

ISLE OF ARRAN FERRY COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held on Monday 13th August 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)

In Attendance: Kenneth Gibson MSP, Robbie Brown (Regional Manager, CalMac), Colin McCort (Port Manager, CalMac), Hazel (NTS) and Jim Nichols (Secretary).

1. Welcome & Apologies:

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

Apologies were received from Guy Bodie (Stagecoach), Sandra Sturgeon (CalMac) and Martin Dorchester (MD, CalMac).

Amendment:

3.2.4 Delete '*late Saturday sailing from Ardrossan*' and insert '*late Friday sailing from Brodick*'.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting:

With this amendment, the Minute of the previous meeting, held on Monday 9th July 2012, was adopted as a true record.

Proposed: Willie Kelso Seconded: Jim Lees

3. Matters Arising:

3.1 9-Day Saver Ticket (Item 3.1.1)

Robbie Brown informed the meeting that the 9-day saver ticket was a trial carried out only on Mull following requests from local residents.

Jim Lees commented that 9 days covered the standard 7-day self-catering period.

Robbie Brown advised that the results of the trial would be known in November and Kenneth Gibson suggested that, in October, the Ferry Committee should pursue the possibility of a 9-day saver ticket being available on the Arran service.

Robbie Brown reported that the July carrying figures for Brodick-Ardrossan route were down 15% on the previous year, with figures for Cumbrae down by 25% for the same period. He added that the August figures for Brodick-Ardrossan were already up by 9%.

Alastair Dobson mentioned that local businesses had suffered a decrease in trade of between 7-12% on last year.

Robbie Brown informed the meeting that CalMac's figures were down by 7% on last year, with Islay experiencing a significant reduction in car fares as a result of RET.

Kenneth Gibson reported that the Western Isles had seen an increase in visitors of 32% over a 3-year period and added that the minimum estimate of the increase for Arran with RET was 40%.

3.2 Brodick Pier Upgrade (Item 3.2.3)

Kenneth Gibson was asked on the possibility, and effect on RET, of a delay to the commencement of work on the new linkspan at Brodick Pier.

He advised that the introduction of RET had been designed for October 2014 in order to boost visitor numbers in the run up to the Christmas period and added that the existing linkspan would be used until spring 2015.

The Chair reported he had received correspondence from Guy Platter, Chief Executive of CMAL, regarding grant funding for 2014-15, and voiced his concern that some local businesses would not last that long.

Liz Robertson commented that Arran was a thriving island, unlike some others, and asked if business people could not come up with a model appropriate for all.

3.3 Clydeport Report (Item 3.2.4)

Liz Robertson enquired on receipt of feedback from Ships' Masters regarding the Clydeport Report published in the Arran Banner.

Robbie Brown advised that a meeting had been held with Clydeport and the statistics used by them in the report were those for MV Saturn and therefore not particularly accurate.

3.4 On-Board Wi-Fi Provision (Item 9.1)

Willie Kelso questioned the necessity of on-board Wi-Fi and suggested it was not a good use of money.

4. Finance:

4.1 Bank Balance

The Secretary reported a bank balance of **£351.73**.

4.2 Expenditure Approval

None

5. Correspondence: 5.1 Letter received from Guy Platter. Already mentioned.

6. Port Manager's Report:

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

- Commercial traffic was using the earlier Isle of Arran sailing, which was being filled to 13 passengers and being well-used despite not being advertised, with some prospective passengers being turned away.

Iain Thomson mentioned the lack of a 5.15pm sailing on a Friday and Robbie Brown reminded him that the timetable had been agreed by the Ferry Committee.

- Highland Games day had seen good numbers travelling, with 100 passengers left at Ardrossan following departure of the 9.45am ferry but cleared by MV Isle of Arran.

The weekend commencing 11th August had been the busiest of the year so far.

- Halcrow had been appointed as consultative engineers for the design stage of the new linkspan.
- The 8.20am Sunday sailings were showing poor figures with the numbers of cars carried in the first 5 Sundays being 7th, 9th, 15th, 21st and 26th.
- There was a technical problem with the passenger gangway at Ardrossan which was awaiting a new switch mechanism. This had contributed to the ferry running 45 minutes late last Thursday.

Robbie Brown voiced his opinion that the gangway break-down was unacceptable.

Colin McCort advised that a stock of spare parts had been built up at Brodick.

Jim Lees pointed out that there had been a history of breakdowns with the Ardrossan gangway.

Robbie Brown pointed out that the Company could only do their best and mentioned there were issues with gangways at Oban and Craignure.

Asked if gangways were due to be renewed, Robbie Brown advised the Ferry Committee to contact CMAL direct.

It was therefore agreed that CMAL's Chief Executive, Guy Platter, be invited to the November meeting of the Ferry Committee.

Action: Chair

Alastair Dobson mentioned that the seawall at Lochranza had been fenced off for a year now and suggested an action tracker be added to the Agenda.

Agreed Action: Helen Ross to create action tracker.

John Bruce mentioned the confusion at Brodick when at least 6 people failed to get on Caledonian Isles as they were waiting in the queue for the Waverley. Announcements had been made by CalMac staff but, due to the length of the queue, some people did not hear them.

7. Earlier Sunday Sailing:

The meeting heard that the early Sunday sailing was not being well-used but may improve before the end of the trial on 2nd September.

Colin McCort informed the meeting there was a bus service running to the 8.20am Sunday sailing.

Robbie Brown reported that the 20.30 sailing from Ardrossan on Saturday night was not being used.

Iain Thomson suggested this was because no-one knew about the sailing.

Alastair Dobson voiced his doubts that there was a commercial argument for the 2nd ferry next summer. He suggested trying to run Caledonian Isles from 7am – 9pm to try to fill capacity.

Iain Thomson asked if there was a case for a freight ferry as a 2nd boat.

Robbie Brown advised that 2 morning sailings out of Ardrossan were required.

Kenneth Gibson pointed out the need for capacity to meet demand when RET comes in.

Alastair Dobson spoke of the need to find a way to make Arran a more affordable destination.

Liz Robertson mentioned the lack of written confirmation that the Lochranza-Claonaig service was safe.

8. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of Isle of Arran Ferry Committee will take place on **Monday 10th September 2012 at 7.30pm in Brodick Castle.**

9. Any Other Business:

9.1 Jim Lees mentioned this had been a bad season for the tourist industry, but added this had been a general downturn and was not unique to Arran.

Alastair Dobson spoke of 3-4 years of poor performance and the fact that 80% of Arran business came from the west coast of Scotland. He spoke of the need to extend the reach through advertising but acknowledged that this would incur extra expense.

The Chair spoke of tourists attempting to negotiate on advertised process for bed and breakfast etc.

9.2 Liz Robertson raised the subject of the coffee bar at Ardrossan Harbour closing at lunchtime.

Robbie Brown informed her that the coffee bar closed at 12.30pm, following the ferry's sailing and re-opened at 1.30pm.

9.3 Alastair Dobson asked for the Ferry Committee's thoughts on the threat of strike action.

Kenneth Gibson reported he had been contacted by the Trade Union last week and the Minister had written saying the Scottish Government had no plans to break up CalMac.

9.4 Alastair Dobson enquired on the cost difference between MV Isle of Arran running a passenger service on Saturdays only and running a full roster. He suggested the crew numbers were 25 and 27 respectively.

Robbie Brown informed him that CalMac had been given a sum of money to provide the service for 8 weeks and that the actual crew numbers were 15 for freight sailings and 22 for passenger sailings.

9.5 The Chair suggested action should be taken now to secure the provision of the 2nd ferry for next summer.

Jim Lees agreed and mentioned the need to get it into the timetable, which is usually published in October.

10. Close:

As there was no further business to discuss; the Chair all for attending and closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

Signed:

Dated: