

**MINUTES of MEETING of COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM held via SKYPE
on MONDAY, 24 MAY 2021**

Present: Councillor Alan Reid (Chair)
Councillor Bobby Good
Councillor Audrey Forrest

Attending: Melissa Stewart – Governance Officer
Martin Arnold – Contract Officer
Tommy Gore – Area Operations Manager, Calmac
Gordon Ross – Western Ferries
Alistair McLundie - Western Ferries
Iain Slorach – Client Manager, Calmac
Iain Catterwell – Timber Transport Group
Chief Inspector Emma Grimason – Police Scotland
Neil MacFarlane – Transport Scotland
Murray Rogers – West Coast Motors
Jeff McCormick – West Coast Motors
Iain McInnes – Lochgoil Community Council
Willie Lynch – Dunoon Community Council
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 Jim Anderson;
Councillor Gordon Blair;
Marta Zawadzka - Community Transport Officer;
Michael Breslin – South Cowal Community Council; and
Archie Reid – Strachur Community Council.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

The minute of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on the Monday 1 February 2021 was approved as a correct record.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

(a) Caledonian MacBrayne

The Forum considered an update from Tommy Gore - Area Operations Manager, Caledonian MacBrayne, in relation to there being only one vessel in service on the Dunoon/Gourock route as MV Argyll Flyer was still in dry dock due to engine issues

that were uncovered on sea trials. In terms of service reliability the Forum noted that both the Dunoon/Gourock and the Colintrave/Rhubodach routes had 12 sailings cancelled with 99% and 100% respectively of those sailings running on time and that the Portavadie/Tarbert service was back to hourly sailings. It was noted that the cancelled sailings figure did not include sailings cancelled due to the MV Argyll Flyer being unavailable.

Discussion was had on the accessibility of the gangway for all users and the Forum noted that CalMac were in the process of procuring a replacement gangway, due to be installed in the near future.

Discussion focused how the replacement bus service on the Dunoon/Gourock route had not been crossing with the ferries though it was understood that once the service was back to normal the shuttle service would be reinstated. Confirmation was sought and received that if the bus does not cross with the ferry, CalMac will reimburse the cost of the ferry ticket to passengers.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the update;
2. agreed that Tommy Gore would update the Forum on the situation of the MV Argyll Flyer in dry dock when the position changes;
3. agreed that Tommy Gore would circulate service reliability data for the Portavadie/Tarbert route to the Forum and would include the figures in future updates at the Forum's meetings;
4. agreed that Tommy Gore would update the Forum on the position of the reinstated bus shuttle service on the Dunoon/Gourock route; and
5. noted that Tommy Gore would ensure that the position regarding reimbursement of the cost of ferry tickets to passengers who used the bus shuttle service on the Dunoon/Gourock route would be communicated clearly to all customers.

(b) Western Ferries

Gordon Ross - Managing Director, Western Ferries, confirmed that the Summer Service timetable was introduced on 26 April 2021 in line with Scottish Government guidance; new offices were open with normal opening times; and outside works had been completed which included mobility parking.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(c) Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service

The Forum considered the update from Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CalMac).

Discussion focused on what work has been done by the tripartite regarding the

modelling of predicted service levels and the Forum noted that CalMac, as the operator, provided data from last 10 years to Transport Scotland and that the demand for the routes was to be discussed at Reference Group meeting on 28 May 2021.

Outcome

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

(d) Shore Side Infrastructure at Dunoon

The Forum noted that there was nothing further to update until the Forum's next meeting in August 2021.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

The Ferries representatives left the meeting at this point.

5. POLICE SCOTLAND

The Chair welcomed Chief Inspector Emma Grimason, Police Scotland, to her first meeting with the Forum.

CI Grimason introduced herself and informed the Forum that she will be supported by the newly appointed Inspector John Forrest. She gave an update on matters she had recently been attending to, which included working with the Community Engagement Team to establish a Day of Action to be held on 27 May in Dunoon. This will see an increased police presence in the area with the aim to pro-actively address problem areas through education such as bike marking at the Band Stand in Dunoon, safe passing distances when vehicles overtake cyclists, a speed detection event to address complaints in the Bullwood Road area, promotion of a national motorcycle campaign reporting on high profile speeding and working in conjunction with Transport Scotland around the influx of tourists to more rural areas due to staycation activity. The Forum noted details of the event will be promoted on social media with local press coverage.

The Forum noted that the Youth Programme would be re-instated in a revised format once a review had been completed.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the update;
2. noted that CI Grimason would ask Police Officers to monitor speeding issues along Sandbank Road that engagement with Lochgoil Community Council regarding rising policing in that community would be facilitated; and
3. noted that once the review was completed that CI Grimason would update the Forum on the position of the Youth Programme.

6. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

(a) VMS and Manual Signs

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland, updated the Forum in relation to VMS and manual signs and highlighted that the main issue with VMS is finding a mains connection and due to the costs involved advised the Forum that signage will be reviewed between medium and long term solutions as part of a move towards relying on social media and radio travel updates for information.

Outcome

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

(b) A83

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland, advised the Forum that whilst work was ongoing at the Rest and Be Thankful (RABT), most work on A83 and A82 Loch Lomondside was completed and that the A82 Inverarnan stretch would be subject to overnight closures from 27 May 2021 and the next major resurfacing works on the sections of the A83 close to Cowal are expected to take place in September/October 2021. The Forum noted that multiagency work monitoring and managing traffic, particularly in Loch Lomond area, was underway.

Discussion focussed on the RABT medium and long-term proposals including ongoing discussions with Forestry and Land Scotland regarding the option for a new road along the corridor of the existing forestry access track. The condition of A8/M8 between Newark Castle and Glasgow Airport was also raised.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the update; and
2. agreed that Neil MacFarlane would raise concerns over the condition of A8/M8 with relevant officers in Transport Scotland and report back to the Forum.

7. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) Pingo - On Demand Bus Service

The Forum considered the submitted leaflets on the bus service 'Pingo'; an app which allows customers to book a shared journey not served by the bus service at that particular time. It operates within the West Coast Motors, Dunoon and Cowal network and acts like an on demand response service. Murray Rodger, West Coast Motors, further advised the Forum that the service was developed as part of the green recovery to encourage people away from single occupancy car trips. Users can book, pay and track vehicles online with the option of calling the helpdesk to assist with the app and to book journeys for those that do not use a smart phone. The Forum noted that the service has the support of local businesses and if it continues to be a success it is hoped that it can be extended to other locations dependent upon demand.

Outcome

The Forum noted the information.

(b) Reduced Bus Services

Jeff McCormick, West Coast Motors (WCM), advised the Forum that service levels were currently at 90% pre-covid levels and discussion focussed on getting all services back on as soon as possible whilst looking at alternatives such as Pingo and how WCM are funded through fare revenue and concessionary fares which have severely reduced and how Transport Scotland has guaranteed to assist in plugging the funding gap only until the end of June 2021. The Forum also noted that all vehicles used to service bus routes were Equality Act compliant.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

(c) Bus Stop at Rest and Be Thankful

The Forum considered the update from the Public Transport Technician in relation to the bus stop ramp at the Rest and Be Thankful.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

8. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group, updated the Forum on recent activities which included that Hell's Glen forestry works should be complete within the next 3 weeks with no significant issues other than a few drivers choosing to break through the signs; that subject to ministerial approval expected soon a further investment is anticipated for improvements on the B8000 Kames/Millhouse/Tighnabruaich area to include for five additional LGV passing places, carriageway widenings, plus other car sized passing places as topography allows.

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 works were now complete.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position and agreed to remove the item from the agenda.

(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

The Forum discussed the circulated Council policy regarding giving out information about road closures or temporary works. Willie Lynch, Dunoon Community Council, gave examples of this policy not having been implemented and it was agreed that the detail of these examples would be fed back to the service for further enquiry.

Confirmation was sought and received around the maximum timescale of 18 months that a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order can be in place for.

Outcome

The Forum agreed to forward Willie Lynch's observations to the Executive Director responsible for Roads and Infrastructure and to keep this item on the agenda.

11. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Friday 20 August 2021; and
- Tuesday 16 November 2021.