

**MINUTES of MEETING of COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM held via MICROSOFT TEAMS
on TUESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2021**

Present: Councillor Alan Reid (Chair)
Councillor Bobby Good
Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor Jim Anderson
Councillor Gordon Blair
Stuart McLean – Committee Manager
PI John Forrest – Police Scotland
Alistair McLundie - Western Ferries
Iain Slorach – Calmac
Tommy Gore – Area Operations Manager, Calmac
Allan Comrie – Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Iain Catterwell – Timber Transport Group
Jeff McCormick – West Coast Motors
Iain McInnes – Lochgoil Community Council
Michael Breslin – South Cowal Community Council
Willie Lynch – Dunoon Community Council
Ronnie McAlister – Bute Community Council
Sue Wallis – Cowal Resident
Megan Bonar – Dunoon Observer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies for absence were intimated by:

Murray Rodgers – West Coast Motors;
Martin Arnold – Contract Manager; and
Neil MacFarlane - Transport Scotland.

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 meeting during the discussion.

3. MINUTES

The minute of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on the Friday 20 August 2021 was approved as a correct record subject to the correction of a typo at item 4 (b) Western Ferries, which should have read that:

there were difficulties with replacement bus services dropping people off at undesignated stops between ferry terminals.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

(a) Caledonian MacBrayne

The Forum noted the update from Kevin Hobbs, Caledonian Maritime Assets

Limited, on the cyclical maintenance of the Gourock linkspan.

The Forum also considered an update from Tommy Gore, Caledonian MacBrayne (Calmac), who advised that the MV Argyll Flyer was back in service and that MV Ali Cat's departure from dry dock would be delayed until Christmas. The two-vessel service would resume when the Coruisk became available which is intended to be on 15 December 2021. Mr Gore reported that Dunoon Community Council had submitted comments regarding evening sailings and in response to this late sailings would be re-introduced from 19 November 2021. Mr Gore highlighted the recent disruption on the Tarbert/Portavadie route due to the removal of the ferry in order to service Cumbrae, assuring partners that Calmac were conducting an internal review to inform how they remove and re-deploy vessels for any future situations.

Discussion focused on action points raised at August's meeting and it was confirmed to the Forum that upcoming dates of planned vessel maintenance were now published on Calmac's website. It was noted that discussions remain ongoing with Scotrail to address ticketing issues and that cash can now be accepted at terminals though card payments are preferred.

In addition the impact of ferry cancellations and reduced services on local residents and businesses was discussed, including the knock on effects on bus services due to cancelled sailings on the Colintrave/Rhubodach route which had resulted in the through bus from Rothesay to Dunoon being unable to complete journeys.

Outcome

The Forum;

1. noted the updates;
2. agreed that Tommy Gore would confirm to the Forum the reason why the MV Ali Cat cannot be utilised in foggy weather;
3. agreed that Tommy Gore would present a progress update on the ticketing system issue to the Forum's next meeting in February 2022; and
4. agreed that Tommy Gore would obtain statistics looking at the number of sailings cancelled on the Colintrave/Rhubodach route over the last 10 years and circulate to the Forum.

(b) Western Ferries

Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries, confirmed that the service was operating as normal with one vessel off for annual dry-docking, the four vessel service would return on 19 November 2021. Mr McLundie advised that Western Ferries are prepared to back up the service with a shuttle service to respond to anticipated increases in demand due to a dancing competition in Hunters Quay on the same day and that aggression towards staff regarding the operation of the reimbursement scheme when the replacement bus service is in use has now been resolved with help from Calmac.

Discussion focused on a point raised at August's meeting regarding the replacement bus service not stopping at undesignated stops. It was noted that the replacement

bus was not operating as a traditional bus service and it was not contracted to stop at undesignated stops. Partners also discussed how waiting times at terminals are impacted on by a range of unpredictable factors and how it was hoped that toilets would be built behind the terminal building, noting that there was no timescales available for this at present.

The Chair updated the Forum on the situation with traffic on Marine Parade advising that Roads are considering removing some parking spaces and installing double yellow lines to widen the carriageway to allow the centre line to be moved to enable a wider bend in the road at the foot of Ardtully Brae. This exercise would also allow the bus stop pole to be aligned with the bus bay. The Chair added that the Rankin's Brae sign was yet to be agreed but it was likely to advise that queuing traffic could be expected on the A815 Shore Road and that the alternative route to Dunoon is via the A885 High Road.

Outcome

The Forum noted the updates.

(c) Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service

The Forum considered an update from Ruairidh Campbell, CMAL, on the Gourock/Dunoon/Kilcreggan infrastructure and concept vessels. The Forum noted that a public consultation exercise on the Dunoon Concept vessel was due to commence in late November and would run through December 2021. The Group further noted that a revised project Q&A document will be made available on their website to reflect feedback received during the Gourock Masterplan Public Consultation.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(d) Shore Side Infrastructure at Dunoon

The Forum noted the update from Scott Reid, Marine Operations Manager, which detailed the timeline for the Gourock/Dunoon/Kilcreggan infrastructure options appraisal and public consultation.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(e) Concessionary Fare Increases

The Forum noted an update from Councillor Dr Martin Bartos, Chair of Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee (SCTSJC) in relation to the Concessionary Travel Scheme and Gourock-Dunoon ferry fares.

Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), updated the Forum on how the issues raised in August's meeting had been referred to the SCTSJC and they are acutely aware there is a potential discrepancy in the treatment between Road Equivalent Tariff routes and other routes. Mr Comrie advised that the

SPT will review this over the next two months and report back to SCTSJC early next year.

Outcome

The Forum noted the updates.

The Ferries representatives and Mr Comrie left the meeting at this point.

5. POLICE SCOTLAND

PI John Forrest, Police Scotland, advised that they had been very busy with the ongoing impact of covid-19 on resources with Officer absences affecting stations in Rothesay and Dunoon. PI Forrest advised that Dunoon Sheriff Court was now up and running again with Officers receiving citations to attend and that COP26 saw many officers seconded away for 3-4 weeks which affected Police Scotland's ability to be proactive in the local area but now they can be and would focus on driver behaviour, uninsured and road worthiness of vehicles. It was noted that there were various personnel changes including a new Road and Policing Sergeant who will now be working in the local area.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

6. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

(a) VMS and Manual Signs

Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland, having submitted his apologies provided the below update which was read out by the Chair:

By way of written update I can advise that the VMS at Strachur and Kilmun is working correctly. These were checked as part of a wider Winter Readiness check for our operations at the Rest and be Thankful.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(b) A83

The Chair read out the below update in Neil McFarlane's absence:

In the next three months there are no planned works, other than the Rest, between the peninsula and the A82 at Stoneymollan roundabout.

There are some resurfacing works on the A83 on the Campbeltown side however these have been consulted on and advertised through the usual channels.

Discussion focussed on the frustration felt around the issues and timeframes in finding a permanent solution to the A83 Rest and Be Thankful.

Outcome

The Forum:

1. noted the update; and
2. agreed that the Chair will write to Transport Scotland highlighting issues that would be caused if the A82 and the A83 were to be out of action at the same time.

The Chair ruled, and the Forum agreed, to take items out of sequence in order to facilitate partner attendance. The items are minuted in the order in which they were discussed.

7. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

(a) Update from Timber Transport Group

Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group, updated the Forum on recent activities which included that the A8003 widening was complete with new passing places with re-surfacing to follow soon.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(b) Debris from Timber Lorries in Sandbank

The Chair advised that Roads had advised that the current schedule for street sweeping in Sandbank is a manual sweep once a fortnight with a mechanical sweep once a month and it was understood that the mechanical sweeper attended for its scheduled clean recently but due to budget reductions over recent years there was no longer the resources and flexibility to increase the frequency of cleansing in this area. Roads further advised that the Timber Transport grant was funded through a competitive bid process and funds can only be used on what was bid for. This year's round of funding was for capital improvements to road surfaces which were damaged or suffer stress from timber transport and it was unlikely that they would receive funds in the future for street sweeping. The Forum noted that the Argyll Timber Transport Management Group continue to liaise with the haulage company with regards to the cleaning of the lorries and have made them aware of their responsibilities

The Forum noted the advice received from Police Scotland in relation to Section 95 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 regarding deposit of mud or other material from vehicles on roads and it was noted that the Police had not received any complaints in this regard.

Outcome

The Forum noted the updates.

8. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) Reduced Bus Services

Jeff McCormick, West Coast Motors, advised the Forum that the bus services were still not back to pre-lockdown levels with mileage at 87% and patronage at 60% and that there had been issues in recruiting drivers.

Discussion focussed on the disappointment in the continued lack of Argyll and Bute Council Officer attendance and engagement at the Forum's meetings in order to address issues raised around reduced bus services and lack of communication with Elected Members around bus service changes.

Outcome

The Forum noted that the position.

(b) Bus Stop at Rest and Be Thankful

The Chair advised that touring coaches parked at the bus stop cause access issues to service buses and Roads are considering a bid for funds to create two parking spaces for touring coaches but there is uncertainty regarding Transport Scotland's plans for the Rest and be Thankful. The Forum further noted that the ramp between the bus stop and the Old Military Road had been completed.

Outcome

The Forum noted the position.

9. ROADS UPDATE

(a) 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

No issues were raised.

11. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that a future meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum would be held on Wednesday 9 February 2022.