

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM HELD BY MICROSOFT
TEAMS
ON MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2024**

Present: Councillor Daniel Hampsey (Chair)
Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Audrey Forrest
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager, Argyll and Bute Council
Gordon Ross, Western Ferries
Captain Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries
Victoria Shaw, Calmac
Jeff McCormick, West Coast Motors
Inspector Bart Simonis, Police Scotland
Frauke Thornton, Dunoon Community Council
Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council
Dave Cooper, Hunters Quay Community Council
Tom Murray, Lochgoilhead Community Council
Ronald McAlister, Bute Ferry Group

Attending: Robert Trybis, Dunoon Gourock Ferry Action Group
Chris Martin, Dunoon Observer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Martin Arnold, Contract Officer, Argyll and Bute Council;
Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT); and
Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on Tuesday 12 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted his thanks to Inspector Simonis, who he had a very positive and productive meeting with in January. The Chair also advised that following the last meeting where it was agreed to hold a meeting to discuss improving connectivity between Dunoon Town Centre and Gourock Railway Station, that significant progress had been made and a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport would be held in the near future.

Having noted the commitments of those in attendance, the Chair agreed to vary the order of business. This Minute reflects the order in which discussions took place.

4. POLICE SCOTLAND

Inspector Bart Simonis provided the Forum with a verbal update on the ongoing work of the service. He advised that from April 2023 to January 2024 there had been 8 fatalities recorded on the road network, which was a decrease from the previous year where there had been 11 fatalities recorded. Inspector Simonis highlighted that the Police are aiming to promote road safety throughout the locality and are holding road safety events with one being held in Helensburgh on the 21 April and that they would be looking at holding similar events in Dunoon and Bute.

Inspector Simonis highlighted that specialist road policing units continue to deploy marked and unmarked vehicles across Argyll and Bute and that there had been an increase in detecting drivers under the influence of drugs and alcohol across the area with an increase of 48.5% in comparison to the 5 year average. Inspector Simonis advised that the annual drink driving campaign ran from the 1 December 2023 to the 2 January 2024 and the number of roadside breath tests carried out by Police within the year increased by 21% from the previous year.

Kirsty Reid advised that adults are continuing to cycle along the pavements on Argyll Street, Dunoon which is causing danger to elderly pedestrians. Inspector Simonis advised that he would look at promoting and educating people on cycling and the responsibility of keeping themselves safe whilst on the road.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted that he had several members of the Community advising him of people driving at excessive speeds along the A815 during the early evening. Inspector Simonis advised that he would report this back to the roads policing team for them to add this road to their policing matrix.

Outcome

The Forum noted the information provided by Police Scotland.

5. FERRIES UPDATE

Western Ferries

Gordon Ross highlighted that Western Ferries are concluding their dry dock programme and that the summer programme would come into effect on the 29 March. Captain McLundie advised that they are monitoring traffic continually and have now made the decision, based on customer demand, to introduce a 4 boat service on Sundays from 10am to 5pm, removing the 4 boat service on Saturdays. Captain McLundie advised that the 4 boat service on Fridays would continue as normal and that they would consider putting on extra boats when they have staff available for busy days such as weekends or bank holidays.

The Vice-Chair and Chair recorded their thanks to staff at Western Ferries for the great work they do.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update from Western Ferries.

Calmac

Victoria Shaw highlighted that Calmac are finishing their overhaul programme with the MV Chieftain hopefully being reintroduced at the end of the month and the MV Ali Cat is currently covering the run and the MV Argyll Flyer back covering the Gourock – Dunoon as a single vessel service.

The Forum highlighted their disappointment at the summer timetable and the 26 minute wait between the ferry and connecting rail service.

Kirstie Reid highlighted that she had been approached by a member of the public who was disabled and was nearly knocked over by a cyclist due to the new cycle route for Gourock. Victoria Shaw advised that she would look into appropriate signage for the area.

In the absence of Michael Breslin from South Cowal Community Council, the Committee Manager read out the below question submitted prior to the meeting:

‘I understand that CalMac plans to make changes to the Dunoon ferry time timetable. Can I ask that these changes are on the agenda for the meeting please?’

Councillor Forrest highlighted that she had heard that with the new timetable changes it would mean the 20 minutes past the hour ferry service would be meeting trains but if they were to go to a one vessel service it would be the 10 to the hour ferry that would run. Victoria Shaw advised that she would look into this for the single vessel ferry service and confirm following the meeting.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update from Calmac.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) Kilmun Community Council bus service survey

It was noted that Kerris Bone had submitted her apologies and it was agreed to continue consideration of this item to the next meeting.

Councillor Sinclair advised that Kilmun Community Council are hoping to have a later bus service to Kilmun and Ardentenny, which is vital for those who work late in Dunoon. Councillor Sinclair highlighted that the Community Council had conducted a bus service survey which had received a considerable amount of responses, with many wanting an 11pm bus service.

Jeff McCormick on behalf of West Coast Motors advised that he was aware of this being discussed previously by the Forum and that any information available showing potential demand should be passed onto Neil Stewart.

Outcome

The Forum agreed to continue consideration of this item to the next meeting.

(b) **Opportunity for verbal updates by Cowal Transport Forum Members**

Strachur Community Council

Kirsty Reid highlighted that she had reported in January that the roof of the bus stop at Strachur was loose and becoming dangerous. Ms Reid also advised that she had reported somebody using the bus stop as a toilet and had asked that Environmental Health clean it and advised that this had not been done either and a member of the public had ended up cleaning it.

Ms Reid asked if West Coast Motors had any update on providing an additional Saturday bus to Dunoon, advising that there is no service from 0800 or 0900 nor return to Strachur after 1220. Ms Reid had asked previously if the Portavadie bus could travel via Strachur but had not been updated on this. Mr McCormick highlighted that discussions have taken place but that there is nothing to update at the moment. Kirsty added that it is becoming a big problem especially for young people getting to work and back.

The Chair highlighted the need to return to the pre-covid bus services as it is affecting many young people who cannot get opportunities in the town due to lack of transportation.

Ronald McAlister highlighted that connecting services are not being advertised as full routes online and that many visitors would not know how to get to places because of this. Jeff advised that he would look into putting something online to show all the options for the services.

Tom Murray asked if the correct Helensburgh and Dunoon bus timetables could be placed in the Carrick bus shelter and asked for the Dunoon bus service to be simplified during the summer to assist tourists.

Outcome

The Forum noted that the Chair would raise the issues with the responsible Council Department and update Partners accordingly.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT)

In the absence of Allan Comrie, the Committee Manager provided the following update which was submitted before the meeting;

- No change to supported bus services or fares;
- No change in 2024 to Strathclyde Concession Card fares on rail and Strathclyde Ferry Card fares as per attached Committee Paper (see Para 3 (i)) ; https://www.spt.co.uk/media/2xwmq4pf/sctsjc150324_agenda6.pdf
- Whilst not SPT services there are timetable changes to Glasgow – Gourock rail services and Dunoon ferry times from June 1 2024 as attached; Calmac will better inform on this.

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/summer-timetables/Gourock-Dunoon>

Outcome

The Forum noted the update from Strathclyde Passenger Transport.

Dunoon Community Council

Frauke Thornton advised that she had been made aware of an incident with school children on the bus in Dunoon where the bus was stopped for 20 minutes and children being asked to leave the bus. Jeff advised that he was not aware of specific details however there has been repeated issues on this service with children's behaviour and vaping on the bus. Jeff also advised that West Coast Motors are in dialogue with Dunoon Grammar School around this issue.

7. ROADS UPDATE

The Committee Manager highlighted that the draft Bute and Cowal Roads Capital Programme for 2024/2025 had been presented to the Area Committee on the 5 March and that the Argyll and Bute wide programme would be considered at the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on the 21 March.

Kirstie Reid advised that the Loch Eck road from the Kilmun turn off to Glenbranta was in a terrible state, with ditches filling with water resulting in flooding. Ms Reid asked when the white lines would be reinstated on Hamilton Street/Victoria Road.

Tom Murphy highlighted his thanks to Councillor Sinclair and the Councils Road Engineer for getting the Glenmore road open and advised that it has seen a big improvement, however due to the use of Hell's Glen this road is now deteriorating. Mr Murphy highlighted that many trees had been cut back at Lock Eck and asked if this could happen at the junction at Hell's Glen as vision at this junction is limited due to the overgrown trees. Mr Murphy also highlighted that the Dunoon Junction at Cairndow is very difficult to find, especially in the dark and asked if the visibility of this could be improved.

Councillor Sinclair asked about the regular Timber Transport Group updates the forum used to receive and the Committee Manager advised that the last update from Iain Catterwell was that he was leaving the post and at that time they had not identified a suitable person to represent the Group.

Outcome

The Forum noted:

1. that the Chair would raise these issues with the responsible Council Department and update Partners accordingly; and
2. that the Committee Manager would contact the Timber Transport Group to find out when they would next be providing the Forum with an update.

8. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

Councillor Sinclair advised that public engagement events are being held on the long-term solution for the A83 Rest and be Thankful and that the events are being held in Lochgoilhead on the 20 March and Arrochar on the 21 March.

Outcome

The Forum noted that the Chair would look into why there was no engagement event being held in Dunoon.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There was no other competent business.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone in attendance at the meeting and the Forum noted that the Committee Manager would circulate a calendar invite for a meeting, week ending 10th or 17th June 2024 in due course.