

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM HELD BY MICROSOFT
TEAMS
ON WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Present: Councillor Daniel Hampsey (Chair)
Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Ross Moreland
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager, Argyll and Bute Council
Taylor Cairns, Calmac
Gordon Ross, Western Ferries
Captain Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries
Neil Stewart, West Coast Motors
Dave Cooper, Hunters Quay Community Council
Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council
Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council
Michael Breslin, South Cowal Community Council
Alex Wilde, Shaping Places for Wellbeing
Neil MacFarlane, Transport Scotland
Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
Frauke Thornton, Dunoon Community Council
Tom Murray, Lochgoilhead Community Council
Graham Revill, Kilmun Community Council
Ronald McAlister, Bute Ferry Committee

Attending: Liz Neilson, Resident in Sandbank
Aileen Danby, Resident in Hunters Quay
Valerie Edmonson, on behalf of resident in Dunoon

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies for absence were intimated by:

Tommy Gore, Calmac;
Councillor Audrey Forrest, Argyll and Bute Council;
Inspector Barry Convery, Police Scotland; and
Becky Hothersall, Shaping Places for Wellbeing

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 16 May 2023 was approved as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted matters arising from the Bute and Cowal Area Committee on the 6th June 2023, specifically in relation to the dial a bus and the related booking system.

The Chair advised of his productive meeting with West Coast Motors alongside Councillor Moreland and highlighted that he had been advised that the dial a bus was fully operational and that there is now a dedicated full time member of staff to deal with the related calls; that each area has a dedicated number (0141 370 9262 for Dunoon) and that he had been assured that any missed calls from customers would be dealt with as soon as possible.

Valerie Edmonson highlighted her disappointment at the response being given and advised that there was no dial a bus and that it had been replaced with the Pingo bus service, which does not provide exclusive access and is not a designated bus for elderly service users as the dial a bus was.

4. FERRIES UPDATE

Councillor Sinclair recorded his thanks to both Calmac and Western Ferries for providing great transportation for the Cowal Games as well as the great fireworks display from Western Ferries.

Western Ferries

Gordon Ross highlighted that since the last meeting, the service has run at 100% reliability with no service issues other than a cancellation due to the fog and that additional sailings were provided for the Cowal Games weekend.

It was noted that Gordon Ross had submitted two questions in advance of the meeting:

'Would it be possible for the Council to provide an update on the Dunoon terminal upgrades and progress on moving the winter MCA Category C/D waters to the new linkspan?'

The Committee Manager advised that on receipt of the questions he had forwarded to the Argyll and Bute Councils Marine Operations Manager who provided the below response:

'Preparations for the Ground Investigations (GI) are completed and are now awaiting confirmation from Scottish Government and Transport Scotland on vessel funding for the route before proceeding.

Assuming confirmation is received, the GI will proceed and we will look to finalise the OBC with a preferred option for approval by Argyll & Bute Council Harbour Board.

We have no update on any change to the categorisation of the Clyde estuary waters.'

Mr Ross advised that he was looking for more information on timings for the work and the finance association with the improvements.

Frauke Thornton, Dunoon Community Council, enquired whether Western Ferries new building at Mclnroy's Point would include public toilet facilities. Frauke also asked when the display signs indicating that there may be queuing traffic at Hunters Quay, which had been mentioned at a previous meeting, would be installed. Mr Ross advised that there would not be public toilets in the building but that facilities were available on each ferry. Councillor Sinclair confirmed that the Council were undertaking a recruitment exercise and

that the new officer would be charged with installing the associated signage at Hunters Quay.

The Committee Manager advised that Aileen Danby, a resident at Hunters Quay had submitted some questions in advance of the meeting in relation to the issues around queuing traffic at Hunters Quay:

1. *Given the road looking right of ferry terminal is much wider, has two pavements and does not include a road junction, and would not cause residents the same restriction of exit and entry into their property as the road is much wider, could it be utilized for queuing traffic?*
2. *Signage is supplied which is clear regarding Qing and this is managed by either the Police or Western ferries staff during busy periods.*
3. *Western ferries find alternative Qing areas and utilize all of their staff parking within the terminal to alleviate public road parking?*
4. *I am yet to see any Police attendance on these very busy days, unlike the situation on queuing on McInroy's point, where police attend regularly.*

The Committee Manager advised that on receipt of the questions he had forwarded them to the Networks and Standards Manager who advised that officers would be hosting a partnership meeting regarding these issues and that Western Ferries, Council Officers, Elected Members, Transport Scotland, Police Scotland and Community representatives would be invited to attend.

Outcome

The Forum:

1. noted the update by Western Ferries; and
2. noted that the Committee Manager would submit Mr Ross's further question to the Marine Operations Manager and provide Mr Ross with the response.

Calmac

Kirsty Reid highlighted her disappointment at the Calmac cancellation figures given at the Clyde and Kintyre Users Group with Colintrave/Rhubadoch having 447 cancelled sailings which was down by 127, Rothesay/Wemyss Bay having 197 cancelled sailings which was down by 825 and the Gourock/Dunoon which had 1,180 cancelled sailings which was up by 238.

Taylor Cairns highlighted that Calmac had been unable to collate the carrying figures due to a system change and that they had now re-aligned the morning timetable to join up with Scotrail services. Mr Cairns also advised of the disruptions due to the link span outage and the two periods of emergency dry docking in which they ran shuttle buses.

Kirstie Reid highlighted that she had been approached by a member of the public who was visually impaired and was worried about cyclists cycling in front of the ferry waiting room due to this being designated a preferred cycle route. Mr Cairns advised that signage

had been installed advising cyclists to dismount and that they were in the process of reviewing this.

Outcome

The Forum noted the update from Calmac.

5. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public Transport

Mr Breslin highlighted his disappointment that the Council's Public Transport Officer was not in attendance. Mr Breslin advised that South Cowal Community Council had raised the same issues of the 489 bus service for 30 months and nothing had changed, despite repeated attempts to engage with Officers and elected members.

Councillor Moreland advised that he and Councillor Hampsey had spoken to West Coast Motors regarding this issue and that he would provide South Cowal Community Council with an update at their meeting scheduled for the evening of 13 September.

West Coast Motors

Neil Stewart advised of a minor service change as a consequence of the return of schools in August; the start of the new Tighnabruaich area contracts and introduction of new vehicles; the amended 489 services to meet ferries in the afternoon; the minor service changes due to the change of the Calmac and Scotrail timetables, to ensure the connections are met in the morning and that the Pingo service continues to operate well.

Mr Stewart highlighted that they are operating at 88% of mileage (excluding Tighnabruaich) and carrying 79% of passengers compared to pre-covid level, adding that the biggest gap remains concessions which are only at 65.7% compared to 2019.

Valerie Edmonson enquired why the Dial a Bus service was withdrawn.

Mr Stewart advised that if the Council wished to reintroduce this service West Coast Motors can block the service off for exclusive use only however this would likely result in a drop in overall patronage.

Kerris Bone asked when bus times for Ardentinny to Dunoon and Innellan would be changing back to pre-covid times, advising that young people are using the Pingo service due to the lack of buses running at certain times. Ms Bone added that the lack of bus services was also causing problems for people getting to and from places of employment.

Mr Stewart advised that services to Dunoon up until 7.50pm are back to pre-covid and that he is not aware of plans for further changes.

Kirstie Reid asked if West Coast Motors would offer additional services for the Tuesday of Inveraray Games and for the Saturday of Cowal Games. Mr Stewart advised that if they are aware of these events in advance they could offer additional services.

Mr Breslin advised that the bus timetables in many cases do not make it in time for the ferry and people may not be using them because of this and that the service needs to get back to the pre-pandemic levels which may increase the use of the services.

Outcome

The Forum:

1. noted the update from West Coast Motors; and
2. noted that the Committee Manager would contact the Public Transport Officer in relation to the Dial a Bus being reinstated.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)

Allan Comrie advised that there had been changes to the Carrick Castle timetable due to change of school times; that Scotrail had committed to advising Calmac of any rail timetable changes; the removal of peak fares on the rail services would begin in October for a period of 6 months and that the concessionary fares for ferries and trains continue to be frozen until at least April 2024.

Tom Murray, Lochgoilhead Community Council, advised that the Helensburgh to Carrick bus service had been changed in the afternoon bringing it forward by half an hour with very little notice to the community and that the timetable in the shelter at Lochgoilhead had not been changed.

Kirstie Reid advised that the change of timetable for the ferry and train times to align had resulted in them being too close together meaning that it is more than likely travellers will not make their connection. Kirstie asked for improved communication between Scotrail and Calmac to ensure customers have enough time to make their onward connections.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted that he had spoken to Calmac and had been advised that very little communication had come from Scotrail regarding the change to the timetable and that Calmac had done as much as they could to try and align their timetable.

Outcome

1. noted the update from SPT; and
2. noted that Councillor Sinclair would enquire with Calmac and Scotrail whether further changes to the timetables would be possible to ensure customers can make onward connections.

6. ROADS UPDATE

Liz Neilson, enquired about the speed assessment in Sandbank and asked when the results would be available and when any changes would come into place. Mrs Neilson also raised concern that there was no safe crossings points, especially outside Sandbank Primary School and asked how the community would go about getting safe crossings.

Councillor Sinclair advised that he had raised the issues around speeding and the accidents at various meetings and that he is continually working on this issue.

The Committee Manager advised that at the Bute and Cowal Area Committee it was proposed to raise these issues at the area at the Area Community Planning Group.

Councillor Sinclair advised Mrs Neilson to contact the Roads Department in relation to the crossings and added that he was happy if she was to write a letter to himself and he would pass it on.

Kerris Bone advised that there should be railings to stop children from running out onto the road at Strone Playpark. Ms Bone also highlighted issues with cars parking on blind corners and advised that there had been a collision recently due to this. Councillor Sinclair advised Ms Bone to raise this at the Community Council and submit her concerns directly to him to forward onto the relevant department within the Council.

Tom Murray highlighted that there was new road signs in Lochgoilhead but none included Carrick Castle and that on a recent trip to Dunoon he had noticed that nearly all road signs (including speed signs) were partially covered by vegetation. Councillor Sinclair advised Mr Murray to raise this at the Community Council and submit his concerns directly to him to forward onto the relevant department within the Council.

7. POLICE SCOTLAND

It was noted that there was no representative from Police Scotland at the meeting.

8. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

Neil MacFarlane provided the forum with a verbal update, advising that resurfacing work was recently completed in the vicinity of Stuckgowan on the A82 and that there are 20 resurfacing schemes being carried out on the A83 this year valued at £3.7million, most of these being on the Campbeltown side of the Cowal Peninsula. Mr MacFarlane added that the road was resurfaced at the Rest and Be Thankful and at other locations in Glen Croe.

Councillor Sinclair recorded his thanks for the work on the Rest and Be Thankful highlighting that the work had made such a difference especially for travelling time.

Councillor Sinclair asked if Arrochar was one of the resurfacing schemes, noting that on recent travels the road seems to have a lot of rutting in the middle of the road.

Outcome

The Forum:

1. noted the Transport Scotland update; and
2. noted that Mr MacFarlane would enquire about any works being undertaken in Arrochar and provide Councillor Sinclair with a response.

9. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

The Chair highlighted that Iain Catterwell was no longer in post and that the Timber Transport Group were in the process of recruiting to this post.

Kirstie Reid highlighted that she had previously raised concerns around the number of lorries going into ditches at Loch Eck, advising that this continues.

Graham Revill advised of major tree felling work at Clachaig and that the lorries appear to be going along the A815 to Glasgow and highlighted that it was a shame it was not going to Sandbank.

Outcome

The Forum:

1. noted that Councillor Sinclair would pass concerns regarding the number of lorries going into ditches at Loch Eck to the Roads Department; and
2. noted that the Committee Manager would pass concerns regarding the non-use of Sandbank to the Timber Transport Group.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Kirstie Reid highlighted that the criteria had changed for patient transport services and asked if information on this could be provided to the Group.

Outcome

The Forum noted that the Committee Manager would request a briefing note from the IJB and circulate to the Group before the next meeting.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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 11th December in due course.