

Islay Community Council Ferry Committee

16th October 2019, Service Point, 6.45pm

1. Present: Islay McEachern (IMcE) – Chair, Jim Porteous (JP) – Secretary, Brian Abbott (BA), Colin Fraser (CF), Don McKillop (DMcK), Iain Slorach (IS), Jack Fleming (JF), Michael Donnelly (MD).

Apologies: Ben Mundell (BM), Garry MacLean (GMacL), Mike Senior (MS), Jean Knowles (JK)

Welcome & Introduction

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and the above apologies were noted.

DMcK – Gave an update on the MV Hebridean Isles bow thruster failure which had led to the cancellation of some services and the use of the MV Isle of Mull for the Oban-Colonsay-Port Askaig run today. Parts had been delivered from Gourock and repairs were well advanced. Staff are cautiously optimistic and hoped to commence sea trials shortly. If successful, the Heb Isles will resume service on the 0745 sailing Thursday 17th.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Typo identified under Islay Vessel Project “6 months workup airline design” should read “outline design”.

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by BA and seconded JP.

3. Matters Arising & Action Points

Action Points from minutes:

- Monthly dashboard figures for August were not available in time for the Summit.
- School bus fares trial – update per IS; Calmac submitted the proposal to Transport Scotland (TS) – this has now been returned to Calmac with some queries.

4. CalMac Operational Update

Access to stats for JP discussed, again.

Action Point: DMcK to raise password issue with Angela Peterson.

Of note was the increase in CV traffic – **16,000** lane metres compared to **14,600** last year and an increase of **13%** on the previous month (which itself saw an increase of 12% against previous year). This is entirely consistent with the growth predictions made by the Ferry Committee over some time – and emphasized at the Summit.

IS - The deadweight issues arising from the pairing of MV Hebridean Isles and MV Isle of Arran on the Islay service have been acknowledged and TS have already agreed to extra sailings if these are required during the winter timetable period.

Structural changes – Andrew Campbell has now assumed the post of Port Manager Islay – covering Port Ellen, Post Askaig and Colonsay. Angela Herd remains responsible for Kennacraig, Campbeltown, Tayinloan/Gigha and Tarbert/Portavadie and will continue to be a key contact for the Islay service and an occasional (and welcome) Ferry Committee attendee.

BA – Raised concern over the single vessel service operating over 22nd November which is the date of a significant livestock sale.

Action Point: DMcK to advise Angela Herd

Robert Morrison has been appointed Operations Director and will be based in Oban. There was general agreement that this was a useful and welcome development.

CalMac engaging with Argyll & Bute Council over the re-surfacing works at Port Askaig - scheduled for 20th – 24th April 2020. A pause in operations will allow the Colonsay service to run. CV space, which will include tar lorries, will be at a premium and concern was expressed that the Heb Isles is scheduled to do the morning runs on Tuesday and Thursday.

5. Summer and Winter Timetables

Summer 2020 timetables were scheduled to be available by the end of October. There has been a minor delay to allow debate over a CPI-based ticket price increase, but the timetable should be live by 7th November.

The 07.00 sailing, Kennacraig on Thursday, has been reinstated as per 2018 timetable (changed from 07.45) and will sail to/from Port Ellen. The 15.30 Thursday departure from Kennacraig will sail to/from Port Askaig.

Some discussion followed regarding impacts on whisky production of the proposed US 25% import tariffs – this was not currently believed to be majorly significant as far as Islay transport was concerned.

6. Dry dock programme

An outline of the effects of the dry dock programme has already been shared and has now started – DMcK emphasized that, as usual, this is a live programme and subject to change but undertook to promptly inform ICCFC of any possible/relevant impacts on the Islay service. The Isle of Arran is about to be released from dry dock and everything is on schedule – so far.

Action point: DMcK to provide further info re the actual dry dock program for vessels impacting the Islay service.

7. Campervan proposals

IS – Campervan issues will be seriously considered during the preparation and writing of the new Ferries Plan. ICCFC members expressed concern at the delay as this was something requested by them at the July meeting with Robert Morrison and Iain Erskine and which has a major impact on peak time capacity, especially on Heb Isles.

JP – Queried real opportunity for communities to contribute to this particular aspect, e.g. the ability to influence carrying protocols – limiting campervans to non-core sailings and/or open space booking only.

The full range of community views held on the island was acknowledged but the common concern was the impact of these frequently large vehicles on lane meters available for cars at peak times and the perception that campervan fares are disproportionately low.

8. Heb Isles deck configuration

The drop from 62 bookable car spaces to 58 remains a concern to the committee – it represents a drop of 3,600 car spaces throughout the Summer timetable period. The reasons for the drop were queried. DMcK talked through the changes in car size (Heb Isles original plans could take cars six abreast) and CalMac's assessment of risks allowing a balance between a reduction in standby opportunities and the possibility of fully booked traffic not being shipped. DMcK has negotiated an uplift to 60 bookable spaces and accepts the need for ongoing monitoring.

BA – asked about measures to amend weight carried by the Heb Isles limiting deadweight capacity.

JP – pointed out that this was one of the points made in the Manifesto for Change arising from the Summit. DMcK confirmed that this is in hand.

9. Ferry Summit

The main outcome of the Summit was the Manifesto for Change – a list of agreed actions and outcomes over time. These have been locally reported in the Ileach per MD so should now be widely known on the island. JP – ran through key points: while progress has been made in the timely release of under-utilised block-booked space via the B2B team this remains an ongoing issue and applies to only four hauliers in the formal system. The committee urged CalMac to bring more hauliers into the system to ensure that the system is fairly applied to hauliers; that statistical reporting for block bookings is more accurate and that space availability is maximised. Some discussion on methods of ensuring early release of bookings.

Action Point: IS and DMcK to provide B2B team with this feedback.

Other points discussed – extra sailings, night freight, relief crew, drop trailer provision.

Port infrastructure to be reviewed.

Funding has been agreed for the new boat – design specifications will take six months.

Ticketing and booking – an ongoing matter and a mutually acknowledged, vital improvement.

Islay-Colonsay-Oban runs discussed – a clear preference for not losing an Islay run on key days and the committee’s view that this service should run from Oban, instead of using an Islay service vessel – with the add on of a run to Port Askaig – with no wish to see Colonsay disadvantaged in any way.

Higher level input to CalMac/CMAL/Transport Scotland management from communities – through a yet undetermined mechanism – as current structures and groups do not serve to facilitate this.

10. Community Board Update

JP – noted that the Community Board has morphed into a rather different creature to the original intent, with higher level strategic involvement on service issues as well as the more “local” delivery gains the Board have achieved – amongst which are a simplified procedure for sale of local goods on vessels and a trial reduction in fares for school buses, to the same level as campervans.

The structure of the Board is to change – 14 members will be reduced to 12. Existing Board members have been asked to complete a simple questionnaire but some doubt remains as to just how the cull will be arranged based on the responses! Tenure will nominally be three years but annual change in membership is anticipated going forward.

The Calmac Community Fund, open to non-profit clubs and groups with members under the age of 26 was discussed. While not every committee member had heard of this fund, MD pointed out that five groups on Islay and Jura had already benefitted.

Action Point: IS to suggest to Community Fund administration that additional publicity would be welcomed.

11. AOCB

Committee to check that the new VRDP to be produced shortly by TS is accurate in terms of the distillery forecast figures.

Issues around what causes distilleries to stop production were discussed for information purposes.

12. Summary of action points

1. DMcK to raise password issue for JP with Angela Paterson.
2. DMcK to advise Angela Herd regarding livestock sale on 22nd November during single vessel service.
3. DMcK to provide further detail regarding actual dry dock dates for vessels impacting the Islay service
4. IS and DMcK to provide B2B team with feedback reflecting the strong views of the committee that more hauliers should be formally managed by the system than the current four.
5. IS to suggest to Community Fund administration that additional publicity would be welcomed.

13. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13th November 2019, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 21.15 with thanks to all for their attendance.