

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM HELD BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2023**

Present: Councillor Daniel Hampsey (Chair)
Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor William Sinclair
Melissa Stewart, Governance Officer
Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
Iain Catterwell, Timber Transport Group
Sergeant Eddie McGunnigal, Police Scotland
Captain Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries
Amanda Graham, Dunoon Community Council
Graham Revill, Kilmun Community Council
Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council
Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council
Ronald McAlister, Bute Ferry Group

Attending: Liz Neilson and Valerie Edmonson (Public)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies for absence were intimated by:

Neil MacFarlane – Transport Scotland
Don McKillop – Cal Mac
Neil Stewart – West Coast Motors
Mike Breslin – South Cowal Community Council

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minute of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum held on the Tuesday 15 November 2022 was approved as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted matters arising from the last meeting, specifically his productive meeting regarding the action at item 5(b) (Ferries Update: Western Ferries); that the letter sent by the previous Chair to West Coast Motors could, unfortunately, not be traced but inviting partners who may have this to send on to him; that the Council's Roads Department had taken on board previous comments about road closure consultations raised with them; and that with regard to the road markings in the Loch Eck area, scheduled works had taken place in the latter part of 2022, with drainage being completed and the road markings are in progress and were scheduled for completion at the end of January 2023.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

Calmac

Having received apologies from Don McKillop it was noted that there was no representative from Calmac present.

Councillor Sinclair raised the issue of tickets on the Dunoon-Gourock service, commenting that these have a very short time limit of one month whereas Western Ferries do not include any use by date. He also raised further concern about the 20 minute wait for train connection from Gourock stating that this was not acceptable.

Ronald McAlister, Bute Ferry Committee, raised concerns on the considerable delays in the Calmac service due to no replacement vessel for the broken down Loch Dunvegan for 5 or 6 days, and the fact that the Isle of Cumbrae had been taken from her mooring in Sandbank to Dunoon to run for only 4 hours. He asked why had Calmac not considering tying her up alongside the Loch Dunvegan or a nearby mooring.

Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council, commented on the ferry delay figures which she had received. She advised of cancellation figures totalling 47 for Colintraive/Rhubodach; 46 for Wemyss Bay/Rothesay and 1110 lost sailings for Dunoon/Gourock. She invited the group to ask for an explanation of why so many sailings were cancelled from Calmac.

Western Ferries

Concerns were raised by Councillor Sinclair as to the size of the queues of traffic for the ferry on the 29th December (Gourock side) and at the Dunoon Side on 2nd January, with only 2 boats scheduled half hourly, with some travellers having to make alternative arrangements. Captain McLundie pointed out that there was an issue with one of the vessels that had caused the issue on 29th December, that the reduced service for 2nd January had been well publicised and as a result it was unfair to criticise about the queueing. A third boat would have required a crew to be willing to come out on a public holiday but that this enhancement to service was put on from 1030hrs. Captain McLundie also pointed out that it is impossible to gauge the amount and way people will travel since the pandemic, but will consider the number of users from this year when planning cover for next year's festive period.

Captain McLundie, updated the group on problems Western Ferries had suffered in with the winter timetable. This was a knock on from their dry dock routine where an issue was detected meaning there was a two boat service for three weeks as new parts were sought and fitted. Unfortunately, the new parts failed on three occasions and he explained to the group the extra effort to ensure that the queues were managed to minimise disruption. He further reported that another vessel was due to go to dry dock during the period and that the MCA were asked for an extension to keep the vessel in service and the timetable running as best as possible. It is anticipated that the dry dock vessel will be back in service by next month.

Kerris Alexander, Kilmun Community Council, advised that although the crew do a phenomenal job, she had turned up at Gourock Terminal on Boxing Day, where there was a large queue waiting to board the ferry. She commented that would like to see more transparency on Facebook updating the waiting times and delays to enable ferry users to

make a judgement on their travel arrangements. She also enquired about the £20 book of tickets and where those could be purchased from. In response Captain McLundie commented that they do try to update the social media, but they prioritise updates of the website, and that a list of agents for discounted tickets was also on the website. Captain McLundie agreed to take these points away for consideration.

Councillor Sinclair raised a point on behalf of Hunter's Quay Community Council who were not present at the meeting. He advised that they would like a meeting with the Council's Roads Department and Western Ferries concerning the signage for queuing traffic. Captain McLundie agreed to take this request away.

Outcome:

The Forum resolved:

1. That the Chair would raise the point about ticket expiry, cover arrangements for the MV Loch Dunvegan, high volumes of cancelled sailings from Dunoon and attendance of a representative at future meetings with Calmac;
2. Captain McLundie would look into the issues on boxing day, potential for more service updates via Facebook and the possibility of the round table with HQCC to discuss signage.

5. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(a) Gourock train timetable

The Chair advised that the written response with regards to the Gourock Train Timetable was within the meeting pack and that he was happy to take any questions back.

Outcome

The Forum noted the response.

(b) West Coast Motors Update

There was no representative from West Coast Motors attending the meeting, the Chair advised that there was a written report within the meeting pack.

Outcome

The Forum noted the report.

(c) Opportunity for verbal updates by Cowal Transport Forum Members

Scottish Partnership for Transport (SPT)

Alan Comrie of Scottish Partnership for Transport (SPT) gave a verbal update advising that there was no reduction on service or fare increase on the 302 Carrick Castle to Helensburgh bus route. The SPT are liaising with Scotrail over the Inverclyde Timetable.

Alan also advised that concession fares had been frozen by Scotrail and Calmac which helps with SPT funding so is a good thing within the Concession Fare Scheme. The next meeting of the Concession Fare Scheme is scheduled for 17th March where a paper will be presented on the fares level. He commented that the cost of living crisis would be part of the considerations when reviewing fares.

Alan also hopes to meet with Calmac to discuss ticketing and concessions.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update.

Public Transport

Concerns were raised regarding the demise of the Dial-a-Bus and replacement with the new Pingo Service in the Cowal Peninsula which had a specific impact on elderly users.

Martin Arnold the Council's Contract Officer within the Integrated Transport Team gave a brief outline of what that section of the Council covers; School Transport, Public Buses, Bus Stops and the infrastructure surrounding it.

Martin advised that the Dial-a-Bus had evolved into the Pingo Service in partnership with West Coast Motors which runs from Monday-Saturday covering a larger area of the Peninsula, which had been requested for locally. Due to low usage the Dial-a-Bus had turned in to a "thirsty" Taxi running at 8 miles to the gallon and therefore had not been cost effective.

The Pingo service runs a smaller vehicle which is a 17 seater, low level and more fit for purpose for the elderly, infirm and people living with disabilities. In addition to the app, Martin drew attention to the update provided at the meeting by West Coast Motors noting the intention to launch a designated telephone line for the booking of the bus and therefore the operator will get to know the customer's needs. Martin asked that this enhanced service be rolled out so that effectiveness and usage could be monitored among elderly users of the service.

Outcome

The Forum expressed some concerns that key partners were not in attendance for the discussion; that there were times when the Pingo service was closely followed by the service bus; and that there may be a need to enhance this service given current user figures, perhaps looking also at reserved time slots on specific dates for users over a specific age. Martin Arnold agreed to take forward these issues with management and also with West Coast Motors who deliver the service.

6. ROADS UPDATE

(a) Opportunity for verbal updates by Cowal Transport Forum Members

The Forum noted that no Roads Officers were in attendance and the Chair highlighted the following update received:

Funding for road assessments – national strategy for 20mph zones

Transport Scotland have been working with SCOTS and COSLA to identify the most effective route to implement 20mph speed limits across Scotland.

This follows a trial in the Scottish Borders council area which was run with input from experts from Edinburgh Napier University, who carried out an independent evaluation from 125 survey sites over 97 settlements.

They found vehicle speeds have reduced in almost all settlements, in some instances by 6mph, with an average reduction closer to 3mph.

To support the national decision making process an assessment of the road network is required to help identify the number of roads potentially affected and the financial implications.

To support this assessment the Scottish Government has allocated £1.4million across Scotland's 32 local roads authorities.

Argyll and Bute Council has received £31,000 from this fund which has been used to bring in a temporary resource to complete the 20mph road assessment.

The results of this assessment will estimate the cost of measures to support 20mph limits across the local road network.

Following the outcome of the road assessment Transport Scotland will continue to work closely with SCOTS and COSLA to better understand further cost implications stemming from the yet to-be-agreed route for implementation of the strategy and, subject to Ministerial approval, will seek to provide additional funding where required.

Place Criteria

The assessment exercise itself will be done in the context of a place criteria which forms part of the National Strategy for 20mph Road Assessment Guidance (June 2022)

Identifying any of the following place criteria will help to indicate the 30mph roads which are considered appropriate for potential alteration to 20mph. The roads which remain at 30mph will typically be on A and B Class roads with little frontage activity and where people walking, wheeling and cycling do not need to share space with motor traffic.

A minimum road length for the speed limit is suggested between 400-600m. The length adopted will depend on the conditions at or beyond the end points.

- a) Is the road within 100m walk of any educational setting (e.g. primary, secondary, further & higher education)
- b) Does the number of residential and/or retail premises fronting the road (on one or both sides) exceed 20 over a continuous road length of between 400 - 600m. Other key buildings should also be considered such as a church, shop or school.
- c) Is the road within 100m walk of any community centre, church, place of worship, sports facility, any hospital, GP or health centre.
- d) Does the composition of road users imply a lower speed of 20 mph which will improve the conditions and facilities for vulnerable road users and other mode shift (reflect on future plans such as active and sustainable travel, places for

people, consider existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users)

Will the road environment, surrounding environment, community and quality of life impact (e.g. severance, noise, or air quality) be improved by implementing 20mph speed limits.

Assessment

The steps we will take to conduct the assessment will include:

- Carry out an initial desktop assessment of existing speed limits within Argyll and Bute Council's local road network;
- The assessment of existing 20mph limits should be completed against the place criteria and consider
 - a. If the existing 20mph is sufficient (i.e. self-enforcing); or
 - b. The existing 20mph requires additional measures to meet compliance; or
 - c. The existing 20mph should be amended to a 30mph
- The assessment of existing 30mph limits should be assessed **on the presumption that they will be reduced to 20mph**. The following should be considered :
 - a. not all 30mph roads which meet the place criteria are appropriate for a 20mph speed limit.
 - b. there are 30mph roads which do not meet the place criteria but are suitable for 20mph.
 - c. there are some 30mph roads that will remain at 30mph.
- Consultation with Elected Members
- Consultation with relevant bodies/organisations (e.g. public transport operators, emergency services, community councils) to collate impact of amended speed limits and any proposed traffic management measures.
- Compilation of the assessment form, including RAG status, proposed traffic management measures and estimated costs.
- Produce and provide a GIS map containing the current position for the area on existing 20 and 30mph roads.
- Produce and provide a GIS map containing the proposed 20 and 30mph roads after the assessment.

We are aiming to complete this review exercise by the end of March 2023 and to report this to EDI in June 2023.

Following that submission we will continue to engage with Transport Scotland to seek clarity on the next steps in the process.

Outcome

The forum noted the update.

7. POLICE SCOTLAND

Sgt Eddie McGunnigal updated the forum on the Speed Watch campaign and invited community councils to meet with him individually or together to discuss this. He also spoke regarding another initiative which involved 30mph signs for wheelie bins and informed the Forum that officers were conducting speed checks in the area, focusing on where there were complaints.

The Forum discussed speed limits at Sandbank and why the 40 mph zone could not extend fully into Sandbank but instead increased and reduced after the garage.

Outcome

Sgt McGunnigal agreed to raise concerns about speeding after 6pm on the A815 into Sandbank with the Traffic Department.

8. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

A written update was received on behalf of Transport Scotland which was read by the Chair.

Outcome

The Forum noted that there are no major works planned on the A83.

9. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Iain Catterwell advised that there was no update at this time but that he was happy to respond to any questions.

Councillor Sinclair asked if there was progress on a voluntary 20mph zone at Sandbank by drivers. In response, Iain advised that it was a matter for hauliers but that their view was they were legally driving to conditions.

Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council, raised an issue with a pinch point that made it difficult for 2 large vehicles to pass on the road together. Iain invited Kirstie to get in touch with him to discuss this as it might be possible to fund from Timber Transport Funding for road improvements.

10. 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, possibly week beginning 8 May 2023 but that it may be the following week to avoid a clash with the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group.