

Isle of Arran Ferry Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 April 2023 at 7.30pm at Thomson Construction Boardroom

Present:

I Thomson (Chair)

S Armitage, Haulage (Vice Chair)

B Calderwood, ACC (Secretary)

S Gilmore, Tourism (Treasurer)

N Arthur, Independent Traveller

R Betley, NHS

S Clark, Stagecoach

D Henderson, NFU

C Reeves,

Business

In Attendance

F MacRae, Calmac (via Zoom)

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from K Gibson and T Billings.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 The adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2023 was proposed by SG and seconded by DH.

3. Open Actions and Updates

Under the responsibility column, this will now identify whether this will be CalMac Operations or Commercial or Marine.

3.1 Ar Turas

The implementation has again been delayed until 16 May. It will also impact the introduction of "advanced standby". FM said this was due to cross over issues and the situation regarding deployment of vessels. The disruptions of the latter being experienced have been unprecedented. SG enquired whether the online booking system will be closed during the transfer to Ar Turas. FM said that it would probably be from 00:01 on Saturday until Tuesday. During this time, all new bookings will be taken manually. BC asked if this was through the port offices. FM said it would and asked that any bookings be made in advance where possible. SG requested that this information be clearly communicated. BC confirmed the AFC will revisit the action in June.

3.2 Relocation of Brodick Kiosk

This review has been deferred until June. FM said that, with the introduction of Ar Turas, check-in queues will be improved. As an aside, IT stated that, on Easter Saturday at Ardrossan, the vehicles were queued back to the roundabout at Asda because the kiosk was not opened. BC said that this was not a singular incident. FM understood that this had previously been resolved but will speak with the Ardrossan port manager.

Action: FM

3.3 The frequent cancellations of the 0700 sailing from Ardrossan will remain on the list and be monitored. Noted ongoing maintenance to Ardrossan fenders.

3.4 This action concerns weather-related disruptions/cancellations that are at odds with what the travellers and other forecasting websites are observing and predicting. Warnings are going out but no reason is given. FM said there had been a problem with the anemometer at Ardrossan but this had been fixed. He added that CalMac use a more reliable system, but not always 100% accurate, that is not available to users. The vessels also have their own systems.

3.5 Tidal Restrictions at Claonaig

As reported previously, this comprises 192 cancelled sailings over 48 days in the summer '23 season due to perceived safety issues. FM was asked if the vessel could sail with a reduced capacity rather than cancel the sailing. IT stated that the last two sailings on Wed/Thu had been cancelled and asked if it had not been possible to schedule an additional sailing in these circumstances if hours allowed. NA asked if there could not be a sailing to Tarbert.

Action: FM will check both requests.

3.6 FM stated the MCA had approved three hybrid vessels to sail from Lochranza to Largs. The sailing time would be approximately 2.5 hours. CalMac are looking at making this viable if required.

3.7 This item relates to a request to invite a captain as well as marine representatives to an AFC meeting. It was agreed that a skipper who knew the network was the preferred option. FM stated it would be useful to preview questions/topics which may arise. Potentially to schedule for June meeting.

Action: FM to check availability of captains. AFC prepare initial questions.

3.8 BC stated there was uncertainty over what was classed as freight. FM said that this was any LGV over 6 metres. IT said there seemed to be a grey area where vans were concerned and needs to be clearer going forward. FM replied that CalMac will communicate differently. When bookings were being reallocated, the decisions should be influenced from local knowledge and not central CFL groups.

The following discussion highlighted issues related to availability for capacity for ambulance travel.

Because the lofA does not have a dedicated medical room it was necessary for ambulances to travel on the ferry. RB stressed that they had been refused boarding on numerous occasions both at Brodick and Ardrossan. She highlighted that this is a critical situation and asked if there was a point of contact at the ports who she could rely on to rectify the problem. FM said the problem was not unique to Arran. He will meet with RB separately to discuss and open the issue again. CR asked if it would be possible to allocate a place for an ambulance and, if not required, could be filled from unbooked queue. IT said ambulances should never be refused. Once procedures are agreed these should be published to ensure all parties involved worked from one system

Action: FM/RB.

3.9 Terms and Conditions

BC had written to A Hood but, as yet, had no response. He will follow up next week at Customer Steering meeting.

3.10 Disruption Communications

BC stated that there is a network team looking at this via the FCB.

3.11 The CI will return Tuesday 18th. BC asked if it was possible that the lofA remain for 24 hours in case of any problems with CI. FM said it would be deployed to Islay because of the pressure there. However, he will raise at the executive meeting the following morning. BC stated that the data regarding demand of available sailings does not support Islay's position vs Arran and our customers require justification.

Action: FM

3.12 It was questioned why the Alfred was chosen instead of the Pentalina given its inability to be accommodated in most ports with the Pentalina having already been proven to fit most ports. FM said that it was bigger, wider, newer and had more capacity. However, it was looking likely that the only ports suitable for Islay were Port Askaig sailing to Troon or Campbeltown and for Arran the Brodick - Ardrossan Irish berth or Troon. All still to be confirmed following trials.

4. **Correspondence**

4.1 CMAL have appointed Alchemy to construct the permanent toilet facilities at Claonaig. Temporary ones will remain in place until their completion.

4.2 The submission of Troon timetable requests is still with the Transport Minister.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

5.1 Per SG, the current balance is £386.22.

6. **Date of Next Meeting**

6.1 The date of the next meeting is 8 May 2023.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 The FCB had met with the DML board. They also had a positive meeting with the new Transport Minister who has requested another meeting in May.

7.2 The AFC had written to the Transport Minister and had offered an open invitation to meet with AFC.

8. Close

9.1 The meeting closed at 9.35.

Signed *I Thomson* Date *8th May 2023*
I Thomson
Chair, Isle of Arran Ferry Committee
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