
Draft Ferries Plan - Briefing Note

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scottish Ferries Review is now complete and the Scottish Government have published a Draft Ferries Plan (SDFP) which has been prepared following the 2010 public consultation exercise. The SDFP sets out the Scottish Government's proposals for the provision and support of Scotland's ferry services to 2022.
- 1.2 The Scottish Government are keen to seek opinion on the proposals set out in the SDFP and in particular on the options identified for local ferry services. As such, a consultation is now underway and the closing date for responses is 30th March 2012.

2. Draft Plan Options

Funding and Procurement

- 2.1 The following options are set out in the SDFP in relation to future funding and procurement of ferry services in Scotland:-
 - The Scottish Government will require to consider what services will be provided in the future to better understand the level of spending required over the period to 2022. The Final Ferries Plan will provide details of the level of investment required.
 - The Scottish Government will continue to work with CMAL to consider alternative financing options.
 - The Scottish Government will revisit in 2013, through CMAL, the future level of pier and harbour dues with the intention that the level of income generated wholly covers the cost of the ongoing maintenance and repair of their piers and harbours.
 - The Scottish Government will explore what would be involved if they, through CMAL, were to take responsibility for ports currently owned by Local Authorities.
 - The service specifications for the next Northern Isles and Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services (CHFS) tenders will be less specific, only specifying what is deemed to be a minimum requirement. The final contracts will fully specify details of the agreed proposal.

Fares

- 2.2 The Scottish Government recognise that the current fares system is complicated and no longer fit for purpose and they should work towards achieving an overarching fares policy for ferry services. As such, the following options are set out within the SDFP:-
 - Replace the route-specific nature of fare-setting with one single overarching framework.
 - Roll-out RET across the network as the basis for single fares for passengers and cars.
 - Work with operators to better manage demand where necessary, consulting key stakeholders.

- Replace RET for commercial vehicles with pre RET discount schemes (2.5% - 15% based on turnover and proposed number of journeys). In the longer term develop an overarching freight fares policy.
- RET will replace multi-journey discount tickets.
- RET will be rolled out further during the term of this Parliament.
- A new system of annual fares reviews will be implemented in line with the cost of travel.
- In the current Northern Isles tender and the next CHFS tender, it will be a requirement for ferry operators to work with other transport providers to encourage integrated ticketing and better timetabling.

Route Proposals

- 2.3 A needs based assessment was undertaken and an evidence based routes and services methodology was developed to determine a model ferry service for each community on the network. The Scottish Government have made a commitment to repeat the methodology in line with tendering timetables to ensure that the needs of communities are always reflected in their ferry services.
- 2.4 Claonaig to Lochranza
- It is proposed to upgrade the Ardrossan to Brodick service to a two-vessel operation with a more frequent shuttle service and extended operating hours and services from Claonaig would be reviewed following these changes.
- 2.5 Bute
- Extend the operating hours of the Colintrave to Rhubodach service to midnight as part of the next tender for the CHFS in 2013.
- 2.6 Cowal Peninsula and Dunoon
- The Scottish Government expressed their disappointment at not being able to continue a town centre to town centre vehicle and passenger service and they have set out their commitment to look at more options to improve the overall service and facilities.
- 2.7 Mull
- Upgrade the Craignure to Oban service to a two-vessel shuttle service and extend the operating hours.
 - Following the upgrade of the Craignure to Oban service review operations of the Fishnish to Lochaline service.
 - Replace the current passenger and vehicle service on Tobermory to Kilchoan with a passenger only service.
- 2.8 Iona
- Provide an additional 90 minutes of services in the evening, so the last service is around 8pm. An additional berthing facility could be provided to achieve this.
- 2.9 Lismore
- Replace the two existing services with a single passenger and vehicle shuttle service operating from Port Appin and Point from 7am to 10/11pm. It is anticipated that this could be achieved during the next CHFS contract (2013 – 2019).
- 2.10 Coll and Tiree
- Improve the winter service to Coll and Tiree that operates for at least six days per week. This could be achieved during the next CHFS contract and proposals to procure new vessels for other routes could provide opportunities for existing vessels to be made available to increase service provisions to Coll/Tiree.
- 2.11 Kerrera, Luing and Easdale Island
- Current services are fit for purpose and meet most of the communities needs.

2.12 Islay and Jura

- Offer residents of Jura no cost fares on the current service between Islay and Jura, when this journey is part of an onward journey to the mainland. These proposals would be implemented during the tender for the CHFS and in the meantime the Scottish Government will provide financial support for the summer-only service between Craighouse and Tayvallich. The financial support would cease following the 2013 CHFS tender.
- Run more services from Port Askaig and fewer from Port Ellen than was the case prior to the suspension of services from Port Ellen.

2.13 Colonsay

- An additional sailing day in the summer.
- At least one day per week where there is a return sailing between Colonsay and Oban.
- A commitment in the longer term to work towards more sailing days during the winter if (and when) other vessels are released during the next CHFS contract in 2013.

2.14 Gigha

- Construct a berthing facility at Ardminish which would enable the operating day to be extended.

2.15 Kintyre

- Retain the Kintyre to Portavadie service as is.
- Possibility of introducing a vehicle service between Campbeltown and Ayrshire via Arran.

2.16 Western Isles

- The principal route for Harris and Lewis is the Ullapool to Stornoway route. Tarbert to Uig is the secondary route. The principal route for the Uists and Benbecula is Lochmaddy to Uig. Lochboisdale to Oban is the secondary route. Barra has only one direct route to the mainland, Castlebay to Oban;
- There is a need for all principal and secondary routes to be retained because of the distance between the ports; the population around the secondary routes and the need to ensure adequate exit ports for resilience purposes;
- Barra is the only landmass in the Western Isles which does not currently receive a service that meets the community's needs in terms of service profile. (Their current winter service is 3 days per week and ideally this should be at least 5 days);
- The secondary route (Lochboisdale to Oban) for the Uists and Benbecula should also be retained for the reasons given above;
- The Scottish Government have considered options for improving the service to Barra. However, there are no viable cost effective options available without affecting the other Western Isles services. Within the Western Isles the Barra service will be given priority for funding in the future.

3. Responsibility for Providing Ferry Services

- 3.1 It is considered that there is currently no consistency in the provision of ferry services in Scotland. During the consultation exercise it was generally felt that the Scottish Government would be best placed to provide ferry services and Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships should not be given overall responsibility for ferry service provision.
- 3.2 As such, the Scottish Government have expressed a willingness to take responsibility for all 'lifeline' ferry services and in Argyll and Bute this would include:-

- Jura – Islay
 - Seil – Easdale
 - Seil – Luing
 - Lismore Ferry service
- 3.3 Any transfer of responsibility would potentially require an adjustment to the local government block grant for ferry services currently provided to the Council to operate ferry services or a transfer of capital funding.
- 3.4 Other proposals set out regarding the responsibility for Ferry Services are as follows:-
- The Scottish Government will become responsible for ensuring the continuation of any lifeline ferry service currently provided by the private sector;
 - The Final Ferries Plan will represent the national framework for the provision of all subsidised ferry services in Scotland. It will however be up to those responsible for delivering these services to consider whether they wish to adopt this strategy;
 - The Final Ferries Plan will provide details of the good practice procurement guidance followed by Transport Scotland. The Scottish Government will provide advice to any provider of ferry services who wishes to discuss how ferry services are procured by Transport Scotland;
 - The requirement for a Scottish Ferries Regulator is under review and further details will be made available in the Final Ferries Plan.

4. Accessibility

- 4.1 The Scottish Governments proposals with regards to accessibility are set out below:
- In the next Northern Isles and CHFS tenders we will specify a number of requirements and also seek to encourage operators to adopt as many of the 'Accessibility' reports recommendations as possible. (This will include putting 'Accessibility Information System' in place);
 - The Scottish Government intend to set up an 'Accessibility Improvement Fund' and will develop this further for the Final Ferries Plan;
 - The Scottish Government will write to all Local Authorities, Independent Trust Ports and private owners of vessels and ports and harbour facilities to ensure they are aware of their obligations under the current legislation and encourage them to make progress, in terms of improving accessibility;
 - The Scottish Government will ensure the owners of all infrastructure (vessels, ports and harbours) used for subsidised ferry services continue to be aware of the need to make progress in improving accessibility.

5. Environmental Issues

- 5.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken on the SDFP and this focused on options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ferries.
- 5.2 The rollout of RET is considered likely to increase emissions of greenhouse gases due to increased levels of vehicular traffic however, some of this could potentially be offset by introducing new, more fuel efficient vessels.
- 5.3 Other potential environmental impacts include:-
- Potential for increased collisions with marine mammals.
 - Potential increase in introduction of invasive species;
 - Increased erosion due to vessel wake – increased journeys and speeds.

- Decreased air quality at ports;
 - Increased risk of collision between vessels leading to detrimental effects on water quality;
 - Increased litter;
- 5.4 The Scottish Government intend to mitigate negative environmental effects over both the short and long term by introducing the requirement for better data collection and reporting which will be specified during the tender process and by introducing more fuel efficient vessels.
- 5.5 The Scottish Government will not however, impose emission reductions through reducing vessel speeds as the majority of those who responded to the initial consultation would not be supportive of such measures.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The deadline for responses to the Draft Ferries Plan is 30th March 2012. To meet this deadline it is considered that a draft response would require to be taken to the Executive Meeting on the 8th March for approval and papers for this meeting are required by the 14th February.
- 6.2 Argyll and Bute Community Councils have been contacted to provide responses that will be included in the Council response.
- 6.3 There is also the need to align the Council response with HITRANS response where appropriate – HITRANS workshop on 2nd February followed by Board meeting on 3rd February will discuss the Review and its response.

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