

**MINUTES of MEETING of COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM held via SKYPE
on MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2021**

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

Attending: Stuart McLean – Committee Manager
Gordon Ross – Western Ferries
Alistair McLundie - Western Ferries
Iain Slorach – Client Manager, Calmac
Stewart Wohlgemuth – Port Manager, Calmac
Iain Catterwell – Timber Transport Group
Chief Inspector Douglas Wilson – Police Scotland
Neil MacFarlane – Transport Scotland
Murray Rogers – West Coast Motors
Iain McInnes – Lochgoil Community Council
Graham Revill – Kilmun Community Council
Willie Lynch – Dunoon Community Council
Michael Breslin – South Cowal CC
Jeff McCormick – West Coast Motors
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;
Councillor Gordon Blair;
Tommy Gore – Area Operations Manager, Calmac;
Paul Bulmer - Colglen Community Council;
Iain McNaughton - Sandbank Community Council;
Paul Paterson – Kilfinan Community Council; and
Martin Arnold – Contract Officer.

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 16 November 2020 was approved as a correct record.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

(a) **Caledonian MacBrayne**

The Forum noted the update from Tommy Gore - Area Operations Manager, Caledonian MacBrayne, in relation to the deployment of MV Coruisk on the Gourock/Dunoon route.

Stewart Wohlgemuth – Port Manager further informed the Forum that punctuality on Cowal routes had been similar during November 2020 and December 2020 at around 89% - 91% and carryings were down 86% from the same period the previous year. Mr Wohlgemuth added that the Gourock Linkspan works were progressing and that it was anticipated it would be back in operation by 22 February 2021.

Discussion focussed on the dates for the re-engineering of the ferries and the potential loss of a boat for a lengthy part of the summer timetable should the works be pushed beyond the current winter timetable. Concern was expressed over the lack of timelines available which does not allow planning for the easing of restrictions and by association encouraging people to come back to Dunoon and the surrounding area.

Stewart confirmed that vessel and terminal staff are questioning customers at point of ticket sale about the nature of their travel during lockdown and are making travellers aware of the restrictions rather than enforcement.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the position; and
2. agreed that Calmac Asset Management Team would look at providing fixed dates for a plan for the Ali Cat and Flyer and once confirmed circulate to the Forum.

(b) Western Ferries

Gordon Ross - Managing Director, Western Ferries confirmed that they are operating a reduced hourly service but half hourly at peak times; traffic numbers are reduced as people are adhering to restrictions and as soon as restrictions are eased they will ramp up service to the normal level. Hunters Quay improvement works are scheduled to be completed in the next couple of weeks with full passenger parking available by the end of February, once travel restrictions are lifted it is the intention to complete the improvement works to Kilmun.

Discussion focused on the appropriateness of ferry staff questioning traveller intention and that staff are not empowered to make judgments as this power lies with the Police.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(c) Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service (Pages 7 - 14)

The Reference Group circulated an update to Forum along with a copy of the Outline Business Case as attached to the minute.

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

The Forum considered the update from Stewart Clark - Marine Operations Manager, Argyll and Bute Council, in relation to compilation of the Outline Business Case of various design solutions to ensure safe berthing of the proposed new vessel at both Dunoon and Kilcreggan.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

The Ferries representatives left the meeting at this point.

5. POLICE SCOTLAND

Chief Inspector Douglas Wilson, Police Scotland, gave an update on matters he had recently been attending which included potential issues around essential travel on boats and that the Police aim to be visible where they can and issue fixed penalties where necessary. Police Scotland have also received sporadic reports of people accessing holiday homes and traffic levels are not as low as the first lockdown with speeding in Dunoon and Cairndow in evidence. There had also been some reports of bogus workers touting for business who have now moved on.

Discussion focussed on the lack of uptake on the Community Speed Watch programme was perhaps due to a lack of willingness to give up time as peoples' focus might be elsewhere at the moment and it is hard to arrange training until social distancing restrictions are relaxed, concerns were also raised around driver reactions and behaviour.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

6. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

(a) VMS and Manual Signs

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland informed the Forum that there was nothing further to update in relation to VMS and manual signs.

The Forum discussed the new VMS signs and agreed that this was as a consequence of the collaborative working of the Forum and Transport Scotland. The Forum thanked Neil for his work in response to their request. Regarding the request for manual signs on the road out of Lochgoilhead, Neil said that Transport Scotland had no plans and that drivers should consult social media.

Outcome

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

(b) **A83**

The Forum noted the letter from Kimberley Hughes - Project Administrator, Transport Scotland in relation to A83 Access to Argyll and Bute.

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

Completed:

A83 Tarbet To Arrochar Footway

Ongoing:

A83 Tarbet To Arrochar, additional drainage improvements now underway; and A83 Rest and Be Thankful (RABT) – bund on OMR complete, daylight operation of A83 one way.

Upcoming:

A82 Loch Lomond side night time convoy resurfacing – all of February to 9 March;
A83 Clachan resurfacing from 18th to 22nd February;
A83 Lit sign faces and bollards refurbishment;
A83 Branch cutback proposals to be submitted w/c 25/01/2021;
A83 Glen Kinglas Bunds – subject to contract completion; and
A83 Cairndow Signing scheme design underway.

Discussion focussed on the intermediate solution at the RABT being weather dependent and the intention to increase resilience to work towards having the road open 24/7 and in both directions. Concern was expressed over the length of time the projected Local Public Inquiry would take to complete and by association the final solution for the RABT.

Iain Catterwell – Timber Transport Scotland stated that issues with Glenmhor road are subject to discussions with the council and that they were looking at inter-visible passing places or two way carriageway for short stretches, a bid will be submitted for 2021/22 with the intent to upgrade to these standards. The forestry road on the south side of Glen Croe will be upgraded for the use by timber transport and Mr Catterwell confirmed that they were not sure if this route would be further upgraded to become a permanent replacement for the trunk road traffic or reserved just for timber transport.

Outcome

The Forum noted the letter and the update from Transport Scotland.

7. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) **Reduced Bus Services**

The Forum noted the letter from Trish McCotter, Bus Policy Officer, Transport Scotland in relation to funding for rural bus services.

Murray Rodger, West Coast Motors stated that they were in close dialogue with the council over service levels which are currently sitting at 80% of pre-covid levels; they employ a one man one bus policy; passenger levels are below 20% with 1.4 passengers per journey, with many journeys having zero passengers; vehicles capacity levels trackers on buses; some school journeys remain for key worker's children and they look forward to a new normal soon noting how peak service patterns are changing from 7am to 10am

Discussion on the importance of ensuring bus timetable at stanchions are up-to-date was had with local councillors agreeing to investigate through Casebook where appropriate.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the letter from Transport Scotland; and
2. noted the update from West Coast Motors.

(b) Bus Stop at Rest and Be Thankful

In the absence of Officer attendance issues with the path from the OMR to the bus stop were discussed. Transport Scotland stated they believed it was the responsibility of the council as it was not part of the trunk road network and was constructed by a third party. Transport Scotland believed that the deterioration of the path had not been effected by the use of the OMR but due to it being poorly constructed.

Outcome

The Forum noted Transport Scotland's position.

(c) Dial-A-Bus

In his absence the Contract Manager submitted an update which advised that the Dial-a-Bus was back up and running and that he was currently working on some publicity material. Once completed these will be disseminated to the Forum for feedback and thereafter wider circulation.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

8. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group updated the Forum on recent activities which included being at the very early stage of harvesting in Hell's Glen as a result of a statutory health notice issued to deal with Phytophthora ramorum. This will involve clearing and felling 6k tonnes of larch and spruce which can take up to 12 weeks in harvesting and despatch activity. There will be full dialogue with all stakeholders before the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order can be put in place with two new tarred and permanent passing places created. There will be disruption, subject to agreement with stakeholders, with the

aim being to keep the road open and/or a diversion in place with emergency vehicles access permitted throughout.

Mr Catterwell added that the B8000 would see large sale movements of about 20k tonnes of timber to add to smaller sales that are ongoing and encouraged any stakeholders to get in touch if they needed further information. He also stated that the daily capacity had increased from 10 to 12 loads.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

9. ROADS UPDATE

(a) Carriageway Roundels and Additional Signage at Colintrave

The Forum noted that Officers had advised the Chair that they had engaged a contractor and are awaiting a suitable weather window for these works to start.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

(b) 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. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

1. The Forum agreed to request that all community councils in Bute and Cowal be involved in CMAL's Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service consultation;
2. The Forum agreed to contact the Roads Department asking for them to confirm what their policy is regarding informing community council about road closures and temporary traffic lights; and
3. The Forum noted that all road closures for planned works was available to view at <https://www.roadworksscotland.org/>

11. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Monday 24 May 2021; and
- Friday 20 August 2021.