

MID ARGYLL, KINTYRE AND THE ISLANDS FERRIES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Ferries Plan was published by Transport Scotland in December 2012. There were a number of key issues that directly affected the Mid Argyll Kintyre and Islay area. This paper sets out the result of some of the short term measures implemented through the Plan.

The Ardrossan to Campbeltown link is now in its second year and has one further year to operate before a decision is taken on its continuation and possible extension to include a winter service.

The Tayinloan to Gigha route has seen the improvements at Tayinloan completed with an outline business case for the slip in Ardmish Bay awaiting progression to the full business case.

The Islay route has had services re-balanced between Port Ellen and Port Askaig. The Jura community has benefitted from the additional early morning services to connect with the 0700 sailing to Kennacraig. The disruption to this route in the event of either breakdown or re-deployment has been raised with CalMac and the rationale for their response is detailed.

It was considered prudent that Members should be made aware that ahead of the new Clyde Hebrides Ferry services tender which is due to be commenced in December 2016 that Council officials are actively engaged with both CalMac and Transport Scotland to ensure that the ferry services help promote both economic growth and assist reversing the trend of population decline.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Area Committee note the report.

3.0 DETAILS

3.1 This paper highlights some of the measures that have resulted from the publication of the Scottish Ferries Plan in December 2012. It should also be highlighted that the Council continue to hold discussions at both operational and strategic levels with CalMac and Transport Scotland ahead of the impending tender for the Clyde Hebrides Ferry Services contract which is due to commence in October 2016 to ensure that the Argyll and Bute populous is served by the ferry operator and will engender both economic and population growth.

3.2 Campbeltown Ardrossan pilot

This service is in the second of a three year pilot period. The carrying figures for both passenger and vehicles for an identical period of time (23 May to 29 August) are tabulated below:

	passengers	cars	sailings
2013	6035	1226	106 with 8 cancellations
2014	5838	1004	106 with 6 cancellations

The service has not attracted commercial users but this year Transport Scotland have commissioned a survey by Vector Research Ltd to establish whether the service has achieved its key objectives which are as follows:

- a) Provide a boost to the Campbeltown economy and develop Campbeltown as an attractive place to invest, to visit, to work and do business
- b) Enhance the transport choices and links for locals and businesses
- c) Increase visitors to Campbeltown and the Kintyre Peninsula and support existing tourism markets and develop new opportunities

It is anticipated that there will be a monitoring report produced at the end of this season followed by an in depth report in the autumn of 2015.

3.3 Tayinloan to Gigha

The assessment of the current service provision was that the model service profile envisaged that services would continue much later into the evening.

The improvement works that were undertaken by the Council at Tayinloan have improved the reliability of the service and it was part of the long term strategy to enhance the facilities on Gigha in Ardmish Bay. This would facilitate the potential for accommodating a new hybrid ferry if Transport Scotland decides to continue the build programme which has seen two vessels deployed to date.

There is an existing outline business case for improving the Ardmish slip and this would allow the vessel to berth overnight on station as distinct from sailing to the south pier Gigha. This requires to be progressed to the full business case stage.

3.4 Islay and Jura Services

The Islay route is served by two vessels and the Ferries Plan originally elected not to re-balance the services between Port Ellen and Port Askaig but as a consequence of subsequent consultation Transport Scotland has altered the timetable to allow those residents in the north of Islay and Jura to access the early morning sailings on a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from Port Askaig. In light of this the Council introduced and funded an early morning sailing from Feolin to Port Askaig. The initial uptake was not encouraging but the passenger carryings during the summer demonstrated that it was a popular service.

The issue of disruptions to the service when one of the vessels is either re-deployed or broken down has been raised with CalMac ferries since this not only affects Islay but Campbeltown too. CalMac's position is that they have a limited resource in ships and it is neither practical nor cost effective to have a spare vessel awaiting deployment in order to retain two vessels on route. However, as part of the Ferries plan there is a vessel replacement strategy in progress which is being considered by both Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) and CalMac. This will address issues of capacity but will not resolve the problems caused by redeployment or breakdown.

3.5 Other routes

The Council understands that one of the new hybrid vessels has now been deployed on the Tarbert to Portavadie route. The Colonsay route has seen the introduction of a new Saturday service from Colonsay to Kennacraig via Islay.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The publication of the Scottish Ferries Plan has provided the platform for introducing a series of measures that impact on Mid Argyll Kintyre and Islay. The pilot service from Campbeltown to Ardrossan is still subject to evaluation. The Tayinloan route has an outline business case for the improvement to the Gigha slip which has to be progressed. The Islay route has benefitted from the re-balancing of services between Port Ellen and Port Askaig which has resulted in greater connectivity for residents in Jura and northern Islay.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 5.1 | Policy | None |
| 5.2 | Financial | If the early morning service from Jura continues there is a financial subsidy required to continue this, currently this costs £18,432 per annum to implement. |
| 5.3 | Legal | None |

5.4	HR	None
5.5	Equalities	None
5.6	Risk	An increase in Financial subsidy
5.7	Customer Services	The decision to continue the early morning sailings could positively impact sustainability of our communities.

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

Policy Lead: Ellen Morton

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For further information contact: Martin Gorrings, Marine Operations Manager
(01546604656)

