

# ISLE OF ARRAN FERRY COMMITTEE

## Minute of Meeting

held on

Monday 10th September 2012

at 7.30pm

in

Brodick Castle

**Present:**

Ken Thorburn (National Trust) (Chair)	Jim Lees (ACVS)
Iain Thomson (Construction/Haulage)	Cllr. John Bruce (NAC)
Willie Kelso (Community Council)	Liz Robertson (NFU)
Alastair Dobson (Taste of Arran)	Robert Waine (Visit Arran)
Russell Duncan (Independent Traveller)	Guy Bodie (Stagecoach)

**In Attendance:** Martin Dorchester (CalMac), Brian Fulton (CalMac), Douglas Ellis (Transport Scotland), Kenneth Gibson MSP, Robbie Brown (Regional Manager, CalMac), Colin McCort (Port Manager, CalMac), and Helen Ross (Secretary).

**1. Welcome & Apologies:** The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

Apologies were received from Sandra Sturgeon

**Amendment:**

- 3.1 RET is not coming in on Islay until this winter
- 3.2 Spelling of name previously mentioned should read Platten, not Patten.
- 7 The comment that AD was 'party to doubts' should be added.

**2. Minute of Previous Meeting:** With this amendment, the Minute of the previous meeting, held on Monday 13th August 2012, was adopted as a true record.

**Proposed:** **Seconded:**

### Matters

#### Arising:

**9 day Saver Ticket** Martin Dorchester, CalMac Managing Director, will see if this should be rolled out across the network next year. He will present this view to Transport Scotland in November with hard and soft data, and if feedback is positive, aim to implement it.

Jim Lees asked on what basis a trial would be, to which the reply was it would be difficult to gauge hard measures year on year, so realistically it would be more likely to refer to softer measures.

**Brodick Pier Upgrade** Ken Thorburn gave the following report. **1.** Based on a report received, there will be a delay to infrastructure, and a year's delay to the linkspan. Regarding Transport Scotland's meeting with Guy Platten, he will report and update at the next meeting.

**2.** The upshot of a meeting held with Ed Carrick and NAC's Economic Department was that the upgrade is unlikely to be completed until 2015/6.

He asks what effect this would have on RET given the Scottish Government's assertion that this would come in within the term of this parliament. Kenneth Gibson awaits a response from the Cabinet Secretary, now Nicola Sturgeon, and quoted Guy Platten in saying that RET is scheduled for October 2014. His own view is that the linkspan must be in place before RET in 2015.

Ken Thorburn said Businesses on Arran are having a hard year and may not survive a delay.

Liz Robertson referred to a discussion that RET could be rolled out now, to which Kenny Gibson said the view is that RET should not arrive on the Lochranza-Claonaig run before Brodick-Ardrossan.

Ken Thorburn asked where a second vessel would come from if RET is rolled out in Oct 2014 and we have a 2 ferry service?

Martin Dorchester stated that there is flexibility within the fleet, and some vessels can be moved around within the network. There may be other vessels in the market available. Looking forward to 2014, a couple of hybrid ferries may come in.

Kenneth Gibson added that there will be better opportunities to deploy hybrid vessels in the future, and there are 2 such vessels in the pipeline. Robert Waine and Jim Lees agree that we must be sure that RET will be brought in on date it was promised. RET does not need to be put in at the same time as the linkspan.

Kenneth Gibson said RET is sacrosanct, and if we must run 6 months with the old linkspan, so be it. Caledonian Isles alone would not cope with the increased traffic.

Alistair Dobson is having further discussions with CalMac, as there should be a more commercial solution than RET alone.

Martin Dorchester made the following points. **1.** As far as he is concerned, RET will come in 2014.

**2.** He asks of Robbie Brown, CalMac Regional Manager, if the linkspan will cope with RET, who replied that there is no reason why it should not.

Alistair Dobson is looking forward to 2014 being a good year for business. He reported that CMAL's website says no planned repairs will be scheduled until 2013.

### **WIFI provision**

Martin Dorchester reported that WIFI will arrive on the boat as soon as an effective solution is found. CalMac need it, and the cost difference is minimal in terms of adding it for customers too. The intention is for it to be free to use.

### **Second Ferry**

Colin McCort reported that the 7am boat was fairly well used by hauliers, therefore there were no capacity issues on the 8.20am. The same applied in the afternoon. Weekends were a bit hit and miss. The 2<sup>nd</sup> boat assisted operations at Brodick, but CalMac are unable to say if it was a commercial success.

Ken Thorburn said The Ferry Committee agreed to the boat, but in future it should be crewed up to take passengers all the time. It should be timetabled. The importance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> vessel is paramount in the next 2 years, given RET's arrival in 2014.

Kenneth Gibson added that it is confusing that some days it could take passengers to capacity and other days not. He reiterated that to have the vessel crewed up is important.

Robbie Brown said it could not be advertised, due to the limited capacity on some days. When asked where the extra crew came from for the weekend sailings, he said they came from elsewhere on a daily basis, and Brian Fulton confirmed they were paid overtime.

Kenneth Gibson said that the service was not bookable for cars, which makes people travelling to islands wary.

Martin Dorchester advised that CalMac were ill prepared, therefore were playing catch-up with people at high cost. In going forward, they will be much closer to working and planning with Transport Scotland. This will enable forward planning to happen much earlier next year.

Kenny Gibson said that each year, the issue is will there be a second service and every year the answer is yes, but this year the decision came in May. The presumption should be that there will be a service. The plans should be made for the next 2 summers.

Iain Thompson added that it needs to be included in the main timetable.

## **RMT**

Martin Dorchester reported that RMT are balloting on Wednesday. They have committed to come and talk to CalMac before any industrial action.

## **Unbundling**

Kenneth Gibson had written to the Arran Banner. He read the text of a note which stated that the First Minister had no plans to unbundle Clyde and Hebridean services. There is no option but to tender.

## **4. Finance:**

### **4.1 Bank Balance**

The Secretary reported a bank balance of **£451.73**.

### **4.2 Expenditure Approval**

None

## **5. Correspondence: 5.1**

Guy Platten will be coming to the November meeting.

## **6. Port Manager's Report:**

Port Manager Colin McCort gave his report to the meeting. Points arising were as follows:

Pier repairs had been executed overnight, as had fender repairs.

There will be a replacement bus service every Sunday from now until Christmas from Ardrossan harbour to Paisley.

Concession cards will be renewable at the Post Office.

**7. Earlier Sunday Sailing:**

Brian Fulton informed the meeting that the success measure was 40% of average traffic. In reality, the range was from 7.9% to 27.3%. It was not timetabled, and there were 2 or 3 reports of people's disappointment that it would not continue into the winter. It was suggested by Iain Thompson that there should be a 3 year timetabled trial. Martin Dorchester replied that 3 years is a long trial, to which Ken Thorburn asked if a lesser length of time might be preferable. Martin Dorchester stated that his duty is to run CalMac commercially whilst supporting the islands. He stressed the need for partnership working, and avoiding anecdotal evidence in favour of working through challenges effectively. He is open to the provision of extra services but needs something to work on.

Liz Robertson said that many people living here and taking part in events on the mainland, eg rugby, dog or horse trials, need to get off on an 8.20am sailing.

Ken Thorburn reminded the meeting that it is important to support Martin Dorchester and get back to him.

**8. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of Isle of Arran Ferry Committee will take place on **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at 7.30pm in Brodick Castle.**

**9. Any Other Business:**

**9.1** Ken Thorburn mentioned that the fares increase this year was substantial. Will there be another one next year?

Martin Dorchester replied that this is not decided yet. The increase was 6.5% last year.

**9.2** Travel trade are in discussions with CalMac to have coaches classed as commercials, with an all-embracing ticket to include admission, eg to Castle, Distillery.

Willie Kelso, Community Council representative, stated that we are led to believe there will be a 40% increase in people coming, but that the fare costs are keeping them back. Claonaig usage has increased 40-50% in a short period of time.

With regard to Christmas Savers, Kenneth Gibson said CalMac seemed reluctant. Alistair Dobson said that further discussions were to take place in the week following Sept 10<sup>th</sup>.

**9.3** Gangways – Kenneth Gibson mentioned that there have been constant problems in the last few months, with passengers disembarking via the cardeck. Are sufficient spares carried? Robbie Brown of CalMac said that CMAL look after the gangways. There will be planned maintenance in future.

**9.4** Alistair Dobson asked, what is the Rail and Sail deal currently being advertised? No-one seems to know.

**9.5** John Bruce, North Ayrshire Council, raised the issue of Customer Care. A blind man was seeking assistance to get to the railway platform. Robert Waine informed the meeting that CalMac are unable to assist with this as Health and Safety rules do not allow it.

John Bruce said that, with regard to SPT connectivity and linking in with new timetabling, there will be longer waits at both ends.

**9.6** Liz Robertson enquired who is doing what job at CalMac? Martin Dorchester replied that he runs CalMac, Argyll Ferries, and Archie Robertsons.

**9.7** Martin Dorchester will be in discussion with the Chief Executive of Scotrail to look at integrated transport across Scotland, with reference to Rail and Sail.

**9.8** CalMac has not always been the most receptive organisation. It could be more flexible and responsive to community needs, and with regard to changing mechanisms.

**10. Close:**

As there was no further business to discuss; the Chair thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

**Signed:** .....

**Dated:** .....