

MINUTES of the FERRIES COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING
held on Friday 13 September 2024 at 0900 hrs
at UHI Stornoway Campus, Microsoft Teams.

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

Present:

Bill Calderwood (BC)
David Herriot (DH)
Gail Robertson (GR)
Jim Porteous (JP)
Kirsty MacFarlane (KMacF)
Murdo MacLean (MMacL)
Rhoda Campbell (RC)

In attendance:

Kevin Hobbs (KH) – CEO, CMAL
Blair Moglia (BM) – CMAL
Brian Fulton (BF) – CMAL
Duncan Mackison (DM) – Chief Executive, CalMac
Pauline Blackshaw (PB) - CalMac
Louis De Wolff (LDW) – CalMac
Demi Wylie (DW) - CalMac
Ailsa Stephen (AS) – CalMac
Chris Wilcock (CW) – Transport Scotland
Trevor McIlhattan (TMcl) – Transport Scotland
Juste Kalinauskaite (JK) – Transport Scotland
Brian Gordon (BG) – Transport Scotland
Anne MacLeod (AMac) – Mobility & Access Committee Scotland
Daniel Cullen (DC) – Young Islanders Network
Mack MacArthur (MMac) – Young Islanders Network
Ellie Ratter (ER) – Young Islanders Network

Apologies:

Angus Campbell (AC)
Angus Campbell (AC2)
Ida Holmstrom (IH)
Joanna Peteranna (JoP)
Kevin Peach (KP)
Donnie MacInnes (DMacI)
Mary-Jean Devon (MJD)

1 GOVERNANCE

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies from Mary-Jean Devon and from Angus Campbell (Chair) – Bill Calderwood assumed role of meeting Chair in AC absence.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

GR declared an interest as a haulier.

1.3 Minutes of meetings held on 31 May and Matters Arising

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

1.4 Actions from previous meeting

Matters marked as closed to be removed from the list.

2 JOINT DISCUSSION

2.1 Finance

CW began by mentioning the challenging financial position from both the UK and Scottish government. There were questions after the parliamentary debate last week around the £500m of cuts announced by Shona Robinson. There were questions from the media asking if specific projects are impacted by those savings, and what this means for the budget position. We [TS Ferries Unit] were not asked to find savings in that space, but we are still in the same budget position as we were before. We have not been asked to reduce the pipeline of projects, which is relatively positive. Therefore, we are still working closely with CalMac and CMAL to take projects to the tender-ready stage. We do expect ongoing pressure in the operational resource funding and capital space for projects.

BC said that there are some views throughout the network about the new vessels coming – a nervousness about being in the same position as we have been in the past where the pipeline dries up. Where do CalMac and CMAL see the timeline for future orders?

KH replied, we have 6 major ferries fully funded and committed to. We have the first phase of the two-phase tender back for the 7th which is being assessed. We will narrow this down to between 4 and 6 tenders. The effort now is to get that over the line in this financial year. It is possible, but a Herculean effort to get a contract prior to 1 March 2025. We have been asked by the Government to bring forward our concept design consultants which we will appoint next year. We are out to tender just now to get those together in the next month or two. We have been helping Highland Council with the Corran Ferry also. All of this is positive. The two projects from a ferry POV which are concerning now is the LOTI replacement and a desperate need to replace the freighters for the Northern Isles also. Working collaboratively with TS, CalMac and Serco to get everything into a position where it can be funded.

He continued, in terms of Islay vessel enabling works, this is all in train now and will be completed before end of financial year in anticipation of the Islay vessels arriving. We have a project to replace the Cumbrae slip, which is funded, and we are moving on with this. Complete rebuild of Port Ellen is another. We do not have funding for some work at Gourock which needs to be done and there are two or three different options for how much or how little we do on this. Rebuilding of Gassay Ferry terminal or the rebuild of Lochboisdale are currently in deep discussion with TS in terms of funding.

CW agreed, Gourock is a challenge for us. The other projects – SMVP, LOTI replacement, Mull Vessel replacement, are all still in our projected budget and we are pushing for those. We cannot allow a position where we have 'job done'. We are still working to ensure a continuous pipeline and the Cabinet Secretary understands this.

BC commented on reports and updates from CMAL and CalMac. Is there somewhere where we can get the third party or local authority needs of the network? For an informed picture of the network.

KH offered to do this [action] – I sit on regular meetings with all three councils which own most of the ports. The two outliers are Peel Ports and Canna (national trust for Scotland). I am aware of their projects. If you wanted a whistle-stop tour of third-party ports, I can do that.

CW added that a real challenging outlier is Ardrossan. CalMac pay extensive harbour dues and pay additional costs on top of borrowing to undertake these costs. We continue to work on that with our colleagues at CMAL and CalMac.

BC commented on the need to represent the network. It would be good to have it all there and to see submissions going on – we must recognise that it is a network service we represent, not just one part of it.

KMacF thanked CW for his encouraging report on budget. The future is uncertain and what you have said is very welcome. At the same time, there is a tremendous wastage of money being spent. That will maintain the pressure. Can you tell, at what point the Minister will make some of the decisions to confirm spending? Just so that we get a feel at what point the decision will be made to confirm Phase 2 funding.

CW confirmed that he did not know. With regards the contract extension, it is very much approved at our side and is expected early next week.

2.2 Future Structures

CW began – happy to talk about the TS, CalMac and CMAL space. The Cabinet Secretary has said that Project Neptune will only proceed once direct award is in place – we are still working to this but will let you know of any changes. We are trying to ensure that TS, CalMac and CMAL are working together and getting out on the network. We are keen to do more seamless engagement with the three parties.

BC said that local feedback appears to be very positive in the joint approach. Respect and appreciation to the parties involved.

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DM added a point on asset management also. You will be aware that one of the systems identified needing replacement is the asset management system that CalMac uses. As part of the funding and extension for next year, Chris has jumped in and supported the procurement of this. This will be used by CMAL and CalMac jointly – a shared system and this demonstrates working together more structurally those two teams in the management of the asset from procurement and construction through to whole-life servicing. This is a strong indicator of our direction of travel.

BC agreed that the combined approach has led to positive feedback. There is clearly more collaboration to bring a conclusion to some of the vessel programmes underway.

BF asked if there was anything BC could share with the wider group on how FCB structure looks going forward?

BC answered that there has been some pre-meetings and self-assessments on our effectiveness and individual contributions. That will be discussed later this afternoon to bring some clarity to our roles and how we fit into the future. We have had a longstanding action to refresh the posters that go on the vessels for promoting the contacts and FCB membership. There has been another movement – if we are all working as partners, why should the FCB be the only people on there? We will suggest showing an integration with CMAL, CalMac and TS. This is just a suggestion.

He continued, there is strong desire from board members that we be more influential, and our views are reflected more strongly. If our minutes can show that we are part of the decision-making process, that would go a long way. Our participation and contribution to some of the discussions needs to be more visible. We are actively pursuing that and will certainly come out with something to the partners before our next meeting.

BF mentioned the terms of reference and the governance for future contracts, so that everyone is on the same page.

BC said that there is strong alignment there because we all recognise that since its inception it has moved a long way but there is still a way to go. Discussions to be had on integration and work within the various groups.

CW said that he had an outstanding action to pull together some papers. At a high level, having the Chair appointed Ministerial would strengthen the appointment to work closely with the Board, get the right balance between FCB independence but also being able to engage at a strategic level across the piece. I would argue that you already do and the Board's voice is strongly heard by Ministers, but keen to continue working on that. The Board was a construct of CalMac's CHFS2 bid, but there will be a contractual requirement under direct award for a Board to be a fixture. We need to articulate how it influences decision making and think about how the tri-partite supports it.

BM asked about the secretariat of the Board – would CalMac still support?

BC commented that although you are an independent board, you are under the wing of CalMac in terms of finances and administration. As the Board has developed, the demand on the Chair has increased and it needs support. Once we have finalised how we see ourselves playing a part, that will be one of the asks.

KMacF returned to the point of visits. We could say that at times we get despondent as a Board, which reflects how our communities feel – particularly about the pace of change and how CMAL, TS and CalMac interact. It was great to see you on Coll and it may seem like a small step, but it is important. I offered to write up a report and wondered if you might consider drafting a short report yourselves to tease out the main feedback that you were getting from our communities?

DM replied, we gather the results of those discussions respectively afterwards. We are happy to pull something together after each visit and make some notes about that. Perhaps we could take that offline and see what that might look like [action] – happy to look at producing something.

KMacF: something very general, it does not have to be too specific.

TMcl spoke about supporting the FCB going forward. For CHFS3, we have left that flexible in the contract and we expect CalMac would be the support for this. Once we have a more settled position, we will let you know. Happy to continue discussions and think about the work for the wider stakeholder setup. We are aware and will make sure that there is ongoing support in some shape or form for the Board.

BC asked KHJ and DM if there is anything they wished to add before leaving the call slightly earlier.

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KH answered, not really. There is documentation required because the original contract was purely for 8 years. We must look at operating agreement, bareboat charter. A whole lot of things need to go on just for the one year and then more work next year about the direct award. That is the next phase. We are trying to knit that together, without knowing if there will be a direct award or not, which is difficult. Hopefully some form of direction before Christmas when the necessary hurdles have been crossed. We have everything ready to go on the 1-year extension. During the extension, several vessels will be leaving the fleet and a number coming in, which requires a lot of documentation and change.

DM added from a CFL perspective – none of this process is having any effect or delay on the speed or momentum of work at CalMac. The new Area Manager appointments and deputies is still taking place, plus e-booking pressure. The CFL Board are saying to maintain a rate of change – maintain the speed. Although there are contractual discussions going on, they are not influencing the organisation and their priorities.

TMcl said that we are aiming to start the pre-referral process next week and presume to have the outcome of that before Christmas. After that, although there are the usual Cabinet approval processes, that is the current timeline and direction of travel.

BC thanked TMcl for the reassurance.

KMacF asked if we have considered what improvements might be introduced in the next year?

BC said that as an FCB, we need to formalise our roles and direction, and share this with the parties involved. This is part of the reason for the session later this afternoon.

2.3 Contract Extension Improvements

Board agreed that this was covered in segment 2.2.

2.4 KPI Update

BC shared that there had been discussion on clarity – are we looking for KPIs or looking to improve the dashboard reports that once existed. There is a further meeting with JP, AC2 and Pauline Blackshaw (PB) which will hopefully feed into TS.

TMcl said that he hopes Gordon or Mark will be at this meeting. From a general point of view there is alignment on KPIs which is positive. We want to start monitoring them from mid-October, so hope by mid-November to have an idea of what the results will look like, giving us an opportunity to refine them as we go forward.

BC said that there were one or two points from an earlier discussion that CalMac were going to check. It is nice to look at one route, but when you look at all routes it is difficult to see a consistent picture. For the dashboards, they should be route or destination specific – KPIs should be network wide. It is easy for us to do it at route level, but when you try to collate it, more difficult.

KMacF requested to join this meeting also, to better understand KPIs. People have done a good job in pulling them together, but I wonder if there is anything wrong or impactable about establishing the principle that there are some KPIs relevant to some routes but not to others. Just as a principle. Would TS see that as a problem?

TMcl replied, we would have to see what the proposal was and what that presents. As long as it does not artificially skew any of the other results in some way then we could look at it on a case-by-base basis. Once you have the KPI formulated, ask what it is telling us.

BC said that the KPIs will deliver what is seen as a standard need of the community measurement. That is the driver behind KPIs. Whether that is one sailing per day, two sailings a week delivering what communities need. We will work through it again and we need to ensure that we do not drag ourselves down looking at specific island needs. We need to drive the key elements of how we are measuring success of the future contract.

BF commented that the KPIs must be relatively simple but fit for purpose. The challenge with splitting is the reporting and this becomes very resource-heavy. On the face of it, it sounds simple, but it is more difficult that it seems. This is an observation from a previous role.

CW agreed – it has to be meaningful and manageable. Unlike a 10-year commercial contract, the direct award gives us more flexibility on how we manage KPIs so we can review them and change them if they are not working for us. We can amend those if we need to.

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TMcl agreed. We are putting these in at the start but should review them on an annual basis to make sure they show what we need them to show. It will be an ongoing process.

BC replied, let's get the new structure of management in place and each dashboard should give way to an improvement plan. They need to be set on the key elements of the service and how they can be improved on. The KPIs being defined is one thing, but the allowable measures of it and performance improvement is something that will require at least an annual review of the appropriateness.

KMacF commented that 40% of major vessel capacity has less than 2 or fewer sailings per day. A considerable proportion with a different style of operation. Happy to feed into the meeting on KPIs.

2.5 Board Membership

BC updated attendees that one member of the board had stepped down in the last 4 weeks. This will be part of our discussion later. We mentioned earlier that we will be reviewing membership and are conscious of extensions to some of the tripartite Boards. We do not know if there are any changes imminent there.

BF said that there are two non-executive directors coming onto the CMAL Board. Not yet able to provide details as it has not yet been announced.

CW commented on the DML re-appointments. This is just the usual cycle of reappointments when members reach the end of their term.

BF advised that Paul Croucher's term had run out but that he would remain at CMAL in a consultancy basis and is staying on until the end of the year to handover.

BM asked who had stepped down from the FCB?

BC confirmed Eoin MacNeil, from Barra. Formal notification is yet to be because of how recent this is. We as a group have not discussed fully.

BM agreed to keep this confidential for now.

RC noted the disappointment locally that DML Board reappointed the directors. There is opportunity for island representation and its deeply disappointing. MM agreed.

CW said that these were re-appointments which are consistent across all public bodies in terms of renewing membership. Ministers are pushing for island representation. When we have recruited, we have actively sought island representation and encouraged application. There has not always been great volume of applications and any advice you might have on how we better target those potential candidates would be appreciated.

MM said that what has been said in the media has put people off. The attitude seems to be 'why bother' from the community. They see good names go forward without being appointed. The media coverage of those who have been appointed – their expertise might be a good match but their knowledge on island issues is negligible. The appointment seems to be driven on professional background rather than what they can do for the islands. This is exacerbated by finding out that they have not visited the network widely.

CW said that the CMAL Board regularly go out. Both Boards do have at least one islander. To run these businesses, you do need that expertise but how do we tap into those individuals. The point you made about people being put off is well made. I have had the experience of approaching people myself and getting that feedback. Please let us know what more we can do to promote the next round of opportunities as they come up. We are keen to maximise that where we can.

BF asked about diversity being a challenge across all industry. Having islanders is of huge value and that adds a dimension, but one of the further challenges we have is gender balance. You are at the mercy of those who come forward for interview. It is not as simple as we think because there are different elements – not just geography.

RC said that the DML Board's profile should be raised significantly across the network. There is no association and for me, that is a very simple solution to get out into the network. That should happen within a week of that suggestion being made – not a year on. She suggested at least a 50% islander split on the Boards to get a real sense of what it is like.

DH said there is nothing stopping the Boards hosting their meetings elsewhere.

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BC said that the likes of what DM and KH are doing now, but with a Board member coming along too would go a long way. They could be promoted at these meetings.

CW said that this is an excellent suggestion and let's continue to promote it. These are regulated appointments and there are processes but that shouldn't preclude us from finding the right people.

BC said that the fact we have done it before does not necessarily mean it is the right thing. Perhaps we need to be more open in this era of change.

BM said that the CMAL Board move their meetings to different places on the network and combine them with visits. This works well.

GR agreed with BM. There needs to be more visibility of the decision makers with communities. What stops the DML board or CalMac's exec team from hosting their meetings out in different locations?

CW commented that TS CEO is keen to get out and visit networks and has indeed done so. We are actively pursuing more visits and the suggestion to CalMac is one for them, but it does sound good. It works well for the CMAL board.

GR said that the executive team at CalMac have only ever been met through different avenues. Some do not appear to leave Gourrock and are invisible to the community. That needs to be changed.

Suggestion was made for CFL Board to join the next FCB meeting.

2.6 Deck Space Reservation Pilot



Deck Space Reservation Pilot - A

Demi Wylie (DW) joined the meeting and shared screen online.

DW explained that she had come in place of Iain Slorach to present on the Deck Reservation Pilot. There are two routes we have conducted this pilot on – Oban > Craignure, Oban > Coll > Tiree. We thought it was a good time to take stock on what we collected from the pilot and discuss how this can inform extensions of this to another route or what can be improved.

The main objective of the pilot is to allow customers with last minute travel needs to travel on a sailing that would have otherwise been fully booked. In order to do this, we restrict a percentage of deck space to be released a set time before departure.

BM asked if there was prioritisation for the space that is reserved?

DW confirmed, no. This is different to the urgent medical protocol for example, where criteria must be met.

BM asked if it affected advanced standby?

DW confirmed, no – it operates separately.

GR clarified that advanced standby is not available on the routes that the pilot took place on.

CW reflected that although this is not a perfect solution, it is good to see that there are some benefits coming from it. From a TS, and indeed a personal perspective, I have hugely enjoyed working with communities and CalMac on this project. It has felt very collaborative and everyone has had knowledge and ideas on making it work. It has been uplifting – thanks to CalMac and community involved. I cannot overstate enough how positive an experience this has been from our side.

DW agreed – it felt great to be involved in something so collaborative and making a difference.

BC said that most people think the only way to resolve this is to provide the appropriate capacity for routes. That's long term.

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KMacF said that it's nice to hear that the working was collaborative – I have enjoyed working in that group as well. The main objective was not last-minute travel for islanders, but an islander preference ticket. The barriers to this project are the current contract and booking technology. We are experiencing, as the pilot has become better known, that it is being used by tourists and business people. That is helpful to the island economy – no denying, however it is once again showing the need for an islander card. I appreciate all the work that has been done, but this is not the model that we thought we would end up with. We still hope to push this to get a genuine resident-islander card.

CW reflected that the discussion at the outset of this was to achieve the art of the possible. We understand the aspiration of islanders for more certainty. That ask remains. While we work to pursue and consider that, what we are not saying is that we should pull the pilot. It still has benefits, but we note that the community are looking for something different.

BC asked how 'residents' would be defined. From previous schemes such as SPT concession fare, the qualification for 'resident' was proof of address. How would you do that for consistency?

KMacF suggested driver's licence.

BC agreed, that shows a permanent address.

RC asked if there was an option for increased sailings to meet that extra demand on capacity? Is that worked on alongside this kind of pilot?

BG spoke on the point of defining a 'resident'. It is challenging to define – does this include people providing essential services, or second-home owners? Good feedback was given on this from the ICP consultation.

BC said that some people will not have bills to show proof of address or have a licence but will still need to travel – to college for example. A publication recently discussed an additional 2 routes for summer next year. Do you know which routes would be suggested?

DW confirmed that Stornoway – Ullapool and the Sound of Harris are the initial suggestions. We would be looking to seek the views of community representatives and then to continue conversation with TS on this.

CW said that if there are views from the FCB on routes for future rollout – could the area managers be more heavily involved in this and set or identify routes and see how the system might work different? Just a thought on how this could evolve.

BC said that in once sense, we hear that the current pilot is being extended to collect more detail to quantify success, but the Cabinet Secretary said it was a success and she promoted it for a further two routes. Mixed message.

MM said that there is an acceptance that capacity will not be there for a fair while. It would be welcome and nice to try something. We have an opportunity today to meet the community later and we can bring it to them later.

CW said that it will be interesting to see how, when the new capacity comes on, if there are changes there.

BC updated on further delays to MV Glen Sannox – again, some concern around communications on why we read it from the press rather than first hand. I appreciate there are responsibilities there. There is lots of speculation around the duration of any delay and that has a significant impact going forward for vessel placement elsewhere and on maintenance.

CW commented that CAML and the yard have been working closely to ensure that the dates shared in the public domain are realistic. On the point of communications – this is fair – we should find a way to alert you. It is tricky to choreograph but let me think about that.

BC said that the knock-on effect of the vessel introduction plan and annual maintenance impact hits the network – not just one destination. I would suggest that because of some of the speculation expected, it would be good to have clarity early next week.

He returned to the deck reservation pilot – has there been any review made of the booking patterns of eBooking or Ar Turas? We are seeing a high rate of bookings and cancellations. From the Arran route, we can see sailings that were unavailable for 20 – 30 days, but 2 or 3 days before it sails, suddenly there is availability. Is there analysis on this?

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GR said that the system shows lots of sailings as full when they are not. Unless you can book online and in case you are online refreshing constantly, you will not see it. I have little confidence in any analysis on this. I am having conversations with Alan Hood about standby and it is all route specific. Until the coordinates of the vessels are correct, the booking system will not be correct. I do not see what negative or positive feedback can be given on this pilot. We have wasted 18 months and felt the impact since eBooking has come in. We are talking 18 more months before this can be investigated properly. I think it is overcomplicated and that there are more fundamental things that need attention.

BC said that it is becoming more common for people to sit and repeatedly refresh their booking page. As soon as they see space, they book it and contact CalMac to ask for a change. There is nervousness around it and we touched on advanced standby. When we speak to local ports, advanced standby is discussed but people have not used it. Sailings are disrupted and CalMac's internal process uses advanced standby to reschedule people. As GR mentions, there is lack of confidence in some of the numbers coming out and that nervousness is extending onto whether this is influencing future processes.

DW replied, we are only as good as the quality of the data we use. It is recognised as a priority of the business. The discussions for this pilot were pre-eBooking. It happened to then be introduced at the same time, which brought its own unique challenges. We need to be aware that there are other things going on. These issues are being looked at as priority and we want to stabilise the system. It has also been during a period of significant change and widespread disruption.

KMacF thanked DW for recognising this and agreed with GR and BC. I do still feel that our route specific desire and feeling that we want an islander preference ticket has a much longer pedigree than just recent difficulties. The pilot has highlighted to me that in Coll and Tiree, it has knocked out mez deck availability. That is a straightforward IT issue. Although the deck space is availability, the pilot deck space because it is reserved until 7 days in advance in our case, port staff and people booking are not able to access it. This has been used only a handful of times this year. Despite that, the ferry is usually travelling with loads of space. As you say, there is frustration as to why these fixes are taking so long. Having said that, we still appreciate the pilot and want to work with you to make it better.

GR agreed – meanwhile the impacts are huge.

JP echoed GR's earlier point. From our point of view and the routes I am involved with, you must be able to identify the problem before you come up with solutions. We used to have dashboard statistics which gave a huge amount of information and bookings. Last minute cancellation trends year on year and month by month. We have been raising it and a roundtable meeting was called. Diane Burke agreed to start producing this information and sharing it with us. Locally, we cannot make any decisions on this kind of pilot until we have the information on what is going on more generally. We have also asked in the past that this is route-specific. A route might not actually want to take part. The lack of statistics is a huge issue. If we are to ever come up with a decent solution, we need them. Even with the additional capacity of the new ships.

DW agreed. The packs will be getting generated and sent out. I can chase that up and make it known that these are still outstanding.

BC said that we had Angela Peterson's commitment some weeks ago.

BC thanked DW for joining and adjourned the meeting for a 10-minute break.

3 CMAL UPDATE

Ellie and Mack from the Young Islanders meeting joined the call.

BM welcomed the young islanders and introduced herself and CMAL colleagues, explaining where CMAL, CalMac and Transport Scotland fit in the wider ferry service landscape.

BF began to update, using the briefing provided in advance of the meeting.



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He began, with the 4 Turkey vessels. 2 launched, 2 yet to be. MV Loch Mor is dependent on space at the dockside before it can be launched. This does not mean that works tops. The reason for the delay to MV Isle of Islay is the risk around the Suez Canal and Mariupol. There was also an earthquake on the other side of Turkey. Given these 3 circumstances, it is commendable that Cemre are only 2 months behind

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schedule. The likely delivery is December of this year, before she heads off to Islay. This will give space for MV Loch Mor to be launched, followed by MV Claymore. MV Loch Indaal is currently sitting alongside Isle of Islay.

He continued, when the vessels get to Islay, we will have an introduction to service ceremony which will involve the local community, schools. There will be events happening. There will be an art competition and the winning pieces of art will be displayed on the vessels for their lifetime. The same will happen with the Little Minch vessels when they are delivered to the Harris and Uist Communities. I have been across to the yard for the two launches and can say with absolute confidence that they are delivering good quality vessels that are not far away. The yard has around 16 vessels in progress, so it is in their interest to finish the vessels on time to keep their pipeline flowing.

He continued MV Glen Sannox – trials continue and when the ship is handed over there will be a series of familiarisation events. He asked the Board if a visit was going to happen for them to the vessel?

BC replied, not yet due to LNG loading and last night there was word of further disruption. Local speculation is that there will be significant delays for this to be resolved which leads to questions on how annual overhaul in December would fit into this.

BF explained that the annual overhaul timing is basically like a car MOT and must happen at the same time every year and it must tie in with all the other vessel overhauls. I understand it was the community that chose this timing?

BC answered yes, the alternative was in Easter.

BF said Glen Rosa is progressing well at the yard and onboard Glen Sannox everything looks excellent. For the Small Vessel Replacement Plan (SVRP) – 7 vessels out for tender now. Plan to award by 31 March 2025. Phase 2 has also kicked off for the further 3 vessels to cover Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra routes. This is a lot more challenging due to the depth of water there. Although we do not have the funding, it is good to hear from CW earlier that this is in their plans, along with the Northern Isles freighters. The needs-based assessment has now been completed for Gourock-Dunoon and the follow-up to this is community meetings to see how the recommendations in the report will be taken forward. We have been in early discussions with Artemis Technologies. The Carvorra is also in plan because it is not capable of handling traffic now. The Caledonian Isles is on her way back to service and the Hebridean Isles is going to be decommissioned in November. She is scheduled for her 5-year service at this time which will cost many millions with no guarantee of her lifetime after that. By the beginning of next year, we should have a fleet capable of greater resilience.

BC asked about delays to MV Caledonian Isles and knock-on effects to other deployments. She will be very welcome back.

BF continued to cover the general terms points of the CMAL report (attached above). With the Scottish Maritime Cluster, Blair and I attend the Cross-Party Group on Islands. If anyone in this Board wanted to join, please let us know. There is a whole variety of subject matter discussed.

BM continued with the Port Infrastructure segment, highlighting key sections. The Islay vessel enabling works is a large project ongoing for some time. Generally progressing well but there have been a few delays on Colonsay. We have created a bi-monthly newsletter for the works for the community. We can add the FCB to the distribution list if you wish. This is a pilot which seems to be well received so far. [Action].

She continued onto SVR works. For the SSEN update, she clarified the difference between firm and non-firm quotes. Firm quotes is when there are two levels of supply coming in, and non-firm is only one level of supply. In the past, with only one level of supply the maximum outage was 14 hours at a time. Cumbrae works are underway and on-track.

GR commented that KH and DM met with South Uist Business Group yesterday. Is there an update on Gassay?

BM replied, the review is still underway. It is no further forward.

BF said that the timescale to review it is December. There was no 'do minimum' or 'do nothing' options in the report. After the review, they will have a go/no-go decision to make which will then allow us to progress.

GR asked, if you get the go-ahead in December, how long will it be until we have something? Bearing in mind Lochboisdale pier could be condemned at any time.

BF said that the projects are at 'shovel ready'. All we can do is take it to that stage, we then depend on getting the funding to progress. We would not do any works at Lochboisdale if Gassay works were to proceed. I cannot give a specific date, but we will be far more progressed than a starting point. There is a lot being done – you may have seen some of the designs and initial work.

GR: so there is a chance we could have no service out of South Uist?

BF said there is always a risk, however it is smaller given the amount of work done recently at Lochboisdale. Wires at the linkspan and deck plating was completed. The long-term work we would not do until we know about Gassay. We are not talking about anything sooner than 5 years down the line where a service might be stopped.

KMacF referred to open action regarding the interactive map to track spending. The whole point of this was to be able to reflect back on major projects, timescale slippages and the reasons for them. You have kept us informed of the impacts (SSEN for example) and a lot of this is of interest to the public with the amount of money we are talking about there and the delays to service. What is the starting point for this tracking model, and will we get that continuum when it's available?

BF replied, the interactive map itself is not capable of doing what we thought it could do. It crashed and we are now at a point where our next Board meeting, we will have something to present. To set expectations on the content, you will be able to go into each route, each vessel and you can see when the vessel is due to be replaced, the timing, and its status. It will also do this for all ports and related works.

KMacF – we look forward to seeing it, thank you.

RC asked about 175m allocated to Phase 1 of the SVRP. In the current climate, there is no chance of that being retracted?

BF confirmed – No. It is committed. I can be positive on that because we cannot legally go out to procurement without having funding in place.

BC thanked BF and BM for their updates and attendance and added one final point. The fact that the CMAL Board have been out on the network – an observation would be that we may be able to get some of the local ferry committees or community representatives to meet with you. People learned about the visit afterwards and might have liked to meet you. Not negative, it was well received, but just an observation.

BF agreed – for future we will absolutely do that.

4 CALMAC UPDATE

The Board welcomed PB and LDW to the meeting.

4.1 Staff Structure Changes – Enhanced Engagement Model

PB began, recruitment has been going well and we are well through the process. Final interviews are taking place now. We have undergone a robust process to shortlist what was hundreds of applications for these roles. There have been group assessment centres and other measurements to ensure that people have the right skills and capabilities for these roles. I would hope we would be able to appoint within the next couple of weeks – considering notice periods etc, but hopefully positions can be in place November. We are working on a new induction programme and this will set a standard for inductions across the business. We want to set the standards from the beginning, and this will be in place for rollout of the EEM. We are optimistic that we will get the right people to take forward these roles, which are core to us delivering the change we want to make. Working with communities to understand what is going on, feed this back into our processes – be it timetables, disruption – that is the next step.

GR asked about the induction programme. This is very welcome, and we have asked for this for a long time – an induction like this. Part of it should be going out across the network and seeing the different routes and communities. I know we are talking about AMs, but will this be developed for all roles in CalMac?

PB replied, we are seeing this as a standard for how we bring people in. We need to set them up for success. We have an introduction programme now, but it is quite light, and there is so much more to the operation, so I see this being expanded out to other areas. Your feedback on what should be included would be very much appreciated.

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MM asked if there would be introductions to the community board as part of this?

PB said there will be various introductions to various stakeholders. It's a key part of the role and a core part of that is making those introductions.

BC introduced the YIN members to CalMac attendees.

KMacF commented, I wonder if you will build community engagement into working practices. Sometimes with more than one community at the same time. For example, where there are shared ports, shared vessels or shared routes. Everyone needs to be aware of certain issues and it's useful from time to time – maybe twice a year – to bring more than one community representative together. I say this in the context of ferry stakeholder groups fading.

PB agreed – there is a vacuum caused by the FSGs and what they do or do not focus on. There is a definite issue where we have communities whose services are interconnected in some way. We find it difficult to rationalise the different views to find the correct solution because all are very valid. I'd suggest this is something we can look at and I'd like more discussions with yourselves on how we might do that. We need to get better at how we balance these decisions. The other thing is how we make decisions where there are competing views within the community. Considering all the feedback, I have not reached an easy answer. Maybe we do need to create regular forums to get individuals together, but I'd welcome further conversation to explore that, if you were willing.

BC said that one of the asks from the Board was that these positions would have much more autonomy to make decisions and make things happen. They should meet with communities, get a plan and implement.

PB replied, there is a decision-making matrix in the works. We want to delegate as much of this as possible to a local level so that things can be taken forward quicker. Where decisions impact another area or community, it would still need to come back up centrally.

BC asked about the facilitation of these roles through the restructuring of other parts of the company. Is there anything there that, as customers, we will notice? i.e. changes in practice or procedures.

PB confirmed this would be on support services and there will not be a noticeable difference. Are there different ways that we can do what we do, without the same level of resource? We cannot let anything we are doing here impact the frontline for customers and it will be maintained.

BC asked if the AMs or DAMs were to request decentralisation in certain areas so that they are more aligned to the communities they are serving, would that be considered?

PB- it would be, but there needs to be a balance between that and having the flexible view that centralisation gives for the full network. There will be a degree of decentralisation, and it needs defined. There will be a middle ground.

GR asked how soon communities will see change from this?

PB replied, once they have gone through the induction programme, we expect them to move quickly. They should be able to set up meetings right away. We want the engagement to start right away. There is no reason why they shouldn't be.

GR asked if the decision-making framework would be in place, come January / February when weather disruption is more likely?

PB confirmed – yes it should be. We are developing that now so that it is ready.

Update from Finlay MacRae

We are still in the process of working through the recruitment for the EEM. It is taking longer than we would have liked. We have been doing it very differently to how we would normally. Part of the challenge has been that we are not any more resourced today than we were 6 months ago – apologies for the time it is taking and appreciate for everyone involved that it has taken longer than we would have liked. Hopefully within the next two weeks we can start to make offers. Some people may have notice periods and internal candidates cannot just take them out of their current role immediately. Hopefully by the end of September we will have clarity on where we are.

He continued, one of the fascinating parts for us was using assessment centres, which we have never done as an organisation. We learned a lot and we will take some of it and use it going forward in our own

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processes. What was helpful was having some of you attend as independent observers. One of the key things we are looking for, particularly for the Area Managers, is the ability to communicate and be honest and trustworthy. They need kudos with those they're working with and able to build that relationship.

GR mentioned that she was one of the observers at the assessment centre. It was enjoyable and it was nice to be asked. PB suggested earlier that these positions are key to the timescale for change. She said that probably by December, they will be in-post and we will start to see a change in decision making by January. She mentioned an induction and that should be throughout the CalMac Network. Is that right?

FMacR replied, everyone will be inducted or re-inducted, almost as if they do not know anything. The biggest workstream in that is stakeholder relationships. The real future vision is that the AMs will be interchangeable. We have it now in the sense that they are 'on call'. The Hebrides AM for example, can cover for the whole network. We want to expand that and bring things closer together.

GR highlighted that at times there may be conflict between AMs and Deputies.

FMacR agreed – it happens right now. When we have a vessel out and have to take another from somewhere else, we know what the impact is. This will hopefully flow alongside the fleet reliability improvement. New ships will have teething issues and we expect this. The overall network viability will still ultimately be escalated in the level that it is now. Unfortunately, at times we have to make the decision at my level and above. That will remain the case. We will still have issues with the small vessels as they are starting to show their age.

GR asked about the prioritisation matrix. Is that being modified to fit the new structure?

FMacR confirmed – yes. It will also be modified for the fleet profile as we add and remove vessels. They are more interchangeable.

KMacF asked if there would be the opportunity to get people together to discuss January and February dry docking, bad weather, cancellations and technical issues. My impression of the matrix is that it would make a difference. I feel it [the matrix] needs a bit of a refresh.

FMacR answered, in terms of network, we have what you might call a 'fail to sail' traffic prioritisation. We have recently done some work in Islay because the way it works there is different to Mull, Coll, Tiree, and Lewis. The whole thing will need to be rejigged because part of the challenge right now is being significantly short in tonnage.

FC commented that there is funding for Phase 1, but that is all. There is a concern that the next tranche of new vessels will fall through as there is no commitment to the rest of them.

FMacR replied, we need a major vessel build every year now for the next 7 years. Then we need more, because by that time, the Hebrides and the Clansman will be at end of Service. The Seaforth is 10 years old, and the Finlaggan is 12 or 13 years old. They are starting to reach the halfway point of their lives. The Seaforth, you could say is even older when you consider she runs twice as much. We have fed this back to all agencies. It needs to happen in generational chunks.

KMacF said that people need to know that CalMac are on the case. It is a question of seeing people regularly, it would make all the difference.

BC asked if there were plans to address the perception in some parts that other locations get priority more than others?

FMacR replied, this is a multi-level question. One of the things that has been so unfortunate with the pressures the service faces is that we have seen communities turn against each other. Some communities who once had good relationships cannot do it anymore. Political interference has been suggested as well.

BC asked if the new managers would have an introduction to the FCB.

FMacR answered, we are thinking of, where appropriate, taking some of the new recruits and having them appropriately attend meetings to allow their expansion of knowledge. We might even get into a roleplay situation.

RC commented that 'Island Crossings' the TV programme showed the difficulties and it went a good way to show what the challenges are.

GR suggested that the Centre of Excellence in Gourock should have mock customers.

MM raise a final point about the pre-ambles on the phone when calling to book. 2.5 minutes is a long time.

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GR also said that the pop up survey appearing every time is also excessive.

4.2 Drydocking

LDW briefly updated on overhaul. MV Loch Nevis is currently in dry dock. The issue with the Glen Sannox is more difficult for us because that is yet again delayed out to now mid-October and we plan to dry dock her as soon as she comes out. We will do the shakedown period and then almost immediately drydock her. The more this delay happens, the more squeezed the in-between period gets. It is already difficult to plan an overhaul with only two months to go. This worries me, but overall, the overhaul programme is running to plan. The Caledonian Isles will soon be back, and this will help.

BC agreed with the concerns that any delay in MV Glen Sannox would change other vessel movements. This gets very close to the need for communities prior to Christmas. We are waiting today to hear where the Caledonian Isles is. It highlights the need for communications. One of the things that comes through on this, and previously, is technical issues with various vessels. The crew that work on these repairs are part of the community and the stories do come through. Sometimes communities hear information. We want to encourage transparency.

LDW; that's understood. There will be updated communications today about MV Caledonian Isles with an anticipated back to service date.

4.3 Ticket System

PB provided a brief update on eBooking. We have a Centre of Excellence where we are training staff in how to follow processes correctly. There are other refinements taking place to the system between now and another release – large release in November. Unfortunately, I am far-removed from the system, but I appreciate there are still bugs and frustration with the system from a customer point of view.

GR commented that 18 months down the line, from a customer point of view it doesn't seem to be improving. The odd thing has been fixed – concessions, online bookings etc. but day to day, there is a long way to go. Far from BAU.

BC said that people are interpreting 'BAU' negatively. From our discussions, it probably needs a separate meeting. I know there is interest across the network on what the next release will do. People are getting used to the idiosyncrasies of it and do not see it as a customer friendly system.

GR said there was a joint meeting with DML Board in July and one of the actions with Diane Burke was to meet with myself and Bill on these fixes. [Action]. The eBooking issues have been compounded by coordinates not being correct and waitlist being removed.

BC said, for Pauline's information, that there is a meeting next week on statistics with Angela.

JP stated that there had been a meeting on Islay with the local area manager and was told that there will be a visit to eDea in Italy to run through possible modifications with them. One of them was to show when a sailing is being worked on in the system, to advise customers to try again rather than to give up. Who are eDea?

PB replied, they are the owner of the eBooking platform. Any changes must be done by them on our behalf. The supplier basically.

JP: thank you, hopefully Finlay can share more with us when he arrives.

PB stated that if it would be helpful to have a specific discussion around this, we would be happy to do this.

GR said that Alan Hood had agreed to speak with the community board, and this will tie in with the eBooking also. I will speak to Angus to arrange this.

BC commented that there was no clarity in advance waitlists, advance standby, the trials. It all needs to come under one umbrella because we speak to so many different people about the same topic. This links to our question about the Area Manager's ability to drive change.

PB agreed. That is the expectation. We want to be able to have the same customer experience, unless the island has specific island needs. We want to create a standard experience. The expectation is that they should be able to review things, identify a problem and look at how we can make improvements. It is not an opportunity for them to go out and just talk, they will be making changes to improve things too.

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RC: the help you get from port staff has made all this much easier. Going online every hour and every day to get a booking, the port staff are phenomenal and if it wasn't for them, the situation would be a lot worse. Having a tourism business, visitors do struggle when they do not see availability. They will switch off and it would be good to quantify how many switch off.

BC endorsed this on behalf of the Board – frontline staff are an asset that customers recognise, and they have our full support. They are the face of CalMac.

RC added that sometimes the information from Gourock is not accurate, with some guests told that they cannot book for 6-7 weeks due to availability, which is totally untrue. My advice to them is always to phone the port for accurate information.

5 BC thanked LDW and PB for their attendance.
TS UPDATE

5.1 ICP Update

The Board welcomed BG and JK to the meeting.

JK shared presentation on screen of the public consultation and community engagement.



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JK began, our team, supported by other colleagues held face-to-face engagement events across the islands in 23 locations. As well as providing some open discussion sessions, these events were also focussing on work-type style discussions, around 3 of the 11 themes of the ICP: community voice & transparency, accessibility and onwards and connecting travel. Thanks to those who came along and for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

Following a competitive tender process, the independent consultant appointed for the analysis produced a report alongside the summary report that shows an overview of the main findings. This is on the TS website

JK continued to present the slides on screen (attached above), before making a few additional comments for note by the Board.

JK: we have been hearing that people do not know where their feedback and input goes after a consultation. We would like to produce something about this and would like to know what your thoughts are on the best way to do this so that people know their contributions have been heard. We also gathered some contact information for those who wanted to be kept updated. We shared the report with those contacts. Keen to know the view of the FCB.

RC raised the point of consultation fatigue. The work that has been done is fantastic and the amount of information available is fantastic. How quickly will we see change from this document? I was concerned that all of this would be dragged after years of consultation and engagement. It would be good to go back to the communities – perhaps with 10 key areas that will change in the next 2-3 months, for example. That would be good. It is frustrating to be involved in such a high level of engagement with no obvious output.

BC agreed – this summarises a lot of our conversations today, seeking timescales for change. We know that the contract will kick off in 3-4 weeks' time. Something new is going to change in the next year and we are looking for some dates on specific actions and change. The community want to know how you react, not in words, but in dates.

KMacF added, the proof will be in how much the draft ICP document will change as a result of everything that has been consulted on. There is no indication at this stage on that, so we will have to reserve judgement. My overall impression was that you began with what must be the simplest route, with no vehicle traffic. It has taken a long time to get a report on this and the methodology has changed. Have the consultants yet looked at how to analyse vehicle traffic, and how that builds into community needs? We seem to be a long way away from going around all of the other communities for their input. Timing is an issue. The ferries plan expired almost 2 years ago and the frustration, with all this consultation, is when will we see something that shows a map for how the next few decades will go. We appreciate your hard work. I believe the ICP is far too complex and trying to achieve too much in a very active area of public service. The politicians have made your job very difficult and it is frustrating as a community also. If you could take this message higher, we would appreciate it because we want to see progress. Thank you.

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JK said that was helpful – thank you. It is an interesting point about complexity of the ICP. It is a big piece of work with many complex components. The change and impact needs to happen soon – we appreciate this. I have heard good feedback on what we need to do – particularly around individual needs. We are recognising that this is not a one-size-fits-all model. We do want to reflect on that and think of ways to manage the community needs assessment better. The methodology is set up to be able to analyse vehicle capacity as well. There is good work happening on Shetland where they have looked at models to support that kind of work.

BC asked when the next key stakeholder meeting is.

JK confirmed – 24 September 2024.

BC thanked Juste and Brian for attending the meeting and agreed to speak with the Chair of the Board to prepare an understanding of where the FCB stand on this and how we can help to move this forward with you. All attendees agreed.

6 YOUNG ISLANDERS NETWORK - UPDATE

BC welcomed Mac and Ellie and asked if they had concerns to share with the Board to help progress.

ER: from our last meeting with the Young Islander's Network (YIN) we spoke of different transport concerns and how they fit together. For example, busses and ferries not linking up impact young people's journey home. We also had a discussion on free ferry fares for certain islands. Some of the young people felt it was unfair that only some islands were to receive this. There was a petition, but this has not been shared widely to include all islands. It is good to have this line of communication. Unfortunately, Mac's microphone is not working, and I know he has some good points to share with you. This feels good because we join consultations and do not feel any progress from them.

BC said that on the topic of fares, at every opportunity we try to drive consistency. If there is something there that you can share with us, even if just for information, please do let us know. We can put it in with our community feedback but also direct people to your organisation. Before you joined the meeting, we tried to express that young islander views should be encouraged.

RC commented on the frustration with lack of progress on the under 22 fare programme. We are continuing to pursue this.

Mac raised a point about a local school not having a boat for high school.

KMacF clarified for Tiree – if pupils go to Oban high school, that is considered your choice.

ER clarified, this is for Raasay Primary School. The council are not paying for the boat, and the school must pay for this.

BC promised to get some background on this and find out more. [Action to follow through].

RC asked the young islanders if they fed into consultation on the ICP.

ER could not recall which consultation this was.

RC said that the results are available on the Transport Scotland website, as well as a summary.

KMacF asked about the waiting room on Tiree pier. I would be interested to know whether it is now better than what was there before or if it is still unsatisfactory. Are people getting soaked on their way to the ferry? Do we still need to keep working on this?

MMac confirmed that there is a waiting room, but it is not always open when needed.

MM asked if the YIN have any link to Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS).

ER said that she was not sure but that the YIN would be interested in making a connection. That could be very positive. I would advise them to get in touch with Naomi to explore a possible link-up.

MM promised to make the connection for YIN/MACS [action].

BC thanked the Young Islanders for their contribution.

7 **MACS Update**

The Board welcomed Anne MacLeod (Mobility and Access Committee Scotland) to the meeting.

AMac thanked the Board for the invitation. Our role in MACS is to advocate for the needs of disabled people in the CHFS consultation. MACS requested monitoring and publication of statistics for passengers requesting assistance at the time of booking. We think that customer questionnaire surveys could be improved to provide more specific information to allow a channel for disabled passengers to feed back on the issues affecting them, as well as allowing service suppliers to get actions to improve. The transport providers need to coordinate their timetables. As part of our response to the consultation, we submitted a case study which highlighted some of the difficulties faced by passengers and suggesting some measures which would improve their journey.

She continued, after this came the ICP consultation where we stressed the need for an approach that embraces the social model of disability – it is the environment, the infrastructure and service design that disables and limits people. We welcome the decision to introduce an accessibility standard. We also want to give staff and crew a better understanding on how they can support the needs of disabled passengers. For this to be effective, the standard must be consistent across the vessel. We understand that the difference between vessels might affect this. Key stakeholders should be consulted in the development stage of the accessibility standard, and MACS would welcome the opportunity to engage on this.

We would like consistency across the network on concessionary fares. Disabled passengers requiring a travel companion should not have to provide a reason for the companion – the card should be evidence enough. MACS would like to see free companion travel as standard on ferries and is available by rail and on concessionary travel by bus. We would like to see priority boarding for passengers requiring assistance, as on other modes of travel. Disabled passengers with concession cards should be able to get their tickets in advance and have the option to require a return ticket if required. Having to go into the office on every journey promotes an unequal service and prevents disabled passengers from the same benefits as non-disabled passengers. Crew should be on hand at lifts to ensure that disabled passengers are seated as close to the lift and facilities as possible. Seating areas should be reserved for disabled passengers and their companion. These should be flexible and not have fixed arm rests. We agree that reliability and resilience should be the main priority; islanders have lost confidence in the service following a prolonged period of disruption. Disruptions are particularly distressing for disabled passengers. Medical and care plans are also impacted. A reliable service would benefit patients travelling for healthcare. Fear of missing appointments is a real concern with patients often traveling earlier for appointments, causing stress and additional costs at an already difficult time.

She continued, the strategic approach paper was encouraging, despite a long way to go. MACS have written to various Ministers and Secretaries in relation to air traffic changes due to the change of contract for those travelling Benbecula – Stornoway. The small aircraft is inaccessible to disabled people, older people and pregnant women. This has an impact on the Berneray > Leverburgh for passengers traveling to the Western Isles hospital. Whilst this is an issue for the operator and local authority to resolve, we welcomed the offer for Neil Gray to lead the parties involved to facilitate dialogue and find a meaningful solution that meets the needs of island communities. This meeting took place in Benbecula last month and I attended from MACS. The patient participation group opened the meeting with a very disturbing report about their difficulties traveling for health care. They have been lobbying local authorities – Government and NHS relentlessly for a solution. It is described as at crisis point now. The most troubling thing from the meeting is that some patients are opting not to attend appointments at all due to travel issues. Mr Gray said that there was a need for better coordination between health and transport departments and Ms. Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Transport had already approached him following a visit to the Western Isles to ask how they could work together on this. He spoke of his own personal experience in travelling to healthcare appointments on Orkney. He committed a group to take this forward for the people of the western isles.

AMac said that she met with DW earlier to discuss accessibility on vessels, difficulties with the booking system and passenger assistance. Demi said that there was a problem for people with neurodivergent conditions, autism etc considering cancellations and vessel changes. Our committee has access to a wealth of knowledge in this field and Sara Todd (who is also in the ferries and aviation workstream) presented a useful overview of the issues that would have a negative effect on a neurodivergent passenger through each stage of the journey. She also presented some solutions on supporting those individuals on ferries. MACS secretariat produced an advice document that could be used for any mode of travel. We have had engagement with CMAL with regards the new vessel for Mallaig – Lochboisdale and were able to look at plans and make recommendations for the new vessel. We were delighted that our feedback was useful and that our asks will be implemented, including foldable seats around the lifts. They will increase the walkway space on the car deck around the lift, where possible. They cannot do this for the full length of the deck due to constraints, but that is a big positive. They will use braille to indicate deck levels on the handrails and have audio announcements within the lift. Finally, an accessible height nursing table for parents in wheelchairs.

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She concluded, we feel that our points have been taken onboard. Resources are questionable, but there is certainly a willingness. It is good to have the island perspective. Someone on the Board with lived experience of travelling on the ferries with a disabled person.

BC thanked AMac for her detailed update. The progress is encouraging and great to hear. Well done. You quoted a lot of improvements and aims. Is there anything specific that you would like us to help with your progress? Anything you can forward to us to take forward?

AMac replied, have you had much feedback on the Benbecula – Stornoway flights and how this has affected the Berneray – Leverburgh sailings?

RC said that the ferry is certainly at capacity for most sailings.

FMacR updated that the majority have been accommodated. Those who could not be came over on foot. We had some issues with people waiting in Leverburgh for taxis. We are trying to tighten this up, but our own people there got them a cup of tea. That is the only real feedback. There was the meeting 2 weeks ago in Benbecula and I am not sure what the actions were. The Minister did go away with a network-wide view of patient travel issues.

AMac agreed – it was disturbing to hear about passengers travelling for chemo who were not able to make appointments. Chemo has a limited shelf life, and this is extremely stressful for people. Being on standby, if they cannot access the aircraft, the only option is to go by ferry. To find themselves on standby, wondering if they will get on, is awful.

GR thanked AMac and asked FMacR – there was a request from the health board for block bookings. Has that been received?

FMacR confirmed. Fiona was working on this.

KMacF said the MACS update was inspirational. I was particularly interested in the need to build in statistics. That is something that we would be interested in keeping an eye on. We had this debate in my own community in Coll. We felt unsure about supporting the platinum standard new accessibility plan because we have several people in our community who have been telling us for years that even the standards we have now are not being met. You can put new ones in their place, but how do you ensure they are being followed through? It will be very important in all our work. Would this monitoring be quarterly, monthly?

AMac said she is hoping to meet with DW next week. We would like them to monitor the passengers requesting assistance and whether needs are being met. We want to give them a channel to be able to contact CalMac.

MM asked if MJD had been in touch with MACS?

AMac confirmed – yes, she was at the meeting.

MM asked if MACS would like to be connected with the YIN.

AMac confirmed, that would be excellent. It might be an option to invite them along to one of our development days. We have a spotlight session at our meetings. Please send me a contact.

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FUTURE OF FCB

Decision made to defer to allow more FCB members to join the discussion.

Meeting concluded with thanks to all for their contribution.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Friday 6 December 2024

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| No. | Action | Owner | Status |
|-----|--|---------|---|
| 1 | <p>RELIEF CREWING BC noted that relief crewing may be incorporated into future Ferries Plan discussions however it was recognised that it was not practical to discuss it now and the cost may be prohibitive. It could be raised during recruitment for crews for 801 and 802. C/fwd.</p> | AC | <p>Update 13/09 – Discussion to continue, with 801 and 802 in mind.</p> |
| 2 | <p>ROUTE PERFORMANCE DATA Possibility of separating route performance data for Coll & Tiree to be investigated.</p> | DM | <p>Update 13/09 - it will be possible to do this although there may be some limitations around carrying data (can show passengers shipped but not necessarily landed). When statistics are published in the coming months, each port will be reported individually.</p> |
| 3 | <p>CMAL REPORTING & EXPENDITURE TRACKING KMacF asked whether it would be possible to include a timeline on planned projects. A graphic to show plan, vs slippages. KH and BF confirmed resourcing was there to do this and agreed to try new ways of presenting this information.</p> | KH/BF | <p>Update 15/08: Our interactive map has experienced problems. We were populating it with all CHFS Ports (be it ours or 3rd party) and all vessels. However, the programme was overwhelmed with data and a more powerful alternative was found. We are now reconfiguring it all over again. Further details can be discussed at the meeting. 13/09: update during meeting.</p> |
| 4 | <p>FAIR FARES ENGAGEMENT CW took action to go back to TS colleagues for an update on what the engagement there would be for the public on the fair fares piece of work.</p> | CW | |
| 5 | <p>TIMELINE OF NEW CONTRACT WORK AC asked if it would be possible to share an outline and timeline of work on the new contract.</p> | CW/TMcl | <p> CHFS3 - Indicative Timetable - FCB - 12 Please find linked submission above. Propose to close.</p> |
| 6 | <p>FCB CONTACT POSTERS FCB Contact posters to be created, updated, and put back up for greater visibility – ferries & ports</p> | AC | <p>Update 13/09: Decision made to show where the FCB fits in to the tri-partite arrangement. Information on the posters to show what each body does.</p> |
| 7 | <p>SMALL VESSEL REPLACEMENT – WEBSITE INFORMATION AC2 asked if information could be added to the CMAL website about the small vessel replacement plan to alleviate fears. KH said that this can be done.</p> | KH | <p>Update 15/08: The SVRP website information is being updated. We are continually updating it to reflect progress. Last updated mid-July.</p> |
| 8 | <p>EBOOKING FIXES & AR TURAS MEETING RD agreed to share a list of fixes [eBooking] with the FCB. DH agreed to prepare this detail for sharing. Meeting to be set up for Ar Turas concerns.</p> | RD/DH | <p>Update 20/08: We will shortly be able to publish to the FCB an update to the one previously delivered in March 2024. This update will explain the changes and fixes we have delivered through this year.</p> |
| 9 | <p>CARRYING STATISTICS</p> | DM | <p>Update 13/09-</p> |

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| | Carrying statistics to be provided for the network, and/or a date by which they can be provided. No data has been provided since May. | | Statistics are now available on the website for 2023 (annual report). Specific data requests can be made to CalMac, should you require information for specific routes, or vehicles. https://www.calmac.co.uk/article/7308/Annual-Carrying-Statistics https://www.calmac.co.uk/article/7308/Annual-Carrying-Statistics |
| 10 | ACCESSIBLE VESSELS AC2 asked if entryways and seats could be modified on vessels for greater accessibility. Ramps for example, or folding tables. RD agreed to investigate. | CalMac | 22/08: All current vessels were designed and built for accessibility as regulation required at the time and are updated if regulation requires. Changing rooms have been added to some vessels recently, to improve accessibility, an example of modifications that have taken place. There are no current projects in planning to modify vessels for accessibility reasons. All new-build vessels include accessibility requirements as per relevant regulation and are designed and built. Propose to close. |
| 11 | CONSULTATION RESULTS LK agreed to share plan relating to community needs assessment. Communities need to know that their needs have been accurately collected – can this be published? | LK | JK and BG presented this on 13/09/2024 Propose to close. |
| 12 | CHFS2 RECONCILIATION EXERCISE CW agreed that CHFS2 has not been scrutinised or audited to the degree it should have. Before the end of the contract, it should be reconciled. CW agreed to pick up on this and take it away. A reconciliation and reflection on management of the contract, to cover resourcing levels, structure, etc. | CW | |
| 13 | TEMPORARILY UNBOOKABLE MESSAGING – ONLINE JP offered feedback on when booking is temporarily unavailable. Messaging to say that transfers are being made and it is worth trying again later. This may prevent people from giving up entirely when unable to book. DB agreed to take this away and explore how this can be done. | DB | 20/08/24: Over the coming year we are investing in improvements to our customers' booking journey, particularly when they are making that journey online. The ability to show more meaningful messages to customers, depending on the status of the sailing they are trying to book on, is something we are currently investigating with our colleagues at eDea |
| 14 | THIRD PARTY & LOCAL AUTHORITY NEEDS BC asked if there was a resource that showed third party and local authority needs in one place. KH offered to provide a whistle-stop tour of the third-party ports, as a regular attendee at meetings with the three councils that own the majority of ports. | KH | |
| 15 | FEEDBACK FROM CEO VISITS KMacF asked if there was a collation of feedback received from the combined CMAL, TS and CalMac visits around the network. DM offered to take this offline and explore what an update on this might look like. | DM | |
| 16 | BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BM discussed bi-monthly newsletter to communities impacted by vessel enabling works. Offered to add FCB to the distribution list – FCB agreed. | BM | |

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| 17 | JOINT FCB/DML ACTION – FOLLOW-UP PB and AS agreed to follow up on DML Joint Board Meeting action regarding eBooking issues and fixes. | AS | |
| 18 | RAASAY PRIMARY SCHOOL TRAVEL ISSUES The Young Islanders Network raised a concern by Raasay primary school for getting the boat to school. BC offered to find out more about this issue and the Board agreed to help take this forward. | BC | |
| 19 | YIN x MACS CONNECTION MM took action to connect the two organisations and share contact details. | AS | Action complete. |