

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COWAL TRANSPORT FORUM HELD BY MICROSOFT  
TEAMS  
ON MONDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2024**

**Present:** Councillor Daniel Hampsey (Chair)  
Councillor William Sinclair  
Councillor Ross Moreland  
Councillor Gordon Blair  
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager, Argyll and Bute Council  
Gordon Ross, Western Ferries  
Captain Alistair McLundie, Western Ferries  
Neil Stewart, West Coast Motors  
Ian Woodcock, Transport Scotland  
Inspector Bart Simonis, Police Scotland  
David Clough, Dunoon Community Council  
Kirstie Reid, Strachur Community Council  
Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council  
Tom Murray, Lochgoilhead Community Council  
Michael Breslin, South Cowal Community Council  
Allan Comrie, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)  
Simon Stuart, Timber Transport Group

**Attending:** Andrew Boyd, Transport Scotland  
Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland  
Dominic Andrew Calgie, Transport Scotland  
Ronald McAlister, Bute Ferry Group  
Andrew Galloway, Local Democracy Reporter, Argyll and Bute

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Audrey Forrest and Graham Revill, Kilmun Community Council.

**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 18 June 2024 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted that since the last meeting of the Forum there has been several key developments including actions taken following the roundtable meeting with Calmac, Jenni Minto MSP, Community representatives and fellow councillors and that the focus was the development of the new Calmac timetable. The Chair advised that in August he had chaired a meeting with Calmac and community representatives to review the proposals and it was confirmed that they were moving forward with option 3a which would provide reduced peak period waiting times whilst maintaining a consistent service throughout the

day. The Chair commented that the next stage would be to align the ferry timetable to ensure bus connectivity thereby creating a much improved integrated transport system.

The Chair highlighted the successful operation during the recent Cowal Gathering with Western Ferries providing a reliable service during the busy period and the Chair commended them on this.

#### **4. TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY - OUTCOME FROM MEETING WITH MSP**

The Chair advised that he alongside several Community Council's had attended a Transport Connectivity meeting with Jenni Minto MSP in July. He advised that he, and others, had raised concerns around transport connectivity caused by the existing Calmac timetable. The Chair advised that multiple actions had arisen from that meeting and that subsequent updates had been circulated by Miss Minto to those that had attended that meeting.

##### **Outcome**

The Forum noted the outcome from the Transport Connectivity meeting.

#### **5. POLICE SCOTLAND**

Inspector Bart Simonis provided the Forum with a verbal update on the ongoing work of the service. He advised that across Bute and Cowal there had been 66 reported road accidents since 1 June 2024 and that fatal road accidents remain in line with last year and the 5 year average. Inspector Simonis highlighted that within Argyll the main risk on the roads remain motorcyclists, those unfit to drive, people's manner of driving and visitors to the area and that this information has been used to support ongoing work to target these specific groups.

Inspector Simonis highlighted that year to date, across the area, 40 people had been reported to the Procurator Fiscal as being unfit to drive through drink or drugs which is slightly down from the previous year but in line with the 5 year average.

Inspector Simonis voiced concerns around the amount of road users who are unfit to drive due to maturing age or medical conditions advising that many road users need to assess if they remain fit to drive and urged anyone with medical conditions to discuss with a medical professional. Inspector Simonis highlighted that through 'Cassie's Law' Police Officers can now request that someone's license is revoked by telephone or by email should they deem it appropriate.

Inspector Simonis also provided information on decisions made to close roads following road accidents and highlighted the upcoming national campaigns for pedestrian safety and winter safety.

##### **Outcome**

The Forum noted the update from Police Scotland.

#### **6. FERRIES UPDATE**

##### **(a) Community Based Assessment - The Future of CalMac's Service**

The Forum gave consideration to an update from Richard Hadfield from Transport Scotland on the Community Based Assessment that had been undertaken to help inform the Business Case for the Gourock-Dunoon/Kilcreggan vessel replacement project.

Mr Hadfield highlighted some key findings from the Community Based Assessment such as the route is highly used by commuters; it forms part of a wider integrated public transport network; carryings are concentrated around peak times and many sailings carry relatively few passengers, suggesting an overprovision at certain times. It was highlighted that the service is often undermined by poor reliability which undermines commuter's confidence and as such commuters would value a service that is both reliable and resilient. Mr Hadfield also recognised the importance of the service to ensure economic growth within the locality.

Mr Hadfield advised that the Assessment had identified 6 options for addressing the over provision and that there are consequences, both positive and negative, to each of them. To better understand the community's needs Transport Scotland are undertaking a user survey and have held open days to explore options for improvement. Mr Hadfield advised that they are aiming to supply advice based on feedback to Ministers during the early part of 2025.

The Chair thanked everyone in the community for attending the community event in Dunoon, advising that the current service is operating at a loss and that there are services throughout the day which are underutilised. The Chair highlighted that the route is critical for the community and that the community needs a ferry service which is intergraded with other public transport services.

Discussion took place in relation to the poor reliability of the ferries being the reason as to why passenger numbers are falling. There was also concern around the cost to the tax payer; that the conclusions are being rushed and as a consequence of being based on timetables from December 2022 inaccurate and out of date. The Chair highlighted that before any decision is made that it would need to be checked to ensure that it is the right one for the community.

The Chair advised that should there be further developments on this subject before the next meeting, that the Forum would convene a special meeting to discuss as appropriate.

## **Outcome**

The Forum noted:

1. the update on the Community Based Assessment in relation to the Future of Calmac's Service;
2. that the Chair would forward comments and questions to Calmac with responses circulated to the Forum; and
3. that the Chair and Councillors Blair, Moreland and Sinclair would meet to discuss raising the issue at a future meeting of the Bute and Cowal Area Committee.

(b) **Revised CalMac timetable**

The Chair reiterated that he had attended a meeting to discuss options for a revised timetable by Calmac and that David Clough, Dunoon Community Council, had conducted a consultation in this regard. There was general consensus that option 3a is the most appropriate and that he hopes that this will be implemented within the next few weeks.

David Clough highlighted that through his consultation work he had undertaken an analysis of the Calmac and West Coast Motor timetables and that the next step would be to engage with West Coast Motors to ensure that bus timetables meet with the associated ferry timetable.

**Outcome**

The Forum noted the update on the Revised Calmac timetable.

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

Western Ferries

Captain McLundie highlighted that additional sailings were provided for the Cowal Gathering weekend; spare vessels were used when the Old Military Road and Rest and Be Thankful was recently closed; there were issues with extremely low tides at Hunters Quay a few weeks ago with delays of around an hour for 3 days and that they have been waiting on a license to dredge the area and would hope that once the license is granted that they can deepen the linkspan to limit the risk of future events.

The Chair recorded his thanks to Western Ferries for the service provided.

Kerris Bone advised that Steve Abbott from Heartstart had asked about the possibility of having defibrillators on board Western Ferries. Captain McLundie advised that defibrillators are in both terminals and that all staff have been through training and although there is none on board, they could get to terminals within 6 minutes. Captain McLundie advised that he would be more than happy to discuss this with Mr Abbott .

David Clough highlighted the significantly different prices for a 5 metre vehicle compared to a 7 metre vehicle travelling on Western Ferries. Gordon Ross advised that the way these vehicles are charged has been consistent for many years and that a table of rates is available from sales staff.

Councillor Sinclair highlighted that it is concerning when there is weather incidents that it has a massive effect on Western Ferries and moving forward with the construction of the debris flow shelter on the Rest and Be Thankful it will increase the demand of the service. Gordon Ross highlighted that he has a meeting with the Roads Department and Haulers to discuss what can be done during the construction phase on the A83.

**Outcome**

The Forum noted the update from Western Ferries.

## 7. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### (a) SPT Concessionary Fares

Allan Comrie reinforced that SPT administer the concessionary scheme on behalf of the 12 associated councils and are not involved in setting fares. Mr Comrie advised that an increase of concessionary fares may be implemented in early 2025 if agreed by the Concessionary Fare Committee.

Councillor Blair highlighted that he is arranging a meeting with SPT to discuss this matter and that he would update the Forum on these discussions.

#### **Outcome**

The Forum noted the update on SPT Concessionary fares.

### (b) Pingo Bus

Kerris Bone, Kilmun Community Council highlighted that several members of the public have been in contact with her due to issues booking the Pingo bus in Clachaig because of their postcodes not being accepted as an area the bus goes to.

Neil Stewart advised that the issue had been resolved and that he had manually inserted all the postcodes within the area to the system.

#### **Outcome**

The Forum noted that the issues with the Pingo Bus had been resolved.

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

#### West Coast Motors

Neil Stewart advised that the under 22's free bus scheme is performing well but is causing capacity issues at the end of the school day. Mr Stewart also advised that an adjustment to mileage on Thursdays and Fridays has allowed for a Saturday morning bus arriving from Strachur to Dunoon.

Neil highlighted that they are carrying 90% compared to same period in 2019; that over 60s concessions have gone from 50.7% in 2019 to 36% and that under 22s have increased by 17% compared to when the same age group had to pay for travel.

Discussion took place in relation to the possibility of a bus going into Hunters Quay ferry terminal. Neil highlighted that this is private land and that the queuing area would prevent the bus from turning and a risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

Neil advised that in relation to a request at the last meeting for a later bus after 11pm towards Kilmun and Ardentiny that historical ticket sale data illustrated that it was a poorly used and as such was withdrawn after a year.

## **Outcome**

The Forum noted the update from West Coast Motors.

## **8. ROADS UPDATE**

The Committee Manager advised that there was no-one in attendance from the Roads Department but would be happy to take away any questions.

Tom Murray advised that the community understand that the gritter service in Lochgoilhead will be delivered directly by Argyll and Bute Council and that he had concerns that the large vehicles used by the Council may result in many of the narrow, adopted roads not being treated. Mr Murray asked if any measures have been put in place to ensure that these smaller roads will be treated.

Mr Murray also highlighted that the road at the public toilets in Carrick has many potholes but the pothole machine never visits that area and that the repair work undertaken at Hellsglen has now started to subsidise again.

## **Outcome**

The Forum noted that the Committee Manager would raise Mr Murray's concerns with the responsible Council Department and update him accordingly.

## **9. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND**

Ian Woodcock provided the Forum with a verbal update, advising that on the 15<sup>th</sup> September approximately 500 tons of material was successfully intercepted by the fences and pits on the Rest and Be Thankful and that there was an unexpected hillside movement on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September with traffic being diverted to the Old Military Road until the 26<sup>th</sup> September. Mr Woodcock highlighted that Transport Scotland continue to monitor the hillside and any event is assessed with prescribed action taken.

It was highlighted that along the A83 at Cairndow junctions there are VAS signs which are waiting for SSE to provide the electrical connection, with 5 signs for the direction signage scheme planned for Q3/4 of this financial year and that Transport Scotland have asked BEAR to engage with Cairndow Community Council on future issues. It was also noted that the Array Bridge works are now complete.

Mr Woodcock advised that there is a planned closure on the A82 between Tarbet and Crianlarich for 4 weeks starting on the 13<sup>th</sup> October with works including structural maintenance, carriageway patching, road markings drainage and vegetation being undertaken and that layby and tourist signage improvements are also planned for October/November time between Tarbet and Balloch.

Councillor Blair highlighted the success of the average speed cameras along the A82 and asked if this approach be adopted across the locality. Mr Woodcock advised that he would pass Councillor Blair's comments onto the Strategic Safety Team who determine when and where the next set of cameras would be installed.

## **Outcome**

The Forum noted the update from Transport Scotland.

#### **10. TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP**

Simon Stuart provided the Forum with a verbal update, advising that he has been engaging with Forestry and Land Scotland to ensure that they are following their timber transport management plans. Mr Stuart advised there is a proposed change to the timber link which could result in more timber travelling via road rather than ships and that less timber is going to Ireland due to disease problems may also result in more timber travelling via road. Councillor Sinclair voiced his concerns that more timber may be travelling via road than ship.

Simon highlighted that the timber lorry service is supported by the the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme, with £5 million being given by Transport Scotland and £2 million from Scottish Forestry, adding that the service is facing increasing pressures as the money from Transport Scotland is no longer available.

#### **Outcome**

The Forum noted the update from the Timber Transport Group.

#### **11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

Mr Clough asked whether the late report he had submitted would be included within the minutes. The Committee Manager confirmed that the report had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting and would also be published alongside the agenda and minutes on the Council's website.

#### **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair thanked everyone in attendance at the meeting and the Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday, 13 January 2025 at 2pm.