

## Aviation, Maritime, Freight & Canals

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CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Councillor Alan Reid  
Argyll & Bute Council

Our ref:  
2020/0002066

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Date:  
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Councillor Reid

Thank you for your email of 4 May 2020 to the Chief Executive of Transport Scotland, Roy Brannen, in regards to the Claonaig – Lochranza and Tarbert – Portavadie winter services. As a member of the ferries unit, I have been asked to respond.

As you may be aware, it has been the Arran Ferry Committee's aspiration for a Claonaig - Lochranza year round service for some time and this request has been investigated on a number of occasions through the established timetable consultation process by CalMac. The reason CalMac are unable to provide this service in the winter timetable is that it is not operationally feasible on safety grounds. For your information, CalMac have provided to the community, in as much detail as possible, the reasons why this service is not operationally feasible. Their position is set out in annex A.

Currently CalMac do try to operate additional Claonaig – Lochranza services in winter on occasions where there are disruptions on the Ardrossan – Brodick route, but only when weather conditions are suitable to do so. Each sailing is considered on a case by case basis taking into account operating environment at that time.

More recently the Arran Ferry Committee, through the annual winter timetable process, requested information on the resource requirements for such a service and cost indications for infrastructure improvements to make the service deliverable. CalMac advised that they could submit requirements to CMAL for infrastructure changes that would help enable a reliable year round service. However, the work identified would require extensive capital investment that would need to be considered against other priorities across the ferries network. Also the crew deployed on the service in summer, are deployed throughout the network as relief crew in the winter season. Therefore, CalMac would have to recruit and replace them if they operated a winter service, which would also incur significant and ongoing costs. This was discussed between CalMac and Transport Scotland and it was acknowledged that these requests exceed the service levels proposed for the route within the current Ferries Plan (2013-22) and the current Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services contract.

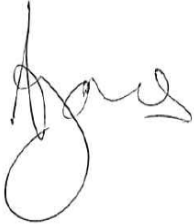
The concept of a significantly enhanced year-round service for Lochranza and an associated programme of infrastructure upgrades is a substantial change that cannot be dealt with via the timetable change process alone. These aspirations are better suited to be considered within

longer term strategic work now underway to produce the successor to the current Ferries Plan (2013-22).

We appreciate the community's willingness to contribute to the process and look forward to CalMac, Transport Scotland and the community working together on developing the future plans for services and infrastructure.

I hope you find this helpful in explaining the situation.

Yours sincerely,



Ashley Jones  
Ferries Policy Officer  
Transport Scotland

*“The main concern is operating to/from the Claonaig slipway in the winter. The reason being it is very exposed to swell as well as winds, especially from the North East to South. Operating in those conditions will make it unsafe to maintain the vessel's position while carrying out passenger operations.*

*The vessel has had her hull damaged at the slipway previously and operating in more challenging conditions will only exacerbate the issue. The surrounding of the slipway is very shallow and we have imposed a tidal limit of 0.3 meters to prevent further damage to the vessel.*

*Weather data for the area available from the Admiralty Sailing Direction South-West Coast of Scotland is as follow:*

*Days with winds gales as follow:*

*October: 3  
November: 5  
December: 8  
January: 8  
February: 6  
March: 5*

*This means that at least on those days per month the vessel will not be able to operate the full day. Depending on the residual swell this might affect some of the following days too.*

*With regards to wind and swell, the worse directions that will effect operating to/from Claonaig slipway is from North East to South. Anything above force 5 of the Beaufort scale might lead to a cancellation. Lack of daylight will also have a detrimental effect.*

*Admiralty Sailing Direction South-West Coast of Scotland data is as follow:*

*September/October:*

*There is a 40% chance of having winds from that direction of which 20% between 4 to 6 of the Beaufort scale and 10% of winds between 7 to 12 of the Beaufort scale.*

*This translate at about 18 days for the two months where the service will more likely be disrupted partially or entirely.*

*November/December:*

*There is a >40% chance of having winds from that direction of which 28% between 4 to 6 of the Beaufort scale and 10% of winds between 7 to 12 of the Beaufort scale.*

*This translates at about 23 days for the two months where the service will more likely be disrupted partially or entirely.*

*January/February:*

*There is a 50% chance of having winds from that direction of which 20% between 4 to 6 of the Beaufort scale and 10% of winds between 7 to 12 of the Beaufort scale.*

*This translate at about 18 days for the two months where the service will more likely be disrupted partially or entirely.*

*So based on the above data it is estimated to be a service impact of about 30%. The majority of the effected sailings will be during the hours of darkness and dusk, this might increase the percentage of cancellations. This is why we believe operating to Claonaig is not operationally feasible”.*