO standards will still be there at the end of the period. Can the plan build in resilience for perhaps doing mid-life improvements to these vessels as well. This will also arise with the Bute vessels which will be getting near the 30-year period by the time it is over.

BC referred to drafts being ready by the end of the year and asked how this would tie in to budget cycles. We are looking for a 10-year plan rather than the latest edition of a document.

With regard to targeted infrastructure, one of the things that has also been highlighted is that, with the introduction of RET, there was no funding for infrastructure on the islands. STPR2 and, to a lesser extent, other reviews, are heavily influenced by mainland contributions. Is there something here that will help the island communities to carry out maintenance to help island infrastructure rather than port infrastructure.

CW commented that, with regard to alignment with Government funding rounds, these are not bid documents. Budgets are set annually. This is not seen as an immediate concern.

With regard to the routes piece and islands infrastructure, island ferries are not being included in this.

BC replied that one of the points raised in the Board's paper was that TS can plan for the majority of the resource, but how does this link into the local authorities so that we get an integrated transport plan.

RC raised the issue of fixed links for the Sound and asked for details of the proposal on that.

RH replied to BC's question about local authorities by saying that TS will not be covering these in detail because they are not responsible for them. TS is looking at an overview document that would be applicable to any domestic ferry service within Scotland, so that there is a consistent, strategic approach available. There is some discussion going on with Council officers about how bringing Orkney into this would work. Ideally, the ICP overall strategic document is one that all ferry services can fit into or be part of.

The question about the Coruisk is a good one. The general question about life extensions has been discussed over the years and TS would like to do it. CFL and CMAL have done it to some degree. In terms of some of the bigger life extension projects, we have never had the opportunity to do this with the major vessel fleet. Potentially, some of the vessels, like the Bute vessels, might be beyond the point you would want to do that.

With regard to RC's comment about fixed links, STPR looked at the Sound of Barra, Sound of Harris and Mull links to the mainland. We know the Loch Portain is a very specific vessel working in special continues. We also know that the waters have been re-classified so will need a different vessel. It is good to have a look at a fixed link before it is time to replace the vessel. Various options are being looked at.

AC commented that it is very important to have a strategic community needs assessment. This is a 10-year document.

With regards to subsidy, the hope is that this will be done on the same basis as, for example, roads.

Affordability – there are people within communities who have issues with affordability for ferries and this needs to be taken account of.

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It is hoped to have a draft economic plan issued by June. The Board hopes to speak to TS before that and an invitation to that meeting was extended to RH. The Board is very keen to help where it can.

Local authorities who run ferries get funding. If they want to come into the bigger group, this funding should be shared.

LK referred to the fares review and meetings with Brian Gordon. Further discussions will take place with the Board and then TS will work with them to move this forward.

4 CMAL UPDATE

KH, MMacN and BF joined the meeting

MMacN introduced herself and advised she had worked as a corporate lawyer before going into the ports and harbours industry. She joined the Board of CMAL in 2014 and became interim Chair on 1 January 2022. She was pleased to join the meeting and looked forward to hearing the views of the communities.

Loch Frisa went on sea trials on Tuesday. She will be leaving Leith on Sunday and going to Oban. There will be a small re-naming ceremony in Craignure on 6 June and thereafter she will enter service. This date will be determined by the success of berthing trials. Coruisk will be retained at the outset.

The two Islay vessels have been contracted. 90% of equipment has been bought already. Steel cutting is expected to take place in the middle of September. The yard has been advised that CMAL will accept the vessels if they are completed earlier than planned.

Mallaig-Lochboisdale

Project has been initiated and work group has been formed.

Gourock/Dunoon/Kilcreggan

Project is in final stages.

Small Vessel Replacement

Vessels will be all-electric. Discussions are taking place with Scottish Energy to determine what power will be required at the ports where the vessels will berth overnight. Small vessel replacement phase 2 will follow.

Dual fuel vessels

Andy Crossan has now formally seconded into Fergusons Marine and has been appointed as Project Director. Further assistance will be provided by CMAL's site team.

HYSEAS III

Now complete and a report will be going to the European Community before the end of May. We have a design for a hydrogen ferry. A wrap-up meeting will be held on 15 June and the Royal Society.

BF reported on work at ports as shown below, having circulated a paper prior to the meeting.

Mallaig-Lochboisdale

Details of the first public meeting are on the CMAL website.

Tarbert, Harris

BF had visited the site and was very impressed with the new marshalling area and pier. Steel for the terminal building is arriving this week and work should be complete by the end of the year.

Brodick old pier

Demolition has started and should be completed by autumn.

Castlebay Ferry Terminal

Complete apart from a couple of snagging points.

Claonaig toilets

The temporary facility is impressive.

Colonsay

Fendering replacement is complete.

Gourock re-development

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This is moving forward although reference group meetings stalled due to local elections. The project involves a considerable reclamation of land. There will be two main piers for the Gourrock-Dunoon vessels and a major extension for MV Glen Sannox to provide resilience.

Lochboisdale

Fendering complete.

Gasay

An outline business case is being worked on.

Troon

Installation of new fenders and decking is complete. Fabrication and installation of the portacabin will not happen until August due to supply chain issues.

Tiree pier shelter

This will be procured in the next couple of weeks. The construction has to be right as it will be in a very exposed location.

AC2 referred to the small vessel replacement plan and asked when the first vessels could be expected. KH advised CMAL would be going out to the market in terms of the PQQ and ITT before the end of the year and should be able to turn this round by the middle of next year.

BF added that information on prioritisation of routes should be available by the end of July. Reference groups will be established for each route. Delivery of the first vessel is expected around 2025 and then, depending on the yard, the others should follow every 3-6 months after that.

AC2 asked, if they are all electric, what is the expectation of a working day. KH replied that there is no problem getting a full working day out of them but, in really bad weather, the power requirement is greater and this needs to be looked at in detail.

AC2 commented that it is absolutely essential that the design is more weather resilient than at present. AC asked if there was a danger these are ships that are constrained on time if we cannot manage the crew. KH replied that it is not possible to run a ship 24 hours a day if it has to be charged up. If there is a desire for extended working days, that is a much wider discussion point than building a vessel. The data CMAL has for Largs-Cumbræ is close to 99%. AC2 replied that the service is getting worse from a weather resilience point of view. There is a danger of this not changing with like for like replacement vessels. Improved weather resilience is a requirement across the network.

DMacI raised the question of access to the CCTV cameras on the pier at Tiree and Coll. He had assumed Masters could interrogate these cameras for swell at the pier. This would be a terrific tool for them to decide whether to leave Oban. KH had no idea why they could not do this already. BF added that public cameras being rolled out. If the cameras that are there are GDPR compliant, he could not see why the Masters would not have access to them. It was reported that Masters have been asking for it but have not been given access so far.

KMacF asked for assurance CMAL are still looking for spare tonnage. KH confirmed they are continuing to look at the second hand market.

MMcN added that she appreciated the frustration and could assure the group that at every Board meeting CMAL discuss what options might be available. We have assurance from TS and the Minister that they will act very quickly if we find something appropriate.

DH said having cameras available at Wemyss Bay would be useful as well. It would also be helpful at Rhubodach. Sailings could be reduced if there are no foot passengers and the crew were able to see this.

KH said they are beginning to have discussions with third party ports and are in discussions with Argyll & Bute Council about them installing cameras in or allowing CMAL to do it for them. In CMAL's opinion, digital ports are the way forward.

BF commented that the point about Rhubodach and on demand sailings would be a change of policy decision. His understanding is that, if a sailing is in the timetable, it needs to operate. DH said it would make sense from an environmental perspective not to run a sailing if it was not required.

AC2 referred back to second hand tonnage and asked if CMAL were looking to see if they could find any small vessels to improve resilience. KH replied that they were looking at vessels across the board, including freight vessels.

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KP asked about electric vehicle charging. There are 2 chargers in Ullapool. There is a need to investigate whether cars could be charged while at sea. If not, the parking required ashore would need to be built into plans for the future. KH replied that, at the moment, charging on board the vessels is not an option. Ferries are being built with enough power so that, if the technology becomes available, we will be able to do it.

BC wanted to record his thanks to the team in getting the impressive facilities installed at Claonaig and he looked forward to seeing the permanent solution.

RC thanked KH and BF for meeting with the Harris Transport Forum and responding to their queries.

AC thanked KH & BF for attending and advised he would contact them regarding the proposed joint meeting with CFL and TS.

5 TRANSPORT MINISTER

JG joined the meeting and AC ran through the list of those present. It was noted that KP and DMAcl had had to leave the meeting.

JG thanked the group for giving her the opportunity to attend. She is keen to have more regular updates with the Board as it is important that they get the chance to speak to her directly. She had been out in the Western Isles last month and heard from people face to face. She appreciates that this has been a really challenging time. She is keen to get out and meet people and hopes to do more of this over the summer.

AC replied that the Board appreciates that the fact that they can communicate with the Minister. In terms of ongoing interaction with the Board, in the past the Minister has come to a meeting once a year and had six-monthly meetings with AC. AC would like to keep this line of communication open. JG finds these meetings instructive and, given the challenges, suggested they take place quarterly. She is keen to continue dialogue in the interim.

AC advised that the Board meets every quarter and would welcome the Minister's offer. The six-monthly meetings between the Minister and AC could be dispensed with as long as we keep the line of communication open. The Board would also find time to come together for a specific issue if that was required.

The main issues were seen as being resilience, consultation, new tonnage and the new contract.

A sub-group of the Board will be working with RH over the next few months on the ICP. JG will speak to RH to make sure that this consultation is meaningful.

BC commented that the Minister has recognised the need for new tonnage and KH assured us the search is ongoing. With regard to network resilience, if we cannot get extra tonnage, what are the opportunities to get more from our existing assets. We are not talking about at 24/7 service. It is to look at how we could put an extra crew on to do a morning or extra sailing or an overnight sailing for freight. JG replied that the point about additional crew has been taken away as an action point. She is keen to explore this further.

CW said TS have been talking with CalMac about a range of initiatives. CalMac have shared a very early draft which will be discussed with them before being shared with the Minister. JG replied that all options would be looked at. The challenges we face on the ferries network are a major challenge for the government. JG wants to support and will make efforts to get any funding required.

RD said CFL have looked at this on an unconstrained basis. We will continue working with Chris and this colleagues and share with the communities. We need more vessels, not more crew. It is a lot more complicated than just running another sailing.

KMacF commented that the "one size fits all" does not work anymore. Data and close consultation with the communities is the way forward. In the Argyll islands we feel very envious of the Western Island and Orkney & Shetland – the islands authorities per se and would like to see more cohesion in the Argyll islands. We feel we are entering into a 2-tier system. The benefits that the islands authorities are able to give in the area of ferry services seem to be far superior to what we have in Argyll.

JG thought this was something that could be dealt with through the ICP to get away from the one size fits all.

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CW added that TS is absolutely open to exploring different solutions where circumstances are different on different islands.

JP commented that we are going to go through a period of probably 3 years of more problems until the new ships come in. We have made numerous suggestions about how we could make better use of the existing assets. CalMac have spent a lot of time on this. They have put costings on them. We probably need to re-visit with CalMac all the possible options we have looked at over the last couple of years, look at the costings and look at possible areas of compromise. There have been issues about crew accommodation. It is possible to get pods to house crews properly. We must be hiring crews shortly for 801 and one of the issues we have about moving crew around is route familiarisation. Could we be hiring crew earlier for perhaps 801 and giving them the benefit of extra training around the island and use them to fill in in emergencies. Things should not be restricted because of cases submitted to TS based on worst case scenarios - FC should be able to check before submission.

JG confirmed she would look at any options put forward by CalMac.

RD said the options put forward are not worst case scenarios and never have been. You cannot hire a crew for just 3 weeks. You can't run a ship with a few people, you need a full crew. Vessels are ageing and subject to technical resilience and working them harder would risk them further.

The Board wanted to emphasise the importance of the communities' views in the new CHFS contract and Project Neptune. JG is keen to release Neptune and make sure that everyone with a vested interest in it has their views listened to. She confirmed the Community Board will still be involved in the new contract. There are a number of ministerial portfolios that need to be included in this.

AC2 said the contract is set up on delivering a timetable. It should be service provision -v- fixed timetable, with flexibility to run at night if sailings are lost during the day due to breakdown or weather disruption.

RD provided an update on progress with repairs to Lord of the Isles. JG said she had been impressed by CalMac approach to the latest service outages. She thanked RD and his team for their efforts and flexibility. She also advised that she is keen to meet with the MCA.

GR commented that, while it is appreciated the CalMac put mitigations in place, this strangled business between Uist and Barra on the small ferries. The inter-island service has to be viable. She asked for proper communication in relation to Lord of the Isles returning to service. RD accepted the point made about the Sound of Barra but the company had provided as much capacity as it could. The timetable fills up all of the time we have; there is no ability to run extra sailings.

BC said that RD's last point highlights the need for innovation. When we lose three or four sailings in the middle of the day, there is no scope to run these later in the evening.

6 CALMAC UPDATE

RD advised the options put to TS are unconstrained and have huge costs against them. RD gave a summary of the options presented and will share more details when he is able to.

RD advised the company had closed off its financial year and is showing a loss of approx.. £3m. The plan for this year will show a loss of £4m. Funding for contract years 7 & 8 has not yet been approved. Maintenance costs are up by approx.. 70%. We are out of COVID but the company is facing enormous challenges in recruitment. Passenger numbers are down on what was expected. This could be due to the cost of living crisis. The company is looking at new asset management systems into next year. Customer service improvements are also being considered.

The company had a good presentation at the Scottish Parliament. Attendance was good and the event was opened by Jenni Minto MSP. Erik Ostergaard and RD spoke about what the company is trying to do to improve service.

Discussion took place on the circumstances surrounding the company making a loss and the implications of this.

JoP commented that the cost of living crisis is having an impact on people's willingness to travel but it is worth bearing in mind that it will also have been impacted by the number of cancellations and disruption. RD commented that the company is listening to what Business Scotland and

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other surveys are telling us. A lot of hotels on the mainland are running at 70%. JoP replied that this could be due to a lack of staff rather than a lack of demand.

KMacF assumed that these 2 years of consecutive losses reflect 2 years of COVID. RD replied that the company received funding during 2021/22 which covered revenue lost but the company still had to cover the cost of vessel maintenance. COVID restrictions ended in May, so the company will not receive any further COVID funding.

KMacF asked what the company could do differently to bridge the 2-3 year gap when we are going to continue as we are unless spare tonnage can be found. RD replied that this is what has been submitted to Transport Scotland. There are options that would make a material difference but what we need is more assets. We have said we would like to operate the Pentalina and/or Arrow, although it would take time to recruit crew.

The team are working hard on how we deal with drydockings. We have changed the way we deal with our logistics and are looking at ways to improve customer service and communications.

DB commented that we have been doing a lot of work on communications, particularly during disruptions. We have created a disruption tool which has been shared with a couple of members. It would be useful to have specific examples of where things are not working rather than general complaints about poor communications.

RC thanked RD for meeting with the Harris Transport Forum. More information had been expected regarding the reinstatement of the mezzanine deck, as well as on Pentalina and Arrow. It is frustrating to still not have reinstatement of the mezzanine deck after all this time. RD advised this matter had been escalated again. It is on the list of things we want to do around resilience and we will keep making this point.

BC said this discussion highlighted the need to get all parties round the table as soon as possible.

MS joined the meeting and took attendees through his presentation on Ar Turas. RD reiterated this is the biggest transformation CFL has ever undertaken.

EMacN thanked MS for the presentation. The booking system relies on wi-fi and a signal. What happens when that fails? MS replied that we have an external consultancy working with us who will do intensive testing for this and, if anything needs to be strengthened, that will be done.

AC2 asked if there had been any progress with SPT on season tickets. MS has had various meetings and all SPT products have been put into the system.

Blue badge issue – MS confirmed this is in the system and those concerned will not have to go to the port office to buy their tickets.

DH advised there had been no consultation at all on Bute. MS will schedule something with DH offline. *[Post meeting note – DH asked for the record to be updated to reflect that there had been no communication since 1st March 2021]*

KMacF pointed out that the consultation showed a clear preference for islanders to go to the local office to make bookings. We have just run a survey and 96% of permanent residents don't care what the system looks like, they just want to be able to book when they want to get away or come back. MS confirmed that there are no plans to close any port offices. This is just an additional choice, it will not be enforced. MS added that the system will track capacity much more accurately and measure vehicles more accurately, but it will not create any more capacity on the ferries.

KMacF commented that, for a small community that gets one sailing a day, life is not easy. We had hoped that CFL might have tweaked the system to focus more on specific needs.

There are loads of other communities that feel this way. We are looking for the ability for permanent residents to get their booking space.

RD replied that the contract says the company must operate on a first come, first served basis, but TS and the Minister set the contract, so they can change the policy. It is worthy of a wider debate. The system is much more flexible and will show which sailings are available, which are stretched and which are full.

MMacL asked if the system could make allowances for people making short notice changes which are outwith their control. This is to be discussed under the Ts & Cs session.

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JP asked if it was planned to hold consultation on Islay. MS replied that this would happen. The company has been engaging through various forums. This should take place during the summer, either in person or online

RC asked about consultation on Harris. MS will ensure Harris is included. It was noted that Harris Transport Forum is the group responsible for ferries. RC will email contact details to MS

AC thanked MS for his attendance.

Terms & Conditions

DB showed some slides giving an update on progress with the consultation process around the number of no-shows and changes & amendments to existing bookings seen across the network. She thanked everyone who had provided feedback

DH mentioned his connection to the Scottish Islands Federation and asked if a separate session could be held with them. DB will contact DH to arrange this.

JP asked for clarification on the exclusion with regard to hauliers. DB confirmed that hauliers who have block bookings have different terms & conditions.

KMacF commented that a request had been made for the raw data on no-shows that was pushing these cancellation charges. The data presented for Tiree shows a 2% cancellation rate on this route. KMacF would like to see this data because, if there are problems, the solution should be more focused rather than applying these terms which people in her community are incensed with. It is not helping the current situation at all. DB confirmed there was no issue with sharing the data.

BC referred to "repeat offenders" and commented that there is a strong feeling that CalMac knows who these people are, but everyone is going to be penalised rather than the company tackling these repeat offenders. He also advised there were questions around the data presented.

DB replied that, at the moment, there is no penalty for making numerous amendments to the same booking. People are not "offending" because our Ts & Cs allow them to do that so we would need to change our Ts & Cs to allow us to tackle the repeat offenders. We have in our Ts & Cs that if you don't turn up for a booking you get no refund but we have not implemented this so that is why this is part of this consultation. We will respond to you regarding the questions you have raised.

DB added that the company is not looking to penalise everyone. We are looking to penalise people who do not turn up for their booking without telling us and also those who keep making changes to bookings. We are often sent photographs showing unused car deck space and are told we are doing nothing about it. The company's view is that these proposals will change behaviours and maximise the deck space available. On Northlink services if you cancel within 2 weeks of your sailing, you are charged 50% of your fare. If you cancel after the opening of check-in you are charged 100% of the fare.

GR commented that feedback from her area is more about the timing of this consultation and implementing these changes being poor.

JP said that the view from Islay is very similar to Arran. Within your compensation on passenger rights you would only give any refund on one journey leg whereas if there was a weather cancellation and someone wanted to change their booking, they would change both legs but would be penalised for both legs under your system. The list of exceptions is very limited. We would expect to see some kind of appeals process. When you presented this, we mentioned the weather issue and Islay has a block booking system where we lose a large amount of space on the ferry because block bookers can just cancel within 24 hours of sailing.

The view from the community on Islay is that the main problem is to do with block booked lorries cancelling and it would not be fair to penalise everyone else. DB replied that the utilisation for block bookings is incredibly high. One customer is bringing the numbers down and we are working with them. We are not just consulting with the Ferry Committees on this, we are consulting with our port teams as well.

AC advised he has had a large amount of correspondence on this. Timing has been raised as a major issue. Nobody compensates the customers if CalMac cancels. They do recognise there is a problem. When you report back on the consultation, it would be crucial to see how many people are for the proposal and how many are against it.

7 COMMUNITIES REPORTING

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Small Isles

CD submitted a note to advise that the small freight issue seems to be going in the right direction. There are issues around tidal access to some of the Small Isles and people are wondering when dredging will take place.

Bute/Cowal

DH advised numbers are down, with Easter and the May Bank Holiday being quiet. The biggest problem has been that the Passenger Access System has been out of action for some weeks. The system is owned by Argyll & Bute Council. Specialist engineers are due to look at it on 31 May. This issue is outwith CalMac's control.

Cumbræ

The Ferry User Group and Community Council have a meeting with the Minister next week. This will cover reliability, contingency and future service to the island.

Service has been impacted recently by a couple of technical issues.

Routes have been quieter than anticipated in terms of visitor numbers but there are a lot of concerns about summer and the ability to cope with it without Ar Turas being in place.

Noise around prioritisation for islands is prevalent in this area.

Benbecula

The most important thing to flag from Uist is heightened concern about Uig pier closure. This was brought into focus with recent events with Hebrides and Lord of the Isles and has raised concerns in the community and amongst businesses. RD commented that, unless something is concluded soon, it would be too late to get the Pentalina because there are various things that would need to be done before she could go into service.

Barra/Vatersay

There has been pressure on the Sound of Barra ferry due to disruptions. It is coping well, but it does show we could be using extra sailings on that route. There seems to be a larger volume of cyclists. Issues are still being experienced with getting regular deliveries of gas to Barra.

Barra has been selected as one of the 6 islands to become entirely carbon neutral by 2040 as part of a Scottish Government pilot scheme. There will be issues around that concerning transport and transport links.

Islay

Looking forward to the new vessels, the first of which is due at the end of 2024, as we have quite severe capacity issues at the moment. There are concerns around completion of port shore works to handle capacity on these ships. Port Ellen may not be complete until 2026. This may require diverting the two new ships to Port Askaig and we are having a discussion with Argyll & Bute Council about whether or not they will be able to cope. We need to have one of the ports able to cope with the 40% increase in volume. There is a CFL & CMAL reference group meeting on 14 June and a public drop-in meeting on 22 June when CMAL will answer questions.

We have had a winter of breakdowns and extended drydockings and had a prolonged period when we only had one vessel. It is fair to say that CalMac's local management and staff have been excellent in coping with difficult situations and angry customers. JP asked for thanks to be passed to those concerned.

There has been a 45% increase in lorry block bookings for 2022. Currently, there is no increase in capacity or timetable to cope with that, so it means less space for everyone else. Dialogue is ongoing with RD and others which hopefully might find some ways of increasing capacity to cope.

The winter timetable for this year and next year is going to be based on 2019 which will mean we will have less space available than last year. Hopefully some of the solutions found for the summer may be able to help with the winter as well.

Tiree

A fairly difficult winter and we hit a low point in February when we had 7 return sailings to Oban in the entire month.

Work is being done on the pier which is going well and not impacting on everyone. Clansman is back.

The community is working with CalMac's Area Manager and having meaningful dialogue. CalMac are working with us to ensure we come through next winter in good shape.

Kintyre

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IMacF had nothing to add, other than to commiserate with colleagues on the islands for the difficult times they have been through.

Uist

GR said JoP had already raised some of the issues affecting Uist.

Lord of the Isles going away for a critical safety issue resulted in a huge reduction in capacity when we have Hebrides on its triangle route. Each one of these disruptions we have had has come with a financial impact to everyone on the islands. The community is fearful of issues arising while Uig is closed. When the Hebrides had its impact with the pier it was unavoidable but the financial impact was pretty big, especially with the way the vessel was brought back in and timetables changed at the last minute.

A lot of the community were quite surprised and unsettled that the issue with the sprinklers on Lord of the Isles was discovered at drydock but the vessel was allowed to sail. How could the MCA have allowed her to sail for 5 months with an issue with what we are being told is a critical system?

With regard to the Sound of Barra service, it would be worth looking at extra sailings on this route.

Consultation on the Uig outage has been worse than before with no answers being given to questions and no deadline given for feedback to be submitted. Huge lessons need to be learned for the future.

Lewis

The main problem is capacity issues. Accommodation providers have had cancellations because holidaymakers have not booked far enough in advance.

Prioritisation for islanders has been raised.

Uig pier – there is a bit of trepidation from people who would normally travel on the Harris ferry.

RC commented that the Harris Transport Forum met with the Transport Minister, Transport Scotland, CalMac and CMAL. Engagement was good.

The biggest concern is the proposed 6 months outage for Uig to Tarbert. People have asked if there is an option to reduce the period by splitting the work and doing the linkspan first. There is concern over lack of tonnage to service Harris and the impact this will have on businesses, as well as the impact of breakdowns, drydocks and weather disruptions. There is no contingency plan if the work over-runs.

Arran

Customer confidence is at an all-time low. 400 sailings have been lost this year to date and we are very keen to hear lessons learned from the loss of Caledonian Isles and then last Friday the diversion of Isle of Arran to cover for Lord of the Isles and Hebrides.

There are no plans for the fenders at Ardrossan despite repeated requests. This can prevent sailings first thing in the morning.

300 of 900 seating capacity on Caledonian Isles is restricted because the outside seating has been deemed unsafe. Seats were supposed to be replaced by April, but issues with suppliers delayed this. It is hoped this will be complete by the end of May.

Resilience plans need to be developed because next winter is not going to be any better.

Details of upgrades to Ardrossan to accommodate Glen Sannox are still awaited. Another task force meeting is due, but work has still not started despite the vessels being 5 years late. We will have to run to Troon which will reduce the service. There will be a 20-25% reduction in capacity probably through to 2025.

8 SUB-GROUP REPORTING

Communications

No members present.

Unmet demand

Next meeting scheduled for 31 May.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AC advised there is a lot of work coming up:

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- Socio-economic report will be circulated and then dates will be sought for a meeting in June.
- Joint meeting to be arranged with CFL, CMAL & TS.
- There is an opportunity to have the Minister at the next Board meeting. This may take the form of a hybrid meeting, with some people attending in person. AC will advise the Minister of the date. It was agreed to offer Edinburgh as a venue for the meeting if this better suited the Minister's diary.

Electric vehicles

JP advised that some people have asked if there should be segregation on board the ferries for electric vehicles as they are more at risk of combusting, particularly if they have lithium batteries. Perhaps there is a need to categorise them in the booking system to separately identify them. RD advised that guidance had been received which states there is no need to segregate electric vehicles. MMacN asked if there is any way to record how many electric vehicles are travelling. RD said the answer was no, but the new system will record them quite specifically via automatic number plate recognition.

KMacF advised that someone had had an accident with their car on the car deck recently. From the description, it was undoubtedly the fault of the CFL marshals who were directing the car when it had an impact. In that situation, does CFL accept liability? RD advised that if the person concerned wrote to the company with the details of their claim, it would be addressed.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for 2 September 2022.