

**MINUTES of MEETING of COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM held by SKYPE
on MONDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2020**

Present: Councillor Alan Reid (Chair)
Councillor Bobby Good
Councillor Jim Anderson

Attending: Gordon Ross – Western Ferries
Iain Slorach – Client Manager, Calmac
Tommy Gore – Area Operations Manager, Calmac
Iain Catterwell – Timber Transport Group
Chief Inspector Douglas Wilson – Police Scotland
Neil MacFarlane – Transport Scotland
Murray Rogers – West Coast Motors
Cathleen Russell – Colintrave & Glendaruel Community Council
Iain McInnes – Lochgoil Community Council
Graham Revill – Kilmun Community Council
Wyllie Lynch – Dunoon Community Council
Gordon Ramsay – Transport Scotland
Scott Brown – Jacobs
John Redpath - Jacobs
Jeff McCormick – West Coast Motors
Melissa Stewart – Governance Officer
Ronnie McAlister – Bute Community Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence were intimated by:

Councillor Audrey Forrest
Paul Paterson - Kilfinan Community Council;
Stuart Watson – Assistant Network and Standards Manager, Argyll and Bute Council;
Alistair McLundie – Western Ferries;
Michael Breslin – South Cowal Community Council;
Martin Arnold – Contract Officer, Argyll and Bute Council; and
Marta Zawadzka – Community Transport Officer, Argyll and Bute Council.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bobby Good made a financial declaration of interest in item 7 (a) on the basis he is a part-time employee of West Coast Motors. He remained in the call taking no part in the short discussion.

3. MINUTES

The minute of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on the Monday 24 August 2020 was approved as a correct record.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

(a) **Caledonian MacBrayne**

The Forum noted that sailings were back to a two vessel timetable which would be continued into the winter period with an amended timetable in place to accommodate the Gourock linkspan works where works were progressing well with completion on schedule for mid-December.

The Forum also noted that passenger carries were down to 54% for September on the Dunoon/Gourock route but 99% of sailings were on time and 88 sailings cancelled due to adverse weather. In respect of the Colintrave/Rhubodach route there has been no cancelled sailings but there was a big dip in carryings.

Calmac representatives confirmed that the late night sailings on a Friday and Saturday would be resumed once the opening time restrictions on licensed premises had been lifted.

Discussion focused on the deployment of the Coruisk. She is currently deployed on the Rothesay-Wemyss Bay service, but will be available for the Dunoon-Gourock service once the Gourock linkspan works are completed. When either the Ali Cat or the Argyll Flyer are in dry dock during the January-March period, the Coruisk will be deployed to cover the sailings normally operated by the Ali Cat and the vessel which is not in dry dock will be deployed to cover the sailings normally operated by the Argyll Flyer.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the position; and
2. agreed that Calmac would notify the Forum as soon as the linkspan works are completed.

(b) **Western Ferries**

Gordon Ross updated the Forum that periods of inclement weather had resulted in a small number of sailings being cancelled and a small issue with a vessel had been quickly resolved. The Forum noted that they had now moved into new offices and the temporary ticket kiosk had been removed with some works still to be done to the staff parking area. A new bike rack would be installed but disability spaces were now reopen.

Discussion focused how it was hard to predict capacity issues due to closures at the Rest and Be Thankful as this is countered by November being a quiet time of year plus the re-introduction of travel restrictions effecting traffic levels.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(c) **Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service**

As there was no one present from the Ferries Division of Transport Scotland to speak to the issues so the Forum agreed to continue the item.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position and agreed to continue the item.

(d) Shore Side Infrastructure at Dunoon

As there was no representatives present the Forum noted the circulated presentation by CMAL which updated them on the Gourock/Dunoon project

Outcome

The Forum noted the presentation.

5. POLICE SCOTLAND

Chief Inspector Douglas Wilson, Police Scotland, gave an update on matters he had recently been attending which included being back to business in terms of traffic volume and speeding vehicles and stressed that most speeding was done by local people on the main roads and that Police Scotland were producing leaflets and posters to share with community councils to raise awareness through education. He also spoke about working with Roads in terms of addressing the condition of some road signage and trimming back undergrowth.

The Forum noted that work regarding the motorbike noise was ongoing and was subject to joint working between Police Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council and Transport Scotland and that a full update would be available once the matter was concluded.

Graham Reville, Kilmun Community Council highlighted potential speeding by timber lorries at Clachaig and asked whether leafleting haulage companies could be undertaken. Iain Catterwell did not consider that leafleting would be the correct way to address concerns and invited Graham to contact him with information.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the update; and
2. agreed that Police Scotland would circulate leaflets and posters about speeding to community councils as soon as they were available for distribution.

6. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

(a) VMS and Manual Signs

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland updated the Forum in relation to VMS and manual signs which included that the intermittent issues with the new VMS was because they are solar powered and are not getting enough sunlight.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(b) **A83**

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland circulated a list of notable Transport Scotland roadworks on A83 and A82 Loch Lomondside for the next quarter as follows;

Location	Works Description	Start date	Duration
Rest and be Thankful	Landslide Mitigation	Ongoing	Ongoing
Glen Kinglas	Landslide Mitigation	November 20	Until Spring

Resurfacing Projects

Scheme Name	Duration	Start Date	TM Type	Timing
A82 Bandry	8d	17-Nov-20	Convoy	Nightshift
A82 South of Falls of Falloch Phase 2	6d	30-Nov-20	Convoy	Dayshift
A82 North of Luss	10d	31-Jan-21	Convoy	Nightshift
A82 North of Aldochlay	10d	14-Feb-21	Convoy	Nightshift
A83 Butterbridge to Dunoon Jct	19d	01-Nov-20	Convoy	Nightshift
A83 Cairndow North Junction	5d	24-Nov-20	Convoy	Nightshift
A83 Drishaig to Strone	3d	01-Dec-20	Road Closure	Nightshift
A83 North of Strone Point	1d	06-Dec-20	Road Closure	Nightshift
A83 Oyster Bar	3d	08-Dec-20	Convoy	Dayshift
A83 South of Succoth Resurfacing	2d	11-Dec-20	Convoy	Dayshift
A83 Butterbridge to Dunoon Jct Ph2	10d	17-Jan-21	Convoy	Nightshift
A83 West of A815 Junction	8d	31-Jan-21	Convoy	Nightshift

Discussion focussed on the use of social media to update people with the message being to check before they start their journey with Twitter being noted as the most frequently updated. The Forum noted that not everyone had access to social media and questioned whether local and national radio stations could fill this gap. Neil confirmed that notification was provided to the radio stations although commented some were better than others at passing on this information.

Scott Brown from the Jacobs engineering group spoke to a presentation shared on the call in relation to the 11 corridor options under consideration for the Rest and be Thankful along with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) process for the project. The Forum noted that Jacobs were currently at the start of the process in DMRB stage 1 after a 5 week data collection consultation with stakeholders had closed with over 600 responses which were now being reviewed. It was anticipated that in Spring 2021 they will be in position to announce the preferred corridor and the Forum noted that the process was lengthy due to having to follow statutory procedures and practices.

The Forum further noted that the current mitigation measures are hoped to be completed by the end of the month allowing the A83 to re-open and that Neil MacFarlane would speak directly with Bear Scotland regarding the perception that the only diversion route available after 6pm was the A82 when Western Ferries provide an alternative option until 10pm.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

7. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) Reduced Bus Services

Murray Rodger, West Coast Motors stated that whilst working in conjunction with the council they could confirm that additional journeys on routes 480, 482 and 489 have been implemented as of today which took them to 80% normal capacity with updated timetables to be added at bus stops and sent to community councils to put up on notice boards. The Forum noted that in addition the printed timetables will have QPR codes on them to take people straight to the website for the latest updates.

Concerns were expressed that bus services had still not returned to pre-Covid levels of service. Murray Rogers explained that passenger numbers had not returned to pre-Covid levels and they relied on fare income as well as grants to cover their costs. Although the Scottish Government had provided an increased amount of grant, this was not enough to cover the cost of providing the pre-Covid level of service.

Discussion focused on the additional time and expense required to keep the buses safe and clean in light of covid-19 restrictions and how this time needed to be incorporated into timetables to remain compliant with the safety measures.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the position;
2. agreed to pass a query from Ronnie McAlister regarding the experience of Stantec in dealing with rural transport issues to Martin Arnold to respond to; and

3. requested that Martin Arnold distribute updated timetables as soon as possible.

(b) Bus Stop at Rest and Be Thankful

Following on from a desk top exercise to apply for funding and request changes to the TRO Roads had identified actions as follows;

1. A change to existing TRO;
2. Change direction of traffic to an anti -clockwise direction. Adjust signage to suit;
3. Signage for Service Buses only; and
4. Widen carriageway in turning area to accommodate tourist coaches.

The Contract Officer advised in a previously circulated update that they were awaiting a response from Roads regards this and that there was no update from Public Transport.

The Chair asked whether West Coast Motors would be stopping the use of the bus stop between November and the beginning of March, as had been the case in previous years. He pointed out that the weather in November was mild and asked if they needed to stop the use of the bus stop as early as 1 November. Jeff advised that although the weather was mild at present they had to notify the public and register for the amended service. On this basis it is not possible to fit in with milder weather patterns.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

(c) Dial-A-Bus

Having submitted his apologies the Contract Manager circulated the below update in advance of the meeting;

We are working on a new leaflet and poster, now that the Dial-a-Bus is back to operating full time. We will disseminate this to forum when it is complete. Currently scheduled to come out along with other timetable publicity material in time for next Summer season. I appreciate that this has been on the agenda for some time, but we are currently prioritising replacing at-stop timetable panels across Argyll and Bute on the run up to Christmas.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

(d) Kames Bus Stop

The Forum noted the update from the Contract Officer that Roads had put bus stop cage in most suitable location from a road safety point of view.

Outcome

The Forum agreed to take the item off the agenda.

8. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group updated the Forum with the detail on the works of the Group which included that surfacing works on passing place creation would be completed with tarring done by end of the day and that a feasibility study for a dedicated haulage diversion route in Glen Croe for timber lorries only when the A83 and Old Military Road were unavailable was being undertaken.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the update provided; and
2. noted that the voluntary agreement with timber lorries avoiding travelling through Tighnabruaich during school opening and closing times would be issued to hauliers as a reminder by Iain Catterwell.

9. ROADS UPDATE

(a) Carriageway Roundels and Additional Signage at Colintrave

The Forum noted the below as submitted in the absence of an Officer from Roads;

Colintrave: We are currently pulling together a list of additional road marking works in Cowal concentrating on junction marking refreshment and we will have this location included on these works. We have still to carry out the road marking work to our capital reconstruction sites for Bute and Cowal and this work will be done at the same time. The package of work will be issued before the end of November 2020 with the works to be done as and when the weather allows.

White Lining: We have added the training for using the road marking trailer to our training program which is collated and managed centrally by the HQ team at Lochgilphead for all of Operational services. There is a limited budget for training and so our training requirements are prioritised. Until we can gain the training we will continue to utilise the framework for road marking contractors. The trailer only allows for hand applied road markings and short lengths of edge and centre line to be placed such as give way, stop, disabled bays, parking bays, TRO's, bus stops etc. For long lengths, generally greater than 200m, of edge and centre line this needs to be applied by machine which is done by line marking contractor.

Cairndow: This did get missed the last time the road marking contractor was in the area despite requesting this to be done twice. We are currently pulling together a list of additional road marking works in Cowal concentrating on junction marking refreshment and we will have this location included on these works. We have still to carry out the road marking work to our capital reconstruction sites for Bute and Cowal and this work will be done at the same time. The package of work will be issued before the end of November 2020 with the works to be done as and when the weather allows.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position and agreed that give way lining should be prioritised as a matter of urgency due to ongoing safety issues at road junctions.

(b) Speed Surveys

The Forum discussed the submitted dataset in relation to traffic speed surveys conducted at the start of the year.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

(c) Traffic Management in Tighnabruaich, Kames and Millhouse

As there was no one present from Kilfinan Community Council to give an update there was no discussion on the item.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position and agreed to continue the item.

10. PROPOSED ARGYLL RALLY

The Forum considered a letter and a frequently asked questions update from Mull Car Club which was issued to community councils in relation to ongoing arrangements for Dunoon Presents Argyll Rally due to take place on 25 and 26 June 2020.

Discussion focused on concerns around how proposed road closures might impact on residents. It was noted that Mull Car Club were now engaging well with the community councils and Police Scotland and were open to continued discussion which would be further benefited by consulting with West Coast Motors.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

None

12. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the future meetings of the Cowal Transport Forum would be held;

- Monday 1 February 2021; and
- Monday 24 May 2021.