

**CRUISE SCOTLAND REPORT**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Council is a member of Cruise Scotland that allows Oban to be marketed worldwide as a visitor destination. Cruising is a growing market with a season that tends to lengthen year on year. The present season operates from May to September and in 2014 there were 16 cruise ships in Oban and 24 in Iona. They have brought over 7,500 visitors to Argyll with tour destinations ranging from the National Trust for Scotland gardens to Inveraray Castle.

The current indications are that the market will grow in 2015 and with the proposed infrastructure improvements in Oban both with the public realm and Maritime Visitor Facility that will further enhance the offering that Argyll and Bute can make to the cruise sector.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the Committee note the report:

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 This paper gives an update on the activity generated by Cruise Scotland this year. The Council is a full member of this organisation that permits officers to market the port of Oban. There are two key marketing events per annum with the trade show in Miami in March and a European event which this year was held in Barcelona. The Council attended the European Seatrade exhibition in Barcelona since most of the cruise lines that visit Oban tend to operate in European waters.

### 4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That the Committee note the contents of the report

### 5.0 Detail

The principal port for cruise activity is Oban which features in the Cruise Scotland literature. A number of vessels that call into Oban also visit Iona with the season commencing in April and ending in September. The majority of cruise ships require dropping anchor in either Oban Bay or the Sound of Iona and ferrying their passengers by tender to either the Oban Times Slip or the Iona slip. Oban welcomed sixteen ships over the course of the 2014 season that brought 5,490 visitors to Argyll. Tours are organised through the ground handling agents such as Morrison Tours and these focus on attractions such as the National Trust for Scotland gardens at Crarae and Arduaine and Inveraray Castle. There are additional specialist cruise ships that can be berthed on the North Pier which have a limited passenger carrying capacity, in particular the Lord of the Glens, which will make over twenty calls to Oban during the season.

Iona had twenty four calls in 2014 landing 2,415 passengers. Their principal interest is the Iona Abbey which acts as a significant attraction for a large number of visitors.

### 5.1 2015

The early indications for 2015 are that the Council has 17 confirmed bookings for Oban and this is expected to rise. There are 27 bookings for Iona. The Queen Mary 2 is due to visit Oban in May and The World is scheduled to visit later in the season. The Council actively encourages cruise visitors but in addition there is a small team of dedicated people led by Councillor Robertson and including BIDs for Oban,

which welcome visitors to the town. This has a positive impact on the visitor experience and allows local knowledge to be shared with those visiting for the first time. This year will also mark the construction of the Maritime Visitor Facility on the North Pier that will act as a focal point for cruise visitors. There are also preliminary plans to develop a specialist pontoon facility that will provide an ideal transition for passengers from the tender vessel directly to the North Pier car park where coaches can collect the passengers. This will be subject of a further report to the Oban, Lorn and the Islands Area Committee for final approval. These are two valuable additions to the marine asset that will enable the port to be marketed positively and permit further growth.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

6.1 The cruise season has concluded this year with 16 vessels calling at Oban and a further 24 visiting Iona. The cruise ships have brought over 7,500 visitors to Argyll with present indications that this figure will rise for 2015.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS**

7.1	Policy	None
7.2	Financial	none.
7.3	Legal	None
7.4	HR	None.
7.5	Equalities	None
7.6	Risk	That the cruise ship numbers will fall and tourism will suffer a downturn.
7.7	Customer Services	None.

### **Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure**

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