

Cowal Transport Forum – December 2023

Agenda Item briefing note

Western Ferries

At the August meeting of the Bute and Cowal Community Planning Group held by Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 15 August 2023, Gordon Ross of Western Ferries made a verbal presentation. My contemporaneous notes of the meeting submitted to the Dunoon Community Council recorded the following.

Western Ferries – Gordon Ross (MD). Interesting presentation. 32,000 sailings pa., 1.2m people carried, 90% of employees live this side of the water. Emergency out of hours ferries provided free of charge. Believes CalMac subsidy is around £5m – they carried 320k passengers in 2013 between Gourock/Dunoon, now running at £170k. Simple maths – £29/passenger. Suggested that if WF got a £5m subsidy fares could be halved, and direct Dunoon / Glasgow bus could be introduced. DC raised issue of poor bus connections and Hunters Quay – Gordon agrees – needs to be taken up with Cowal Transport Forum. Idea from the attendees for public hire bicycles to get from Hunters Quay to Dunoon.

When the official minutes were published, the following had been recorded.

(c) Western Ferries

Gordon Ross of Western Ferries provided the Group with an overview of the service provided. Gordon advised that in June 2023 Western Ferries celebrated 50 years of service and that they were currently celebrating the 10th anniversary of the naming ceremony of their newer boats the Sound of Seil and the Sound of Soay.

Mr Ross advised that Western Ferries provide approximately 32,000 sailings a year from 6am until midnight, 365 days a year adding that they provide a reliable, frequent and flexible service to the community. It was also highlighted that Western Ferries provide a free out of hour's service for emergency services in Dunoon and have a stand by crew permanently on call.

Discussion took place in relation to the lack of joint working with bus operators to provide a bus link at Hunters Quay into Dunoon.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group:

- 1. considered and noted the information provided; and*
- 2. requested that the Committee Manager relay the concerns of the Group regarding the lack of connectivity between ferry services and bus services to the Contract Officer.*

(Reference: Verbal Report by Managing Director, Western Ferries)

There was no reference to what I considered to be substantive claims about the possible costs/subsidy of the current CalMac service.

I raised this with Julieann Small on 4th October.

Julieann. Good morning.

The minute about Western Ferries, from Gordon Ross. No mention of his suggestion that the current subsidy for CalMac be handed over to Western Ferries, reinstatement of the Dunoon / Glasgow bus service, and halving his fares to name but 3 of his ideas?

The same day I received a reply from Stuart Mclean

Good afternoon Mr Clough,

Many thanks for your e-mail.

The minute of the Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group, nor any other Council Committee, are a verbatim record and are prepared to offer a summary of the discussions with associated decisions.

These minutes remain in draft until the next meeting of the Group when members will be asked to approve them as an accurate record, with the agreement of Group members I would welcome any changes at this stage.

I hope this is helpful.

Kind regards

Stuart

At the October meeting of the Bute and Cowal Community Planning Group held by Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 31st October 2023 I brought this matter up under "approval of the minutes". There was a staggering lack of willingness of those attending that meeting who were present at the August meeting to second my proposed amendment to the minutes to include the salient points missed.

When the minutes of the October meeting were published, no mention was made of the proposed amendment, or the vote. I raised this with Stuart McLean on 14th October following my briefing to the Dunoon Community Council at its October meeting the evening before.

Stuart - good morning.

Can I express my surprise that the lengthy discussion we had at the meeting, and the proposed amendment and subsequent vote on the recording of the August minutes did not make it into the minutes of this meeting. I wish to escalate the matter of the minutes not reflecting salient points of discussion and in particular votes, and will be bringing it up at this evenings DCC meeting to seek their support. In the meantime, could you please advise me and our Secretary of the due process.

Mr Ross's comments in August were, as far as I can make out, the most substantive thing that this Committee has been presented with/ discussed in its last 2 meetings. Every single October minute states "The Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group considered and noted the information provided" with the exception of 2 where there was an additional comments. What are we all doing for 2 1/2 hours?

I've cc'd in Audrey Forrest as she also attends the DCC meetings, and was at the October meeting.

On the 15th he replied.

Good Morning Mr Clough,

I hope you are well.

The Councils standing orders, specifically standing order 10.5 are clear on this matter and state that 'Motions or amendments which are not seconded will not be discussed or recorded in the minutes'. The standing orders can be found by following this [LINK](#) – please see page 38.

As your proposed amendment was not seconded and the minutes were unanimously agreed as a correct record there was no need for a vote and by association of standing order 10.5 no need for this to be recorded in the minutes.

The Terms of Reference of the Group can be accessed by following this [LINK](#), please see item 4 appendix 1, the role and remit of the Group can be found on pages 1 and 2.

I hope this is helpful, I have attached my contact details at the foot of this email if you would like to discuss further.

Kind regards

Stuart

Proposal

Before Argyll and Bute Council remove the linkspan, go and spend a reported £800k on harbour ground investigations and CMAL procure 2 new ferries at a cost of millions* to the tax payer should not some form of positive discussion take place between Transport Scotland, CMAL, CalMac, ABC Council, Western Ferries, West Coast Motors, Scotrail and McGill buses to establish the actual facts in relation to costs, and debate the most cost effective way of providing connectivity between Dunoon Town Centre and Gourock Railway Station for the benefit of all residents, workers and visitors to the Cowal Peninsula and surrounding area?

* In 2020 Transport Scotland said the two new Dunoon ferries would cost 'within the £5m estimate' which had been approved by ministers. In 2021 a CMAL (Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd) document estimated the total cost of three new boats for Dunoon and Kilcraggan at £21m – source <https://thelochsidepress.com/2022/05/31/cost-increase-for-new-kilcraggan-and-dunoon-ferries-appalling-msp>

David Clough

23rd October 2023