

BUTE COMMUNITY COUNCIL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the 10th Bute Community Council Transport Committee
held in the Pavilion, Rothesay at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 25th June 2008

Present: Mr D MacLeod, Chair, Mr F Baxter, Mrs R Laxton, Mr P Lingard, Mr P Wallace

BFUG: Mr G Chambers, Ms M Madsen

Apologies: Mr T Saul

Members of the Public: Mr M McCormack,

1. **Minutes of 28th May 2008:** The minutes of the Meeting of 28th May 2008 were accepted, with some changes. Proposed: Mr G Chambers, Seconded: Mrs R Laxton.
2. **Committee Structure:** Mrs R Laxton asked Mr D MacLeod for information on the meeting that had taken place between Mr B Fulton and himself, at which it was suggested that a slimmed down committee behind closed doors would be more productive; advising that she understood that this committee was the forum in which the wider issues of the ferry service would be discussed. Mr F Baxter added that CalMac had asked BCC to form this committee, and he understood BCC meetings had to be open to the public, moving into the big hall if necessary, and said it was 'sad' that CalMac had walked away.

Mr D MacLeod advised that CalMac had complained about the number of people present at the last meeting, and the point of his discussions were to try to keep CalMac at the table. Mr G Chambers acknowledged this, but highlighted the fact that CalMac had also 5 people at the table.

Mr G Chambers suggested that CalMac had disengaged because the discussions were not moving according to their preset timetable, and was of the opinion that CalMac wanted the hourly service, and if they did not get it at this time, they would come back to it at a later date.

Mr P Wallace informed the meeting that Mr B Fulton had advised that CalMac would not attend the meeting to allow the group to formulate their own questionnaire independently, so CalMac could not be accused of having a hidden agenda, and that they were prepared to come back and talk about the results of the survey.

Mr F Baxter criticised the Buteman for focusing on just one issue, advising that a lot of positive things came out of the last meeting. Mrs R Laxton added that she appreciated there may be difficulties, but that the way forward was with constructive dialogue; however she was of the opinion that the timetable presented at the last meeting was only slightly better in terms of flexibility and connections.

Mr D MacLeod commented that the new ships had greater capacity and were rarely full, and that the proposed timetable had the last ferry sailing later. Ms M Madsen rejected this; saying that it was only 15min, and that the island was marketed as easily accessible, and CalMac should focus on increasing passenger numbers and not reducing the service. She also rejected attempts to absolve CalMac of responsibility for this, stating that the cost of travel is prohibitive. Mrs R Laxton added that it was not a normal company, being heavily subsidised, and therefore should provide a service to the island. Mr G Chambers pointed out that CalMac had denied that the increase in fuel prices had anything to do with the timetable proposals, and Ms M Madsen suggested if this was the case then it would be across the entire network, and not just on limited routes.

There was further discussion about the implications of the timetable presented at the last meeting for various users, refuelling, connections and what CalMac had expected from the meetings, including suggestions that CalMac may be trying to manipulate the committee. Ms M Madsen characterised the behaviour of CalMac as 'disgraceful,' stating that they 'cannot go into the meeting and walk away when they don't like what is being said,' further suggesting that the group should write to the Executive as it was a public company, saying "CalMac don't play fair."

Mr G Chambers said that he gave credit to CalMac for starting to listen to users on some issues, but said there were still problems with core issues, for example the timetable and car parking, and they were not very good at finding solutions. When Mr D MacLeod suggested that CalMac were under no obligation to provide parking, Ms M Madsen commented that there was a difference between 'no obligation' and 'providing a service' to customers, and Mr G Chambers advised they had provided parking for 20 years, and that CalMac staff now park in space that was once available to commuters.

- 3. Methodology:** Mrs R Laxton suggested that it was clear that the object of the committee was to try to find out if the community wanted any improvements to the service, and if so, what they were; however cautioning against a fantasy wish list. Mrs R Laxton also said it was important to use neutral questions, to find out where people were coming from, suggesting that there was a big difference between rare and frequent users.

Mr P Lingard stated that a 3 day questionnaire was of no use, as it does not give enough people a chance to respond, and suggested that it should be kept as simple as possible. Mr G Chambers said that the group would need to work for a good return, suggesting that there should not be a deadline for return, and that in addition to including it in the Buteman, a stall could be set up in Montague Street and at the Highland Games, as well as on the ferries, recommending the 'personal touch.' Mr P Lingard suggested that copies also be sent to larger businesses, and Ms M Madsen included schools and the hospital. Mrs R Laxton suggested a prize draw for respondents.

Mr P Lingard asked if CalMac would be prepared to contribute to the cost of the survey. Mr P Wallace said Mr B Fulton had advised him that CalMac did not have any funds to contribute to the costs. Mr F Baxter advised that the questionnaire would need to be taken to the next full meeting of BCC to get funding approved. In response to Mr M McCormack's question about what postal address to put on the form, it was agreed to ask the Buteman if they would collect returns on behalf of the committee.

When discussion turned to what response would be expected Mr G Chambers said that if the group achieved a 5% response they would be doing really well and that a slightly higher response may be possible doing 'face to face' interviews.

To Mr G Chambers question as to who would collate the responses, Ms M Madsen suggested that it would be better if BCC did this to avoid BFUG being accused of bias. Mr P Lingard noted that the same charge had been levied against CalMac at the previous meeting. It was agreed that Mr P Wallace would compile the results and distribute them to all members; Mrs R Laxton agreed to assist him in that respect.

- 4. Community Questionnaire:** Mr P Wallace produced a combined questionnaire, merging the two that were discussed at the previous meeting.

Mrs R Laxton questioned whether asking for name and address was a barrier to people completing the questionnaire, suggesting that instructions for respondents to only complete one survey was sufficient, however after some discussion it was decided that it would be included.

The group also discussed how to ascertain public opinion about the timetable, without asking leading questions. It was decided that the question should be "Are you satisfied with the existing timetable? If No, please give details." A similar question was also agreed for ticket options.

There was discussion on whether the question asking for comparison between the 'streakers' and the new ferries be included. Mr P Wallace advised that he had suggested it because it was a recurring theme in the discussions, and the questionnaire would be an opportunity to get hard data on it. Mr G Chambers suggested that the problem was during the design stage, and a bigger version of the 'streakers' would have been better suited to the route, asking if the community would accept the amount of disruption experienced during bad weather, and if they were totally fit for purpose.

Mr F Baxter noted that in the evening, access to the ships was at a lower level, noting the ships could load at every level, and that the gangway need not be so steep. Ms M Madsen disagreed with Mr P Lingard that the gangway was DDA compliant, stating that both official bodies agree that it is not, but stating that it is exempt from the legislation, and agreed to bring a confirmation letter she had received to the next meeting. Mr F Baxter countered that it was the ferries that were exempt, but as a shore

facility, the gangway was not, but that they 'got round it' because the gangway has lifts. It was decided however, to ask about the service and facilities that are in place, instead of looking back.

There were some other minor changes to the wording of the questionnaire, and it was agreed that the final questionnaire be put to BCC at their next meeting on 16th July for approval and subsequent distribution.

Date of next Meeting of the Transport Committee: 7.30 pm, Wednesday 23rd July, in the Pavilion.

Signed: Chairman Date.....

Secretary Date