

## BUTE COMMUNITY COUNCIL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> Bute Community Council Transport Committee  
held in the Pavilion, Rothesay at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008

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

In attendance: Cllr L Scoullar, Mr R Morrey (Service Science Ltd)

Bute Beyond 2000 / Tourism & Marketing Co: Mr T Saul

BFUG: Mr G Chambers, Mr G Docherty, Mr J Duncan, Mrs R Kennedy

CalMac: Mr B Fulton, Mr C Gillies, Miss A Peterson, Mrs R Robertson

Press representative: Mr C Borland

Apologies: Cllr I Strong, Mr S Cameron, Ms A Hardie, Mrs M Madsen

Members of the Public: Mr M McCormack, Mrs Grewar

1. **Notification of any additional agenda items:** Mr B Fulton advised that he would ask the group to consider a small change to the existing timetable.
2. **Minutes of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008:** The minutes of the Special Meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 were accepted, with some changes. Proposed: Mrs R Laxton, Seconded: Mr F Baxter.
3. **Frequency of Service:** Mrs R Laxton asked for more details on the rationale in trying to change the service. Mr B Fulton advised that people had been asking CalMac for integration with the train/bus times, and as the train runs an hourly service, the most reasonable solution was to tie in the ferry to the train, as the train cannot change. He continued this would allow people to make their connections more comfortably, without having to run, and would allow more leeway if there were delays. Mr B Fulton advised this would integrate well with the buses and also provide a more flexible turnaround, noting that BFUG had petitioned for an integrated service. He added that on busy weekends CalMac would not stick to the hourly timetable on busy weekends to ensure that the traffic would be cleared.

Mrs R Laxton advised that she had analysed the proposed timetable, and found that the interval remained the same for a lot of sailings, saying that some were even less, and asked how this was an improvement. Mr B Fulton advised that the interval remained the same for each sailing, but that there were also other factors, such as a better turnaround and environmental factors.

Mr G Chambers said that the 3 return crossings less each day represented a diminution in service, and Mrs R Kennedy criticised CalMac for changing commuter sailings which BFUG has specifically asked them not to do. Mr B Fulton asked BFUG to come up with their version of the timetable, to which Mr J Duncan responded that the BFUG proposal was to maintain the status quo, suggesting that there was anecdotal evidence that more people were now using the buses; the new boats were to allow for increased vehicle traffic; and said he couldn't 'see benefit for the community'.

The chair asked Mr B Fulton to talk through the main points of the proposed timetable. Mr B Fulton advised that the 17.15 incorporates fuelling time, and allows better connection with the train; there was no gap on a Sunday afternoon (while still allowing one boat to do their drill), more sailings on Sunday mornings; Finishing time of 20.00 instead of 19.45 in the winter, and 21.00 instead of 20.40 in the summer, again with better connections with the train.

Mr T Saul acknowledged that this was a complex issue with many points of view, but that from a tourism point of view, his interest was in providing as many opportunities for people to visit, while recognising the cost factors of the service, and suggested looking at ways of increasing occupancy on the ferries, aware that if the ferry was running only ¼ full then the costs were disproportionate. He advised that he was open minded, but did see disadvantages in reducing service.

Mr G Chambers said that it was 'quite evident' that the turnaround time of 25min was advantageous to CalMac. Advising that a straw poll on the ferry had revealed strong opposition to losing sailings at commuter times, advising the 8.45 and 9.30 ferries were busy commuter boats, suggesting that even if a boat is not full of cars it is no less important. Mr G Chambers also highlighted problems moving the sailing to 17.15, citing the 16.33 train leaving in time for the 17.30, now having to wait until 18.15, suggesting the changes would affect visitors just as much as locals, saying that it does not make sense

when there were no commensurate sailings; and asked to what extent does fuel costs play a part. Mr B Fulton advised that they were under contract to provide the timetable, and that it was more to do with integration.

Mr G Chambers also asked about the effect of the performance regime and penalties on sailings, to which Mr B Fulton replied that the ferries had more flexibility than any other form of public transport, and pointed out the proposals would allow for even greater flexibility, allowing the boat to wait for rail passengers, while still returning passengers travelling the other way in time for the next train. Mr G Chambers was of the opinion that the timetable should not be considered in isolation, and that Scotrail should play their part, to which Mr B Fulton advised that since the last meeting he had tried to get in touch without success.

Cllr L Scoullar advised the meeting that while everyone seeks a breakwater at Wemyss Bay, no breakwater would be high enough to protect the high boats; possible improvements to track at Paisley could allow greater flexibility in the train timetable. Cllr Scoullar expressed concern at the loss of capacity for a potential 1350 passengers and 180 cars per day, and asked CalMac if it was decided to change the timetable, and it was found not to be working in one year's time, was it set in stone? Mr B Fulton advised that it was not, especially if it was not working.

Mrs R Laxton said that while she could see improvements in the new version of the timetable, the proposals saw a reduction in service of 16.2% in the summer, and 15% in the winter, and that she was still struggling with the rationale, suggesting the boats were bigger than required for the route. Mrs R Laxton advised that having analysed the times at Wemyss Bay, the majority of the sailings have a similar connection time, with some noticeable improvements where the connection was 5 min or less.

Mrs R Laxton acknowledged that there were gains; pointing out that an hourly service would integrate better with the buses on the island, citing the Kilchattan Bay bus as an example, and also said that there was a case to be made if CalMac were losing money due to increased fuel charges etc, however she said that she had concerns for the island economy if it meant a reduction in people coming to the island. Mrs R Laxton also suggested that the underlying problem was access and egress, and that the current timetable would be more workable if the issues were addressed, and that if we were to accept such a 'profound' reduction in service then there should be significant offsets.

Cllr L Scoullar advised that there was to be a significant review of Bute bus services to commence in June, and any timetable changes would be significant for them. Mr G Chambers suggested that they should also be involved in the discussions, and went on to say that commuter sailings continue to attract people to come and live on the island, which boosts the local economy. He also said that Ministers were not holding CalMac back from reducing fares if they were innovative, to which Mr B Fulton responded 'as long as it does not have a financial effect on CalMac.'

Mr J Duncan asked why CalMac had not tendered on the proposed timetable, suggesting that the comment that the proposed timetable works from an operational side sums up the CalMac position. Mr B Fulton advised that he was not party to those negotiations, so could not comment, but reiterated the fact that these were proposals, which would not happen if there was no support, but said that it was an easier and more flexible service to operate.

Mr G Docherty advised that the 16.45 and the 17.30 sailings were the busiest crossings of the day, and questioned the logic of changing these sailings, saying BFUG had been assured that commuter sailings would not be affected. Mr B Fulton advised that this was to accommodate fuelling and to incorporate the 18.15 train, but agreed to look again and come back with an alternative, however he pointed out that BFUG had also agreed to come back with their version of the timetable. Mrs R Kennedy advised that BFUG had sent a questionnaire to users, and expected CalMac to take on board what was said.

Mr G Docherty suggested that neither BCC or BFUG represented the public, and that it was public opinion that really mattered.

4. **Crossing Time:** Mr P Lingard suggested that CalMac were taking 'backwards steps' no longer taking fuel or power from the pier. Mr C Gillies advised that the fuel delivery system on the pier uses a smaller hose, and was not delivering the fuel quickly enough, and would take up vital time used for repairs if the boats were to refuel every day. Mr P Lingard suggested the refuelling stop messes up the timetable

and questioned the economics of having the tanker reverse onboard to refuel the ships, as opposed to delivering to a shore tank, but was advised that there was no difference in cost provided that the full tanker was taken, which required pumping to the bigger tanks onboard; the time also allowed for drills to be carried out on board. Mr C Gillies advised that CalMac had looked at a 5 inch delivery system from shore, but this would involve new regulations, he advised however, that a power supply for both the boats would be installed at Rothesay pier. Mr P Lingard also suggested that the boats were always late back from refuelling; only highlighting another advantage of the proposed timetable according to Mr B Fulton. Mrs R Kennedy suggested that traffic should be analysed with fuelling done at the quietest times.

Mr M McCormack raised the performance monitoring regime, asking if it allowed for the sailing time + 5 min, effectively allowing a 40 min crossing time. Mr B Fulton advised that this was for CalMac as a whole, designed to benefit passengers by encouraging the operator to sail on time. He explained that the Rothesay route was in band A, meaning under 5 min was not considered late, 5-10 min = level 1 penalty, and 10-15 min = level 2 penalty. Mr M McCormack suggested this meant that CalMac could slow down boats and still be on time, which Mrs R Kennedy suggested was happening a lot, especially with the 6.30 sailing resulting in people missing the train.

Mr C Gillies advised that the train would not wait if the boat was delayed due to a stricter performance regime, but thought it was possible if there was a disabled passenger. Mr P Lingard refuted this suggestion advising that disabled passengers were supposed to give Scotrail 24 hours notice before travelling. Mr B Fulton advised that there was little flexibility at certain times as they had to weigh up passengers crossing from the other side, as well as those who are delayed, and at no time can you keep everyone happy.

Mrs R Kennedy said that BFUG had been promised a 30 minute crossing time, which was currently running at an average of 38 min, she went on to say that commuters would not accept the loss of the 8.45 and the 17.15 sailings, and suggested that late sailings in the summer should be operated over the course of the full timetable, pointing out they were not in the recent proposals at all. Mr B Fulton advised that he had spoken to the ship's captain who advised that the crossing was possible in 30 min if the hip was running at a constant speed, however with the time taken to speed up and slow down, coupled with speed restrictions in Rothesay the crossing time had to increase, and a 30 minute crossing was not possible. He also pointed out that some people use different definitions to evaluate crossing times, and CalMac use 'ropes on/ropes off.' Mrs R Laxton asked how long the new ships took to dock, to which Mr B Fulton replied that the 'streakers' were more manoeuvrable, but the new ships were faster, and that on comparison the times were very similar with an average crossing time of 35min. Further advising that once the traffic management system was in place for Rothesay harbour, the problem with yachts should be alleviated, however safety was paramount, and he commended the skippers of the boats for their professionalism when dealing with inexperienced sailors, particularly in the summer months.

Mrs R Laxton asked how many times CalMac had been fined under the performance regime. Mr B Fulton advised that the penalties were small, but would get the information. Mr F Baxter asked if there was a difference for the last sailing of the day, for example if a bus was to phone ahead saying it was late. Mr B Fulton advised that it would, as the first and last sailing were considered lifeline sailings, but said that there were 2 sides to the incident which Mr F Baxter was referring to, saying there had been a lack of communication, coupled with the possibility that the boat could not have tied up in Rothesay because of a 'work to rule.' Mr F Baxter asked if they were limited as to how long they could wait, to which Mr B Fulton advised, not through the performance regime, but through hours of work; however he noted that this would be changing to hours of rest. Cllr L Scoullar added that Mrs A Hardie had arranged for the last sailing to wait for a bus that had been delayed in Edinburgh.

5. **Access and Egress:** Mr B Fulton advised that since the last meeting the gangway had been out of operation for one sailing due to maintenance, but had no other difficulties. Mr G Docherty asked Cllr L Scoullar if the gangway at Rothesay had been declared unfit. Cllr L Scoullar replied that it had been ordered from Saxon Lifts by Balfour Beatty as part of the works on the pier, and that independent engineers had expressed serious concerns. Saxon lifts were to have men on the island at the beginning of June to repair and monitor the gangway, but as yet the council had not accepted it.

Mrs Grewar asked about the angle of the gangway, suggesting it was uncomfortable for an aging

population. Cllr L Scoullar agreed, but advised that it was within the parameters of the regulations. Mrs R Laxton was of the opinion that lifts not working on new boats was completely unacceptable, further suggesting the need for a robust system when things were not working, highlighting the BFUG suggestion that a minibus be used to disembark passengers when the gangway was not working, thus reducing the delay and risk of injury from falls.

Mrs R Laxton also expressed concern about delays and diversions. Mr B Fulton advised that CalMac had been working on their communication, with the introduction of the new phone and text service, and also the traffic lights system on their website, and a new sign at Wemyss Bay. He advised that CalMac were also looking into having a sign at Port Bannatyne for the Colintraive ferry.

Mr P Lingard questioned the existence of an emergency plan when the ferry was delayed or cancelled, and said that staff at Wemyss Bay are not kept informed. Mr C Gillies advised that very often the skipper will not tell staff until they get to the port. Mr B Fulton said that CalMac are striving to improve communication between boats, staff and ports, but that weather is reviewed on an hourly basis. To Mr P Lingard's question about the possibility of an emergency timetable for Gourock in bad weather, Mr B Fulton said this would be difficult as crossing time in bad weather varies. Mrs R Laxton asked if there was a written protocol, to which Mr B Fulton replied that there was one, company wide, which was moulded to a particular route, with timescales for review, but acknowledged that it was difficult to get right; however advised that the situation had improved, and that the office has a list of people who it specifically phones, but advised limitations in updating all the information streams, for so many sailings, can be difficult to get spot on.

- 6. Community Questionnaire:** 2 Sample questionnaires were circulated, one commissioned by CalMac from Mr R Morrey of Service Science, the other compiled by M P Wallace using the BFUG questionnaire, questions submitted by committee members, and discussions at previous meetings. Mr R Morrey proposed that the survey would be done in conjunction with the proposed timetable, primarily targeting islanders over a 3 day period, of which 2 days would be concentrated on board the ships at peak times, with the remaining day on the island. Mr B Fulton asked that the question relating to membership of a transport group be removed.

Mrs R Kennedy believed that the proposal to put out a timetable with the questionnaire was premature as there was no agreement on the timetable as yet. Mr J Duncan queried the relevance of the question on route of travel, and suggested that the scale used to assess satisfaction was unfairly loaded in CalMac's favour. He also asked how the data would be compiled, advising that the last time only average scores were provided. Mr R Morrey advised that he would give feedback on average and percentages.

Mr D MacLeod suggested that the group 'more or less agree' on the timetable and it should go out with questionnaire. Mr G Docherty rejected this saying that if the current proposal was submitted it would be 'shot down in flames,' and it was in CalMac's interest to come up with a new proposal.

Mrs R Laxton agreed that it was premature to put out a timetable, and also raised concern about CalMac commissioning the survey, saying that the process needed to be transparent, asking about the methodology; she was of the opinion that the group needed access to the raw stats to see where the data was coming from. She was of the opinion that the committee should put together a joint statement.

Mr R Morrey advised that Service Science Ltd was an independent organisation commissioned to design the survey, with full input from the Transport Committee. Mr M McCormack questioned their independence with CalMac as the client, suggesting that they could word questions in a manner that 'push CalMac's agenda' and produce a biased result. Mr R Morrey completely rejected any suggestion that his company would not operate in a professional and ethical manner, and that their brief was to produce a questionnaire that would be fully consulted upon.

Mr P Lingard commented that at the previous meeting he had highlighted the failures of a limited 3 day survey, again saying that another method was needed, and that to ask people to look at a timetable during the questionnaire would not allow them time to study what the proposals were. Mr G Docherty suggested that the aim of the process should be to solicit public opinion, and Mrs R Laxton suggested that a flyer in the Buteman would be an effective method.

Mrs R Kennedy again objected to the timetable forming any part of the process, saying it should be a

consultation about what people want and used to inform the committee. Mrs R Laxton was of the opinion that this feedback should be used to form a consultation document which could then be put out to the community, however Mr D MacLeod questioned how much wiser the committee would be, suggesting the main players are already in the room. Mr D MacLeod accepted there needed to be agreement on a timetable for it to be included, to which Mr B Fulton raised the problem that no other suggestions were forthcoming. Mrs R Kennedy rejected this saying that BFUG had brought back a clear message from its members about commuter sailings, advising that they would consider an hourly service between 10 and 4 in exchange for late sailings being run from Easter to October, adding that they were not resistant to change.

Mr G Chambers suggested that there were questions missing from the survey to which Mr B Fulton responded that they could be added. Mr D MacLeod suggested that the two questionnaires be amalgamated.

Mr F Baxter was under the impression that the questionnaire was to ask if a change of service was required, and it would be a waste of time to produce a timetable if the idea was rejected in principle by the general public. Mr T Saul agreed, but said that it was clear that Scotrail were inflexible, and that the current timetable involved some connections that were too short. Mrs R Kennedy also agreed, advising that the questionnaire should ask if change was required and what should it look like? Mr D MacLeod asked CalMac if the questionnaire came back confirming the status quo, would they be happy. Mr C Gillies said they would, if that was the feedback from the community.

There was further comment on how different changes would affect different groups. Mr G Chambers suggested that the questionnaire should be formulated in such a way that all parties get the information they want, without including a timetable. Cllr L Scoullar suggested that a small group meet prior to the next meeting to come back with an alternative questionnaire. Mrs R Kennedy stressed her opposition to the inclusion of a timetable, saying that we should not be working from an hourly timetable back, but from the current timetable forwards. Mr J Duncan added that this would allow information emerging from the questionnaire to be included when formulating a timetable.

7. **AOCB:** Mr B Fulton highlighted a small change to the current timetable, moving the 11.45 to 11.50, as the current timetable was not being achieved. Mr G Chambers expressed concern about piecemeal changes to the timetable, but no objections were raised to this change.

Mrs R Laxton asked about the agenda for the next meeting. Mr D MacLeod suggested that there was enough to talk about with the questionnaire. Mr G Docherty suggested that the group should also consider how it would be delivered. Mr D MacLeod asked about the possibility of it being printed in the Buteman. Mr C Borland advised that it was possible, but suggested that there would be a better response from a flyer inside the paper, for which there would be a cost, and he agreed to find out what that would be. Mr B Fulton raised the risk of duplication of responses, and Mr R Morrey suggested that the way round this was to ask for names and addresses. Mr B Fulton agreed to look again at the timetable and circulate a new version taking into account views expressed at the meeting.

Mr D MacLeod closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their attendance.

**Date of next Meeting of the Transport Committee: 7.30 pm, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June, in the Pavilion.**

Signed: Chairman .....

Date.....

Secretary .....

Date .....