



Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal Agus Bhòid

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7 February 2023

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the **COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM** will be held **BY MICROSOFT TEAMS** on **TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2023 at 10:00 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director

BUSINESS

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 - (a) Opportunity for verbal updates by Cowal Transport Forum Members
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- 8. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND**

9. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

10. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To be confirmed

Cowal Transport Forum

Contact: Melissa Stewart, Governance Officer - 01546 604331

**MINUTES of MEETING of COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM held BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
on TUESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2022**

Present: Councillor Daniel Hampsey (Chair)
Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Ross Moreland
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager
Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland
Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group
Sergeant Eddie McGunnigal, Police Scotland
Don McKillop, CalMac
Iain Slorach, CalMac
Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries
Gordon Ross, Western Ferries
Frauke Thornton, Dunoon Community Council
Graham Revill, Kilmun Community Council
Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council
Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council
Ronald McAlister, Bute Community Council
Michael Breslin, South Cowal Community Council
Dave Cooper, Hunters Quay Community Council
Neil Stewart, West Coast Motors

Attending: Jean Maskall, Resident in Sandbank
Liz Neilson, Resident in Sandbank
Alastair Moodie, Resident in Lochgoilhead

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies for absence were intimated by:

Councillor Gordon Blair;
Iain MacInnes, Lochgoil Community Council; and
Marta Zawadska, Community Transport Officer, Argyll and Bute Council

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Alan Reid for his dedication to the role of Chair over the past 5 years.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on Wednesday 9 February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4. **CLYDE, KINTYRE AND THE ISLANDS FERRY STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

The Chair requested nominations for an appointee to serve as the Forum's representative on Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group.

Outcome

The Forum agreed to appoint Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council, as the representative to the Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group.

5. **FERRIES UPDATE**

(a) **Caledonian MacBrayne**

The Forum considered an update from Don McKillop, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, Calmac. Mr McKillop advised that the new ticketing system will be rolled out during the first quarter of next year. He also advised that the annual maintenance programme was underway, adding that the MV Bute and MV Ali Cat works are now completed; the MV Argyll work is currently underway at James Watt Dock and the MV Argyll Flyer and the MV Chieftain overhaul works are scheduled.

It was highlighted that there had been an increase in passenger usage compared to the previous 12 months and that all statistical information regarding reliability and punctuality were available on the website.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted that on Friday (11 November 2022) the bus replacement service left 6 minutes before the train arrived from Glasgow Central Station, with similar situations arising over the weekend. Mr McKillop advised that he would engage with the Port Manager.

The Chair reiterated Councillor Sinclair's points and agreed that connections with Scotrail trains and replacement bus services needs to be addressed.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update and that Mr McKillop would engage with the Port Manager to ensure that any future bus replacement service compliments the Scotrail timetable.

(b) **Western Ferries**

Gordon Ross, Western Ferries, advised that the planned Dry Docking programme was underway and that this would have a limited effect on services. Mr Ross highlighted that Western Ferries are currently working at 99.7% reliability with this figure including technical and weather disruptions and that passenger numbers were solid compared to previous years.

The Chair highlighted the importance of Western Ferries in providing central links for Dunoon and Cowal residents.

Councillor Sinclair enquired about a potential extension of operating times during Friday and Saturday nights. Mr Ross advised that the last service is at midnight and presently there is no demand for later sailings but this would be explored should

there be demand.

Councillor Sinclair raised the potential of an LED display at the top of Rankin's Brae to indicate that there may be queuing traffic at Hunter Quay. Captain McLundie advised that the LED suggestion was raised at a previous meeting and that the council had installed double yellow lines at existing parking places which had served to widen the road and reduced congestion.

Stuart McLean highlighted that Councillor Sinclair had submitted questions on behalf of Hunters Quay Community Council, specifically around the installation of LED signs, the increasing problem of traffic congestion/pollution/noise etc. at Marine Parade and the dissatisfaction that the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) had been denied to travellers to and from Dunoon. Mr McLean advised that he had received a response from colleagues from within Roads and Amenity Services that read:

1. Officers will pursue the local team regards the situation with the LED signs, however this isn't as simple as putting up a sign. Either - The sign will be manually activated but that needs a communication protocol as to who will be responsible to do this. Or - The signs will be activated by the actual queues forming, this requires additional infrastructure to link this to the signs.
2. The use of the linkspan at Dunoon for vehicle traffic would requires a complete re-assessment of the marshalling area. This is currently designated as parking for the foot passenger service, so this would have to be factored into any traffic queuing expectations. If this is still something that the group wishes to pursue, further checks would be required with our Marine Section regards the serviceability of the linkspan.
3. RET is an issue directly for Transport Scotland but with the above issues taken into consideration, any expansion in the subsidy will likely increase the usage and hence traffic .The current issues are only going to be exacerbated by an attractive reduction in fares through the expansion of RET.

Councillor Moreland highlighted that he agreed with the Chair's comments on the importance of accurate reliability figures and enquired about plans for toilets to be put in on either side of the crossings. Mr Ross advised that Western Ferries were looking into toilet facilities but added that there were facilities on the ferries.

Outcome

The forum noted the update and that the Chair would liaise with Roads and Amenity Services regarding the marshalling area at Hunters Quay.

(c) Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

Allan Comrie presented the latest position regarding the concessionary fare increases. Mr Comrie advised that a proposal for the increase in the Concessionary Card scheme was agreed in 2020 then deferred due to Covid and that reserves are sufficient to not implement the agreed increases.

Mr Comrie further advised that the SPT are mindful customers are facing a Cost of Living Crisis and that any increase would significantly impact users, adding that in

that regard there had been no increase decided for the Concessionary Scheme in 2023. However, a paper was scheduled to go to the Concessionary Fare Committee which may result in an increase of basic fair.

Councillor Sinclair advised that he is on the Board of SPT and that he has made it clear to the members that he has concerns for any increase.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

(d) Dunoon Pier

The Committee Manager highlighted that Mr Ross had asked for an update on the Dunoon Pier and read out an update from the Marine Operations Manager, in this regard:

We are just clarifying the consultation for Dunoon so didn't wish to give any news which may change. The content for the public consultation on upgrading the Dunoon ferry terminal options has been finalised and will be with Elected Members this week.

Immediately following that, the public, web based consultation will open on the Argyll & Bute Council website. The consultation will include a summary, FAQ and options being considered. It will present an opportunity for stakeholders, users and the public to comment.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Discussion took place in regards to CalMac fare increases for 2023. Allan Comrie, SPT, highlighted that they generally hear about increases once the timetables are published and advised that he is unaware of any increases at the moment.

Michael Breslin highlighted his disappointment at not having a Council representative nor a West Coast Motors representative in attendance. Mr Breslin advised the area faced huge Public Transport challenges during the pandemic but as things were getting back to normal a number of changes were made by the Council and West Coast Motors without consultation. He advised that South Cowal Community Council have made multiple requests regarding bus services with no explanation given to the changes made.

Kirstie Reid advised that the Inveraray to Cairndow evening service was no longer running and that this was causing issues for people who used the service when travelling to and from the Beatson. She also highlighted a major concern regarding the changes made to school timetables, specifically the introduction of an early finish on a Thursday and Friday. The Forum had been advised previously that the contract buses to take the children home early were not going to affect the public service but this was not the case as some public services were cancelled.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted that he agreed with comments regarding the attendance of West Coast Motors and the Council. Councillor Sinclair also advised that Mrs Reid's points were discussed at Strachur Community Council and reported that he had arranged a meeting with council officers in this regard.

Outcome

The Forum noted that:-

1. the Chair would enquire about a letter sent by the previous Chair to West Coast Motors re changes made to timetables; and
2. the Chair would request that representatives from West Coast Motors and Roads and Amenity Services attend future meetings.

7. ROADS UPDATE

Alastair Moodie highlighted the lack of consideration from Argyll and Bute Council for residents of Lochgoilhead when making decisions about road closures. He highlighted that recently there was a major closure which severely limited access to and from the village, with notice only being given 3 days prior to the works commencing. Stuart McLean advised he had taken a note of Mr Moodie's concerns and that the Chair would raise it with the Roads and Amenity Services.

Frauke Thornton, Dunoon Community Council, highlighted that resurfacing work at Argyll Street and Victoria Road in Dunoon had been completed, however there were no road markings. She added that there are no cat eyes or road marking along Loch Eck which is worrying. Kirstie Reid advised that Strachur Community Council have been continually complaining about that lack of road marking etc at Loch Eck. She also added that the flooding at Loch Eck is getting continually worse and advised that she has reported to the council.

Councillor Sinclair advised that he has mentioned white lines to the Roads Department on multiple occasions and added that he understands that it has been scheduled.

Outcome

The forum noted that:-

1. the Chair would raise the concerns regarding recent road closures at Lochgoilhead to Roads and Amenity Services; and
2. the Chair would ask for an update regarding outstanding and future road marking works within the locality from Roads and Amenity Services.

8. POLICE SCOTLAND

Sergeant Eddie McGunnigal from Police Scotland was in attendance and highlighted that he was happy to take any questions the group may have.

Liz Neilson highlighted that she was asked on behalf of residents of Sandbank to attend the meeting due to concerns of speeding in the area, advising that in June there had been an accident which resulted in two fatalities. She added that she has since found out that

the incident was not considered to be a speeding offence by Police Scotland. Miss Neilson highlighted that there was a similar incident on the 5th of November.

Miss Neilson advised that there is no pedestrian crossings at any point from Sandbank highroad to Sandhaven and there are a number of cars parked on the pavements and road which restricts the view for pedestrians and other drivers.

A Community meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 24th November at Sandbank Village Hall with over 200 people having intimated an interest to attend and discuss the concerns of residents.

Discussion took place in regards to speed detection completed by the Police within the locality. Sergeant McGunnigal highlighted that speed detection is carried out when the police have free time or have available resources. He added that there are a number of safety aspects for staff they need to consider when doing undertaking these duties, he added that he would enquire about a speed survey.

Sergeant McGunnigal advised that he would ensure that someone from Police Scotland would attend the Community Meeting. The Chair added that he would enquire about someone from the Roads Department attending the meeting also, and advised he would be happy to attend as well.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted the serious concerns after the incidents in Sandbank. He advised that he is planning to meet with a representative from the Roads Department to discuss the potential ways to reduce the speed along that road. Sergeant McGunnigal highlighted that he would be more than happy to support any road safety measures in the area.

Discussion took place regarding the recent release of wild boar in Strachur. Sergeant McGunnigal highlighted that he had attended a Multiagency meeting last week regarding this and advised that a plan is in place to keep them in an area of fields and added that they are now being fed by the Forestry Commission with a plan in progress to capture and rehome them. He advised that road users need to be aware as they are with other wild animal with public safety advice been given through various sources.

Kirstie Reid highlighted that shopkeepers on Argyll Street are fed up with the number of people cycling on the pavements. Sergeant McGunnigal added that officers will be encouraged to talk to anyone using the pavements as a cycle lane.

Discussion was had in regards to cars being parked along the side of the road. Sergeant McGunnigal highlighted that this can often act as natural traffic calming with cars slowing down when they see them. Miss Neilson added that if there were crossing facilities this could also cause traffic to slow down. Sergeant McGunnigal added that he agreed and highlighted that this would be down to the Roads Department and added that once the speed survey is completed it would be presented to the Forum.

Outcome

The Forum noted that:

1. the Chair would enquire about the possibility of a representative from Roads and Amenity Services attending the Community meeting on 25 November 2022; and

2. Sergeant McGunnigal would enquire about the possibility of undertaking a speed survey at Sandbank.

9. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

Neil MacFarlane from Transport Scotland provided the Forum with a verbal update. Mr MacFarlane advised that there are two resurfacing projects which Transport Scotland intend to carry out on the A83 near Cowal, at Butterbridge and Honeymoon Bridge. He added that both are overnight and under convoy traffic management so neither is overly disruptive. Mr MacFarlane added that these works would be postponed if the Old Military Road had to come in to operation.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

10. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group, gave the Forum an introduction to what the Timber Transport Group is and what they do.

Councillor Sinclair advised that when a boat is in at the Holy Loch Marina the amount of additional logging vehicles on the A815 coming in and out of Sandbank has dramatically increased and asked if there would be any possibility for the industry to undertake a voluntary 20mph in the area. Mr Catterwell advised that he will put it to the Group and advise accordingly.

Liz Neilson highlighted that pavements through Sandbank have been being heavily covered in debris from the timber lorries. Mr Catterwell advised that this issue had come up on a number of occasions and he has had conversations with Sandbank Port and the haulage companies to ensure the lorries are being swept before leaving the extraction site.

Mr Catterwell highlighted a number of issues which have arose including the Lochgoilhead TTRO Timber closure which residents initially resisted to but on introduction there had been good cooperation.

He advised that it was the quiet time of the year for timber transport in Cowal.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There was no other business.

12. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair thanked everyone in attendance at the meeting and the Group noted that the Committee Manager would circulate a calendar invite for a meeting, week beginning 13 February 2023, in due course.

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Scotrail Response – Gourock train times

Thank you for the email regarding ferry connections at Gourock for Dunoon.

I agree that the current and ongoing ferry connections at Gourock are not ideal and are a legacy of the Covid Timetable whereby the frequency Gourock services was reduced and the fast services withdrawn. This is in part due to reduced passenger numbers, a change in commuter working practices, a shortage of drivers and overall funding cuts to the railway. Therefore the train service is now currently 2 x slow off peak services per hour calling at all stations with additional fast peak services so some of the previous benefits have been lost.

Ideally we would like to provide a 7 to 10 minute train/ship connection which used to happen with the 4 trains per hour timetable but this is now also made more difficult by trying to incorporate different times on the Glasgow to Paisley corridor which also serves Ayrshire services as well as platforming at Glasgow Central. We also have to give a decent frequency and spread of services to stations such as Bishopton and Port Glasgow. Therefore as the Dunoon ferry and train service are both half hour frequency, the current 20 minute connection is seen as acceptable. ScotRail and Calmac meet at regular intervals to discuss future timetables and these issues are brought up in order to try to give the best connectivity. During the peaks, we do provide good connections into fast trains in both the morning and evening peaks which is when the majority of time critical passengers are travelling. At this time, connecting priority is given to the Rothesay ferry as they are only served by 1 train per hour and a less frequent ferry service and that route is restricted by a single track line.

Looking to the future, ScotRail are actively looking at totally restructuring the Inverclyde lines which would both give a better shipping connection and faster train service but this is currently awaiting future funding acceptance.

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West Coast Motors – Update**Submitted by Neil Stewart**

I had a meeting with Kirstie Reid and Michael Breslin to discuss services this week which I think we all found productive. There were some minor tweaks that could be accommodated in the next service change, likely to be August for the return of the schools. This is due to minor route adjustments often required at school times to meet all the council issued pupil passes. A couple of trips on service 489 around school times could be alerted by a few minutes to better meet the ferry connection, rather than arrive at the ferry terminal as the ferry leaves. Another comment of diverting some 489s via North Campbell Road is unlikely to happen due to the shore road being the primary stops in Innellan. Which led onto the Pingo service which could cover users wishing to board here and sometimes being unable to get through to the office to book.

We are trialling a new guaranteed pre-booking service in Dunoon giving Pingo users a guaranteed pick-up window of within 10 minutes. This means at the point of booking if a passenger requests 1100 pick-up the system tells us due to other bookings the bus is expected at 1115 and do you want to confirm the booking or try a different time. Previously pick-ups were assigned to the Pingo driver on the day leaving some passengers wait up to 40 minutes (maximum). The new set-up is proving reliable and we have seen growth in Pingo passengers. Within the next couple of weeks we will be transferring the Pingo line to a Customer Service team that will be open 0900-1700, 7 days per week. Currently the Pingo line is answered by Dunoon office but on occasion the office must be closed if we have any operational issues. Transferring to a dedicated team will give those that wish to book via the call centre a wider offering of opening times and will always get through to someone.

For our statistics we are operating 88% of mileage comparing with the same period in 2019 but carrying 79% of passengers. The largest variable is the concessionary passes which are only at 58.7% compared to 2019 but the gap has only been narrowed with the launch of the under-22 concessionary passes last year. There is a planned marketing campaign to encourage concessionary travellers back on bus over the coming months. This hopefully aiding the recovery of these passengers to pre Covid levels

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