



# Caledonian MacBrayne

Hebridean & Clyde Ferries

## Reponse to Bute Ferry Users Group

[www.butferryusergroup.co.uk](http://www.butferryusergroup.co.uk)

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# Report on ferry service

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## Wemyss Bay – Rothesay route, currently operated by Calmac Ferries

### CalMac

There are a number of general comments we would wish to make about the report.

1 There are a number of factual inaccuracies within the report which would have been better removed before publication and normally, CalMac would be happy to receive a draft for correction.

2 The Report would benefit from a clear explanation as an introduction of who had commissioned it, who was consulted and what process was used. Clearly, as it carries the imprimatur of BFUG, it is assumed that BFUG is responsible for the content.

3 While the Report was referred to in passing at the meeting of December 18 it would have been more helpful if the Report had been available for that meeting and matters could have been addressed at that point. Given the timing of its publication, the report could easily leave the impression that issues have not been dealt with, when in fact they have been, and discussed at length with explanations offered in most of the cases.

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## Summary

This reports raises issues that are important to users of ferry service on Rothesay – Wemyss Bay crossing. They are issues familiar to ferry users across the country.

CalMac: the Company would be pleased to receive a copy of this research and the basis on which it was conducted to better inform its operational decisions.

The historical comparison is one which many travellers make; the report takes a look at whether perceptions have any basis in truth. A key topic of discussion is whether there has been a diminution in service over recent years or can we say the service has improved measurably. Issues discussed include journey time; ticketing choice and price; timetable; access and egress; pier facilities; and service promises. There is also a brief comment on people. The report necessarily is focused around Calmac as the current service provider.

CalMac: A minor point, but we would appreciate the correct reflection of the company name and brand (CalMac).

## Introduction

This report has been written to raise awareness of service issues experienced by Bute Ferry Users, with a view to gathering further support from local authorities and other interested parties. Specifically we hope to bring about permanent improvement in pier facilities at Wemyss Bay; crossing times; passenger communication and support during times of disruption and/or cancellation, for all the customers.

This report is primarily based on data gathered by BFUG over the course of two years. This data takes several forms:

CalMac: the Company would be pleased to receive a copy of this research and the basis on which it was conducted to better inform its operational decisions. As detailed above, it is not clear how the information gathered in this report has been compiled and on what basis. There is no definition of the sampling in terms of scale or provenance. There is also little by way of definitions of e.g. “crossing time” – which is important as CalMac does already meet certain performance criteria, and is heading for a situation where the Performance regime is going to be even more strictly defined. It is important, therefore, that when making comparisons, these are valid and made on a like for like basis. The purpose of the ticketing analysis is noted – it was produced with a specific target in mind.

- Crossing time – journey time, a random sample of crossings that occurred between end of September 2005 and end of November 2005. The main purpose of the monitor was to record crossing time however other information relevant to the service was also gathered.

- Tickets, choice and pricing, an analysis was undertaken of Clyde crossing to ascertain the variety of ticketing being offered and multifarious pricing employed. The main purpose of the analysis was to support demand for a multi car ticket larger than current 10 journey option; and as an aside compare pricing on our route to others on Firth of Clyde.
- Ramp gradients – measurements were taken of the ramps used at both Rothesay and Wemyss Bay after users raised concerns about steepness and implications for passengers less abled physically or burdened with luggage/children in buggies/shopping etc.

CalMac: It is not clear who took these measurements and how. An explanation would have been helpful.

- Ramp including lift operation - a random period of time over which the operation the ramps was monitored. This main purpose of the monitor was to establish level of disruption caused to passengers' egress and access and whether that matched perceptions.
- Consumer survey – Bute Highland Games afforded an opportunity for BFUG to gather insight from ferry users other than regular, island travelers. A questionnaire was used to gather opinions on a variety of service points from pier parking facilities to general satisfaction of journey experience.
- Dialogue between Calmac and BFUG – there has been ongoing dialogue and this will be referred to.

CalMac: it is noted that while this is mentioned there is little or no reference to it in the Report. It is CalMac's view that over the last 18 months or so there has been a significantly improved level of communication between CalMac and BFUG which is not recognised.

This report will cover the issues that BFUG have identified as the key priorities for the majority of regular users however inevitably consideration is also given to infrequent users; these include both residents of Bute and visitors to the island.

BFUG is a non-profit making organization; the membership is circa 500 and is made up of residents of Bute and non-residents. All of the committee work full time off island and it should be appreciated that as passionate as we are, we are also time poor. This limits our ability to produce as comprehensive a report as we would like. Readers will forgive us for the simplicity with which we have used available data.

CalMac: the limitations as expressed by the authors is noted. CalMac has requested a copy of the BFUG Constitution as it would usefully inform our preparation for future consultation arrangements. It would also be helpful to have a breakdown of the island sectors represented/not represented on BFUG.

## Historical comparison

One of the frequent complaints heard by seasoned travelers (more than a decade) is that there has been little or no improvement in the service over the years. Of course, it is part of our nature to look back to past times with fondness however is there any truth in the matter? This short section of the report will briefly compare boats and crossing time.

CalMac: the definition of “crossing time” is crucial for like for like comparisons.

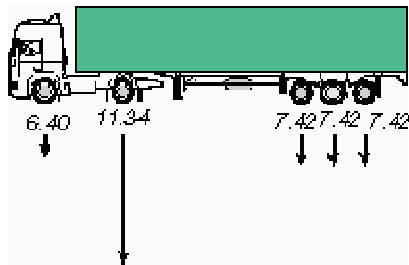
On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1954 the M.V. Bute (VI) began sea trials with a top speed of 15.46 knots recorded in conditions that were ‘rather stormy’. It began service on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1954 and ran at 14 knots, with a capacity for 35 cars and 650 passengers. ([www.shipsocalmac.co.uk/ships.asp?vessel=bute](http://www.shipsocalmac.co.uk/ships.asp?vessel=bute))

Summer 2005 saw the launch of the latest M.V. Bute in Clyde waters. This Bute runs at 13/14 knots, with a capacity for 60 cars and 450 passengers. It can also carry 60-seater coaches, which is helpful during the tourist season and 48 tonne artics which it may be argued is less than useful for an island that does not have the road infrastructure to support such vehicles – nor council budget to repair the damage done if they did descend.

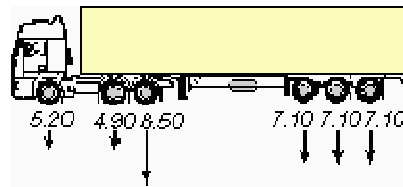
CalMac: it is the customers who decide the vehicles they purchase.

Figures for road wear proportion on vehicles of 48 tonne were not available for this report.

40 tonne artic (1999 onwards)



40 tonne artic



Numbers show typical weight per axle in tonnes. Road wear is proportion to the weight on the axle raised to its 4th power -this is shown by the length of the arrow. ([www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_roads/documents/page/dft\\_roads\\_506830.hcsp](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_roads/documents/page/dft_roads_506830.hcsp))

In the interim period and still in service, Saturn, launched in 1977 the 3<sup>rd</sup> of what are commonly known as ‘the Streakers’, had a capacity of 40 cars and 510 passengers. Latest figures from Calmac website state capacity of 40 cars and 381 passengers, with a running speed of 12 knots.

It would appear that our more mature passengers have the rights of it. Although the new boat can carry more cars and has the capacity to carry big Lorries – passenger capacity has reduced. In terms of speed of crossing, the new Bute is slower than its vintage namesake and only 1-2 knots faster than the now ageing Saturn.

CalMac: it is not clear what point is being made about the axle weights. The ships have to be built to carry anything which is legal on the road. The implications of restricting vehicles types does not bear thinking about in terms of the islands' economy. It is not within CalMac's gift to deliver that in any case.

There have been improvements – such as extension of the sailing day – in days gone past the first sailing were 7.45am and the last 6.20pm. Now passengers are able to sail from 6.30am and last boat home 7.45pm – this makes the island viable for some commuters. It was also the case that Sunday service ran to Gourock as a norm; today Gourock is only used when weather prevents berthing at Wemyss Bay. However, there is an argument for these aspects of the service to be improved further and this will be discussed later in the report.

## Journey Time

Punctuality is a key measure for Calmac – performance to target is an important part of the grant afforded to the company. How is the percentage arrived at?

Performance figure for month ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006 suggested that a performance of 98.5% was achieved. With this caveat – 'punctuality performance against actual sailings undertaken, taking into account any relief events'. Relief event examples are given as 'sailings which were cancelled due to bad weather; in accordance with safety procedures; delays due to the availability or operational restrictions of harbour facilities, or having to wait for the arrival of other public transport connections'. This last, at least, has passengers as a consideration. Passengers however are very much impacted on by these events. Surely it is the true performance figure that should be published in ticket offices and on boats rather than a performance measure that is largely internal between Calmac and Scottish Executive.

One of the differences in language used between BFUG and Calmac relates to the time passengers spend traveling. Calmac measure 'crossing time' and this is taken from 'ropes off' to 'ropes on'. If you are measuring how long it takes for a boat to cross this is, no doubt, a good measure. However BFUG would like to see 'journey time' being measured. This would be from passenger ramp off to passenger ramp on.

CalMac: this would not be a performance measure as it includes turn-round time which is variable. It is the crossing time (let go to all secure) which is time-tabled.

This would be a true measure of customer service – is Calmac fulfilling the promise made in published timetable of 35 minutes crossing?

From 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005, 17 sailings were recorded for both these measures. The last one recorded on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2005. However on one of these occasions the vessel was diverted to Gourock with a sailing time of 1 hour 59 minutes. As this would skew the figures unreasonably this sailing has not been included in the statistics. These sailings were not selected for any special reason and simply recorded at random. The two boats on the crossing during this time were Bute and Saturn.

<i>Crossing Time</i>		<i>Journey Time</i>	
Mean	33.25	Mean	38.3125
Standard Error	0.5361903	Standard Error	0.6172435
Median	33	Median	38
Mode	33	Mode	40
Standard Deviation	2.1447611	Standard Deviation	2.4689741
Sample Variance	4.6	Sample Variance	6.0958333
Kurtosis	6.4997196	Kurtosis	0.3245972
Skewness	2.1314396	Skewness	0.5304776
Range	9	Range	9
Minimum	31	Minimum	35
Maximum	40	Maximum	44
Sum	532	Sum	613
Count	16	Count	16
Largest(1)	40	Largest(1)	44
Smallest(1)	31	Smallest(1)	35
Confidence Level (95.0%)	1.1428632	Confidence Level (95.0%)	1.3156243

The statistics above are outcomes from that monitoring. The journey time can vary a fair bit – this is important particularly to travelers hoping to connect with rail and bus services on the mainland.

It was stated that the target crossing time for the Bute was to be 30 minutes. During this time that target was not met on the monitored journeys.

**CalMac: CalMac's timetable clearly shows a crossing time of 35 minutes. The source of this "target time" is not detailed.**

There were also 5 occasions when passengers had to either access or egress via the car deck. Weather was only recorded as a factor on one occasion, with these 16 sailings, and noted as 'choppy'.

In times gone past, timetables published the 'time in transit' as 30 minutes. Many long time travelers testify that this was the expected time and weather permitting this expectation was met. With advances in technology, it was hoped the new boats would deliver a faster crossing.

Another factor for travelers to consider when planning their journey is when Calmac expect them to be available for boarding. Currently the time asked for is 10 minutes for foot passengers and 30 minutes for vehicles. A particular annoyance for those departing Rothesay is that the first two sailings require the repositioning of the vessels. It is a regular occurrence that the first vessel does not start turning until 6.15am with passengers left to stand in the weather until 6.25am. The same happens with 7am sailing. This has been raised many times, gets addressed and then slips again. We can also add to this difficulties with ramps and infrastructure increase time spent loading and unloading the boats, both people and vehicles, – this has led to late running on the route.

Variations in journey time, through ages, are important in demonstrating a reduction in efficiency on the route. Measuring punctuality against published timetable is important to integration of transport service, ensuring that passengers using train or bus can reliably plan their journeys. The main point is that customer expectation is met and promises are kept where made. BFUG would contend that improvements can be made.

## Timetable

The current timetable is an improvement on service provided in the past however there is still room for improvement.

The two key issues are the lack of an early Saturday morning sailing on the winter timetable and late sailings over the weekend on the summer timetable.

**CALMAC: this is an issue for the tender going forward. CalMac was unable to consider this whilst awaiting the tender. This point does not accord with our understanding of the actuality. We have no record of complaints about weekend late sailings. Does BFUG have this?**

Early Saturday morning sailing – during the summer there is a 0700 sailing from Rothesay. This is of great benefit to commuters who work Saturdays and the return sailing at 0800 from Wemyss Bay benefits shift workers returning to the island. It is also of particular use to day visitors looking to get an early start. However on the winter timetable the first sailing is 0800 from Rothesay – this means that employees have to negotiate changes to working hours to suit the timetable or make arrangements to stay overnight on the Friday to ensure they are at work on time.

Also people leaving the island for winter breaks usually have to leave the island a day earlier to ensure that they can make airport check in times. Again the retention of 0700 sailing would help prevent the added expense of accommodation at the airport.

Recent years has seen Inverkip and Wemyss Bay develop into commuter communities with Rothesay being the next natural extension. However, many people thinking about moving to the island need to be assured that it is a viable commuter option – the lack of this early morning sailing on a Saturday casts doubt on this.

Late sailings – many local hotel, guest houses and B & B's would like to see the provision of later sailings during the summer season. Last sailing to the island on Fridays and Saturdays' is 2040 throughout the summer timetable with last sailing from the island being 1945. Last sailing to the island on Saturday is 2200 however this is restricted from beginning of June to 3<sup>rd</sup> week in August, with last sailing from the island 2110.

Having these late sailings available on both Friday and Saturday plus extending the period to begin start of May and end in September (when English school holidays end) would greatly help both with short break tourism and those who make Bute their main family holiday.

These additional sailings would present a great opportunity to work with the local tourism businesses to promote the island as a great holiday centre with opportunities to day trip to Braehead, Glasgow etc.

## Choice and price

One of the ongoing issues relates to choice and price of tickets. Our consumer survey during Bute Highland Games revealed that only 11.7% of respondents thought the ticket price represented 'Good value for money'. Zero returned a verdict of 'Cheaper than expected'. Leaving 88.30% disappointed with the price paid for their ticket – 27.9% 'Dearer than expected' and a majority 58.51% stating 'Too Expensive'. Of course, consumers are always looking for a better deal and lack of competition in a market adds to the perception that value is not been given.

There are a number of improvements users of Bute ferries would like to see.

**Island discount** – Calmac assert that islanders enjoy winter pricing all year round and that this represents a substantial saving for islanders.

CalMac: This is true. The reason Islander tickets can only be purchased in Rothesay is because this is the only way we know that they come from the island. It would be logistically impossible to offer that discount from the mainland. This discount is given based on the fact that the customer concerned lives on the island and commutes regularly so the 5 day return argument is not entirely valid.

However this only applies to tickets purchased from Rothesay ticket office and only single or return trips. This means that islanders looking to bring their car home at the weekend from the mainland cannot access this saving. An option had been suggested that a return car ticket could be purchased at Rothesay and then used. However CalMac objection to this was one of administration – the outward portion of the ticket (Rothesay to Wemyss Bay) was only valid on the day of travel whilst the inward bound ticket (Wemyss Bay to Rothesay) is valid for 5 days, resulting in driver traveling on an out of date ticket when returning to mainland Monday morning. BFUG contend that this is not an insurmountable problem if the will to overcome it was there.

CalMac: this is not an administrative issue as has been explained to BFUG previously. The ticket validity would be compromised. "Outward" portions of returns are valid on the day of purchase – the "return" portion within one month. The proposal would invalidate the outward portion validity period. This could lead to abuse of the system and revenue loss to the company, and therefore it would have an impact on our deficit grant.

**Supporting business** – Many of the businesses, on the island, are small, with very tight profit margins. The issue of non-transferable and/or non-refundable tickets is one that frequently causes concerns. One example this year demonstrates why this 'policy' needs to be reviewed.

*Local business woman, Maureen Young, who runs Premier Home Care, makes regular use of Calmac services from both ports on the island - usually for passenger only. She frequently buys multi journey tickets. Recently a client in Colintrave has come into her care; the client requires 24 hour care and is looked after by several staff over the course of the week. One staff member had been taking her car back and forth and Maureen decided it prudent to buy a 50 journey ticket for the car - Value £225 - the day after purchasing the ticket, the staff member called Maureen to*

*let her know she would no longer need to use her car as alternative transport had been sourced. The ticket was therefore no longer required.*

*Maureen sought a refund, still having the tickets intact and receipt for payment, she was refused. The small print in the terms and conditions was pointed out to her regarding multi-journey tickets being non-refundable. She explained the circumstances and was refused again 'as a matter of policy'. She offered to accept tickets on Wemyss Bay route to the same value, she was refused.*

*Whilst Maureen accepts the validity of the general terms and conditions; for these to be applied 'as a matter of policy' without due regard to circumstance and the level of custom given, she feels, and I am sure you will agree, is unfair, further, offering an alternative that enabled Calmac to retain the revenue and her small business to utilise the money lost to the business - is a reasonable expectation. She was very disappointed that this was also met with refusal without due consideration.*

Resolution on this issue was reached after BFUG and The Buteman got involved. From the minutes of the board meeting held at Gourrock on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2005, the board acknowledged the 'adverse customer reaction as a result of strict application' of the use of multi journey tickets. There was a little hope, as 'the vehicle specific element of the policy in relation to organizations, such as local authorities, which purchase multi journey tickets for employee use; this issue was being considered separately'. If there was a positive outcome it has not been published.

CalMac: This is a matter between an individual and the Company and the text does not reflect the process which was undertaken, nor the customer's responses. Mrs Young purchased the ticket for one of her employees at 14.43 on September 24. Her employee then contacted her to inform her that she would not need this ticket. The following morning Mrs Young telephoned Customer Care and explained the situation. The staff member explained company policy and informed Mrs Young that we would be happy to change the registration on the ticket so that one of her other employees could use it.

*We allow one registration change of registration in the life of a multi-journey ticket.*

Mrs Young stated that this would not help as she did not have any other employees who took their cars with them regularly on crossings. She wished for a full refund in cash. Angela explained the company policy regarding the return of Multi-journey tickets. *Multi-journey tickets are non-refundable by either cash or voucher and cannot be transferred to another route.*

While this is standard policy, Mrs Young had been in possession of these tickets for less than 12 hours and none of the tickets had been used. She also had all relevant receipts. In light of this the staff member informed Mrs Young that she would like to discuss the situation with her manager. Mrs Young's details were taken and she was informed she would telephone her shortly.

Mrs Young had not been given any firm decision however she was clearly worried that Angela would call back only to confirm company policy. Angela raised the situation with her Manager and they discussed the possibility of assisting Mrs Young as a goodwill gesture. Upon contact with Colintraive, it was confirmed that Mrs Young and her employees travel regularly and all staff concerned felt that Mrs Young purchased the tickets with the best of intentions.

While the situation was still in discussion both BFUG and The Buteman contacted Hugh Dan.

The following should be noted:

- 1 Mrs Young was never refused 'as a matter of policy'. She was simply informed of the policy but told that as her circumstances were unique, the matter would be discussed further and she would be contacted.
- 2 When Mrs Young offered to accept tickets of the same value for the Wemyss Bay/Rothesay route she was not 'refused'. She was informed that this was not standard policy however (yet again) as her situation was unique, the matter would be discussed and she would be contacted.
- 3 Mrs Young's query was not 'met with refusal without due consideration'. She was never refused and the situation was still under consideration when we were contacted by both BFUG and the Buteman.
- 4 BFUG state that 'if there was a positive outcome it has not been published'. For the record, and this was a matter between CalMac and Mrs Young, the issue was resolved as a goodwill gesture. Mrs Young's 50 Journey Colintraive/Rhubodach car ticket (£225.00) was returned and exchanged for a 10 Multi-Journey Wemyss Bay/Rothesay car ticket, passenger ticket (£93.00 and £27.00) and £105.00 in CalMac vouchers.
- 5 Mrs Young was not "disappointed that she was met with refusal and without due consideration" She was quite happy with the outcome. She states in a fax to Angela "Thank you for your assistance in this matter".

**Tickets for cars** – there are a few of issues under this headline.

- i) choice of multiple journeys for cars
- ii) 5 day saver and holiday weekends
- iii) 10 journey ticket applying only to one vehicle
- iv) Confusion between private and commercial use

**Choice** - Currently there are 3 car ticket choices on Rothesay – Wemyss Bay crossing – a single journey; saver 5 day return; and a 10 journey ticket. The Colintraive – Rhubodach route has 4 car ticket choices, the addition being a 50 ticket car and driver.

BFUG has proposed that this 50 ticket option be available on both routes. Calmac have said this option will be looked at.

CalMac: the Company has looked at this and is not currently in a position to offer this due to the current restrictions of revenue neutrality imposed on the Company by the Scottish Executive. The Company will have to submit its bid based on the current fares and concessions. What happens after the bid in October 2007 cannot be foreseen.

- 5 day** – this is a simple issue that only arises around holiday weekends. Islanders purchasing a return ticket on Thursday and traveling back on Tuesday means that the 5 day saver ticket is not an option. An extension to 7 days

CalMac: the Company has looked at this and is not currently in a position to offer this due to a requirement to achieve revenue neutrality in any change i.e. there can be no additional cost to the company. There are also issues regarding to network operation. Concessions/advantages

should not be introduced for individual routes. The Company will have to submit its bid based on the current fares and concessions. What happens after the bid in October 2007 cannot be foreseen.

**Non-transferability** – BFUG see no reason why the car tickets need to be associated with one vehicle. Surely as long as the control portion is attached the ticket is valid. For islanders who have more than one vehicle this would be a more practical application.

CalMac: this position was recently reaffirmed by the Board.

**Confusion** – many islanders make choices about type of car based on Calmac pricing. Considerations such as how many passengers the car can carry, plus large loading space – are high priorities. This is simply because deliveries to the island can add much onto the price of anything from bulk grocery buying to flat pack furniture. Details from an email received by BFUG gives ample evidence of consternation caused.

From N. N. Mellis MRICS,

“I understand that Caledonian MacBrayne have decided, without notice apparently, to change the rules governing fares in respect of private double cab pick-ups over 5 metres in length. This has results in the return fare from Rothesay to Wemyss Bay for my vehicle, a Nissan Navara double cab pick up, being increased by approximately £56 per journey ...”

Mr. Mellis had in fact consulted with the company prior to making his purchase. A resolution was reached when evidence that the vehicle was only insured for ‘social, domestic and pleasure purposes only’ – this being suggested by BFUG Secretary George Docherty. We also believe local councilor Len Scoullar lent his support.

CalMac: this is incorrect: “domestic” crew cab pickups (Nissan) are treated as cars. Cars have no limiting length. Only crew cab pickups based on CV chassis (transit etc) over 5m are treated as commercial. The pricing structure is largely historical and the Company will have to submit its bid based on the current fares and concessions. What happens after the bid in October 2007 cannot be foreseen.

## Pricing in general

There are 9 different tickets available across 7 crossings on the Clyde. Not all tickets are available on all crossings. The analysis carried out on the ticket pricing was difficult and it is appreciated that size of boat; number of crew etc etc may all have a bearing, however applying the same criteria to all crossings, some of the contrasts were stark. Looking at £’s per minute on each crossing the smallest charge was £0.06 rising to £2.04. Thinking about £’s per mile on each crossing the smallest charge was £0.30 rising to £2.29. (See table below). From Bute point of view, Colintraive – Rhubodach seems to suffer from disproportionate levels of pricing.

<u>£ per minute</u>		<u>£ per mile per crossing</u>	
Mean	0.45	Mean	4.41
Standard Error	0.07	Standard Error	1.14
Median	0.32	Median	1.89

Mode	0.09	Mode	0.43
Standard Deviation	0.46	Standard Deviation	7.62
Sample Variance	0.21	Sample Variance	57.99
Kurtosis	3.43	Kurtosis	11.28
Skewness	1.91	Skewness	3.34
Range	1.97	Range	37.20
Minimum	0.06	Minimum	0.30
Maximum	2.04	Maximum	37.50
Sum	20.17	Sum	198.36
Count	45.00	Count	45.00
Largest(1)	2.04	Largest(1)	37.50
Smallest(1)	0.06	Smallest(1)	0.30
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.14	Confidence Level (95.0%)	2.29

The opportunity to choose the ticket that suits your travel needs is to be welcomed and appreciated; however, the opportunities are restricted depending on which Clyde crossing you are on. To date Calmac have not reviewed their position on these issues – the most recent answer to these issues being that the current tender process prevents any such changes.

**Calmac: The Company will have to submit its bid based on the current fares and concessions. What happens after the bid in October 2007 cannot be foreseen.**

With today's technology administration costs should not increase with full choice; in fact with electronic ticketing offering full choice across the network would present profit opportunities for Calmac and allow consumers to make the choice that suits their circumstances.

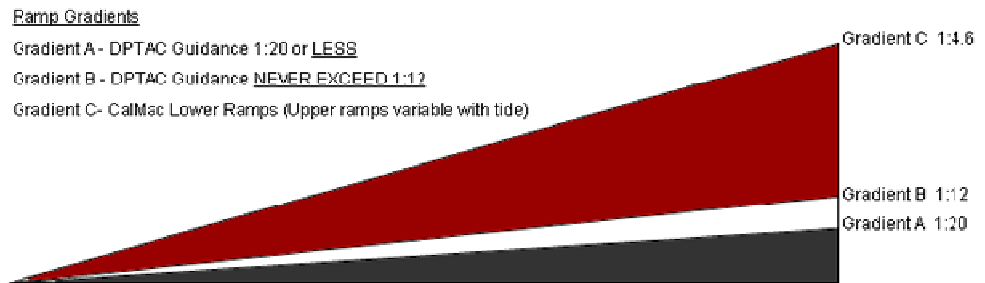
Indeed in all respects of ticketing it is not huge discounts or travel for free that islanders are looking for but a common sense approach that really adds value to the community. To this end we would welcome an investigation as to whether Road Equivalent Tariff would benefit the island.

**CALMAC: there are various systems of RET which have been investigated from time to time but none of them have produced a successful solution. There are winners and losers in every system of RET with some routes coming out more expensive and some cheaper. The system of fares currently used is called CFares and was introduced in 1992 following extensive research. The main objectives of CFares in priority order is; a) to maintain or improve economic and social conditions in the area, b) to ensure that resources are used efficiently and in a cost effective manner and c) to produce a return to contribute towards resources for capital expenditure. CFares was reviewed at the request of the Scottish Executive in 1997 and 2000.**

## Access and Egress

We have on several occasions raised the issue of ramps at both piers. BFUG accept that conditions at Rothesay pier will improve with the planned redevelopment of the pier. We also recognise that, currently, there are restrictions at Wemyss Bay that mean passengers have to accept this unsuitable piece of equipment. The diagram below (kindly put together by D Middleton, BFUG committee member) shows the extent to which these ramps do not comply with DPTAC guidance.

CalMac: Due to space constraints, suggested ramp gradients cannot be provided. Equipment provided overcomes this by providing lifts.



Ramp Lengths

CalMac 18m long at a Gradient 1:4.6  
 DPTAC Guidance 3m or less if gradient steeper than 1:12  
 DPTAC Guidance no Longer than 5m up to 1:12 gradient

Ramp Widths

DPTAC Guidance preferred width – 2000mm  
 DPTAC Guidance short ramp lengths – 1350mm (landing area – 2000mm)  
 CalMac Ramp – 960mm

**Operational issues –**

From March to July 2006 the operational status of the ramps was measured by Julie Reid, BFUG member. Please note that this is not a definitive list of events but just a flavour of the inconvenience caused by technical faults.

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April – Lift at Wemyss Bay out of order, a period of 6 weeks.

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April – Lift at Wemyss Bay out of order.

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – Ramp at Rothesay not working.

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May – Ramp at Wemyss Bay not working.

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July – Ramp at Rothesay out of order.

When ramps are in-operative passengers are asked to access or egress via the car deck. For many people (elderly; disable; parents with buggies; anyone with luggage or shopping) this presents a hazard and is unacceptable. BFUG have suggested that a minibus or similar arrangement be organised to take people on and off the boats during these times. We have been told that it would cause an issue with turnaround times. As there is a van and trailer routinely used to ferry parcels on and off, we asked why this vehicle could not be replaced with a people carrier. We stressed again, the inconvenience being experienced by passengers – the matter was left as something to be looked at.

This issue clearly demonstrates a desire for boat schedules to be adhered to without due regard to passengers. We would ask that value is added by making people the priority.

CALMAC: this appears to contradict the assertions in Section 1 which says CalMac does not meet schedules.

## Pier Facilities including parking

Wemyss Bay – this pier is unlikely to get an upgrade for at least 5 years. This was the message from Calmac/BFUG meeting on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. This means that despite a new link span and terminal building at Rothesay Pier, passengers on this route will continue to experience disruptions and cancellations due to the incompatibility of the new boats and the Wemyss Bay infrastructure.

The marshalling area is in need of repair and possibly resurfacing; cars currently have to navigate ever increasing pot holes. The terminal building leaks like a sieve and needs repairing, this should happen in the New Year - it must be said that after BFUG pressed the issue, the ticket office is to gain a roof. H & S issues have been raised around tactile surfaces and barriers with a few changes made. The ramp has been discussed above.

CalMac: the meeting of December 18 was informed about progress on the roof issue. CalMac will need to investigate the issue of tactile hand rail surfaces.

It is clear that only a breakwater will solve some of the issues caused by wind and tide. However the split of companies resulting in Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd now being responsible for the shore facilities, effectively means that Calmac can distance themselves from the issue whilst stating that they are willing to work with anyone with a proposal. The question is - if the facilities are not fit for purpose, surely the company using those facilities should be to the fore in getting positive action.

CalMac: the meeting of December 18 discussed the way forward on this and it was agreed a case would have to be made. It is not a case of CalMac distancing them from anything. CMAL is where the responsibility now properly lies.

A breakwater would also provide the opportunity for a 'park and ride' facility that could be shared by ferry and rail users as well as the local community. Our survey on this subject revealed that an overwhelming majority of 94 respondents (71%) said they were unhappy with parking availability at Wemyss Bay. Of those who expressed an opinion (77 answers) 65% would prefer to see parking provided free as part of ferry/rail ticket and 35% indicating that they would be prepared to pay dependant on price.

CalMac: the issue is one of space not cost. There is not enough space to make this facility viable at WB due to operational constraints. ScotRail have recently announced improvements scheduled for WB parking and they are investing heavily in park and ride schemes elsewhere.

25.5% of respondents classed themselves as 'holiday makers' and 66.6% of these indicated that they would make use of a parking facility at Wemyss Bay. This should be of

particular interest to those concerned about increasing traffic levels on Bute. Many holiday makers would prefer to leave their cars on the mainland.

21.3% of respondents classed themselves as 'commuters' and all would make use of the facility. With the added choice of a 50 journey car ticket they would be able to bring their cars back to the island for weekends, thereby freeing up space for weekend and day trippers.

We feel that this would not only benefit the island by encouraging weekend and day tripper business, it would also benefit the local community at Wemyss Bay.

## Customer Service Charter

At present Calmac does not appear to have a Passengers Charter – which is surprising for a company that relies on passengers providing 18.68% of Turnover (company report 2006). Indeed a browse through the website and company literature will leave the reader in no doubt that this is a ferry company; focused on meeting performance targets that comply with the funding received from Scottish Executive. That should not be a surprise as 'grants' contribute 38.08% to Turnover. The extracts below are taken from the company website and demonstrate the level of commitment to customer satisfaction.

CalMac is currently producing a Customers' Charter which will be in line with the performance regime required of bidders in the Customers Services undertaking of the CHFS tender. What the detail does is explain the policy.

### **Service disruption**

*CalMac does not accept liability for expenses incurred by passengers due to delay to, or cancellation of services, however caused. This includes the cost of accommodation or travel by buses, trains or taxis, etc required after missed connections. ([www.calmac.co.uk/boarding-information.html](http://www.calmac.co.uk/boarding-information.html))*

### **Refunds**

*Consideration will be given to all applications for refund in respect of unused tickets returned to Customer Care in Gourock.*

*The following administration charges will apply:*

- *25% of the value of the unused tickets (minimum charge £10) for valid tickets.*
- *75% of the value of the unused tickets (minimum charge £25) for tickets which are less than one month past their expiry date.*
- *Refunds will not be given on any tickets which are more than one month or more past their expiry date.*

*Refunds on partially used tickets are calculated on the basis of the fare minus the number of journeys taken, charged at the full single fare. Refunds on 8 or 15 day Island Rover tickets will not be considered if received after the commencement of their validity.*

*Please note that refunds will not be considered for 5/6/10/30/50 Journey tickets, group tickets or other reduced-rate tickets which may be available.*

*Saver 5 Day Return - Valid for 5 days/4 nights (availability is limited on some services - see individual route timetables for details). Partially used Saver 5 Day Return tickets are non-refundable. Saver 5 Day Return ticket return portions can be extended to full standard returns during validity period of the ticket by presenting the ticket to a port office. ([www.calmac.co.uk/ticket-informtion.html](http://www.calmac.co.uk/ticket-informtion.html))*

There are 4 performance targets –

- Financial – fares income as % of operating costs
- Staff costs – as % of fares income
- Reliability – scheduled sailings fulfilled
- Punctuality – scheduled sailings on time

Costs, income, sailings – there is no mention of people. This report has already covered issues arising from the measures of reliability and punctuality. We have also discussed ticketing in terms of choice and price, as well as other concerns that passengers have that are not being measured. Yet over 5 million people use this service!

CalMac: the Company currently details its performance publicly on a monthly basis and detail to that published information is available on request and has in fact been provided to BFUG. The performance regime under the new contract will place even more onerous obligations on the operator. CalMac has consistently made the point that the targets should be customer driven rather than target driven, especially in integrated terms where two co-joined operators' (such as CalMac and ScotRail) might have targets which are not complementary.

First Scot Rail services, from Wemyss Bay to Glasgow, are used by many of the commuters on the Wemyss Bay route and this service too has punctuality and reliability measures however 'our business focus is on you, the passenger.'  
([www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/content/aboutus/passengercharter.php](http://www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/content/aboutus/passengercharter.php))

The language of Calmac measures seems to direct the company behaviour towards treating people as a commodity to pay for the operation of its ferries.

CalMac: this is clearly a matter of opinion. CalMac believes that the establishment of the Customer Care unit and the introduction of CalMac Cares training and other programmes have significantly improved our performance which is monitored internally on a regular basis.

## **The Wish List**

1. Punctuality and Reliability figures that are published should reflect passenger experience.

CalMac: the company believes that they do, within the context of the current performance regime. CalMac does not set these targets but has to meet them and publish performance annually. Punctuality can only be measured against published timetables.

2. Customers should be able to access service information in real time by telephone; web; text messaging system; pier signs and/or company personnel.

CalMac: BFUG knows that this has been addressed. The definition of "real time" needs to be agreed. SMS text messaging is free on bookable routes for car bookings. SMS text messaging is being introduced in February/March for timetable/disruption information, as well as a web-based "traffic light" service status information system.

3. Facilities on and off shore should ensure the safety and comfort of passengers including high standards of cleanliness.

CalMac: obviously agreed totally. The performance regime should ensure this.

4. If the boat is delayed for any reason; the company undertakes to:

- a. Get passengers to their destination port

CalMac: linking transport is provided for diverted sailings as has been explained to BFUG previously.

- b. Or arrange alternative transport where possible

- c. Or make other arrangements, such as overnight accommodation, where appropriate

CalMac: "for any reason" is not reasonable. It is understandable in situations where we are responsible. The performance regime will set out the criteria the operator must observe.

5. If the boat is delayed more than 30 minutes, passengers can expect a complimentary tea, coffee or soft drinks whilst stocks are available.

CalMac: Regional/Onboard Service Managers have the flexibility to deal with this as it is.

6. Changes to timetable are published in local newspapers as well as on company documentation.

CalMac: this is done and we will do more of it where there is evidence that we don't fulfill our obligations (Performance regime)

7. Season ticket holders delayed for more than the equivalent sailing time can expect vouchers to the value of that journey to be redeemed against the next ticket.

CalMac: over-simplistic: what would happen if the customer caught the next ship? What if the delay was not CalMac's fault? Season tickets refer to a period of time rather than a number of journeys.

8. If punctuality or reliability targets are missed then 5% deduction of next season ticket is given. If both targets are missed the deduction rises to 10%.

9. All other ticket holders can expect vouchers to 50% of the ticket value if delayed for the equivalent sailing time.

10. If the sailing is cancelled or the delay is of such length that passenger decides not to travel – a full refund should be given immediately.

CalMac: 8, 9 and 10 are issues for the Performance Regime. Number 10 happens already.

## People

People are the key to any company wishing to succeed in creating profitable relationships with their customers. People must have the right balance of knowledge; skills and attitude, also thinking like a passenger and seeking to meet their expectations would be beneficial. However they must also be empowered to make decisions; there should be flexibility within processes and systems, to allow that empowerment; and trusted to understand the goals of the business, to an extent that any decision results in a win-win situation for both company and passenger.

In general terms the people employed by our current service provider do a good job. However there are growing concerns that morale is dropping to a level that is having an impact on service.

CalMac notes this acceptance. With respect to morale, the perception amongst the staff and crew is often that they are being “got at” by customers and take unreasonable levels of abuse. CalMac will work hard to ensure that morale is not allowed to drop and that employees are in a position to deliver the services confidently and successfully.

It is not the remit of this report to criticize individuals, however it is pertinent to state that passengers can judge how hard a company is working to engage with them on the experience of interaction with that company’s employees. Recently that experience has been very mixed.

## Conclusion

The ferry service provided to and from Bute does not, at present, represent value for money.

CalMac: this is a commonly held view and rehearsed frequently across the network. The provision of lifeline ferry service is, however, an expensive business. It is not a view that is universally shared, however, and is more commonly held by island residents rather than occasional or infrequent users.

Processes and procedures brought in, or recently robustly enforced, do not encourage a belief in an effective or efficient service that is passenger focused. The incompatibility of boats and pier infrastructures impacts frequently on service; this is exacerbated by weather conditions. The crossing time has not decreased; the journey time for passengers has increased measurably. Current ticketing arrangements do not suit passengers’ needs or wants. The current service provider does not fully understand its consumer base.

CalMac: this is not agreed and the company will work harder to explain its own circumstances and operating environment to customers, so that they too are fully conversant with the constraints.

It has, thankfully, recently started to listen.

## Recommendations

We recommend that any future service provider understands that it is people who are the key to running a profitable service. A passenger charter is required. A reliable, frequent service, that has the flexibility to respond to the needs of the island inhabitants and businesses' it serves whilst encouraging infrequent users to return, is essential.

CalMac has no difficulty with this whatsoever. CalMac will, however, be fully reflective of the issues raised in the various documents and will produce its bids in line with the formal requirements, having taken on board as much as is possible and financially viable from the consultation exercise which is about to take place.

## Bibliography

[www.buteferryusersgroup.com](http://www.buteferryusersgroup.com)

CalMac: it is disappointing that the website is not kept up to date with, for example, CalMac news releases for information.

[www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

CalMac: the performance, layout and operation of the website is constantly reviewed. CalMac welcomes any suggestions which would lead to the improvement of the website which has already won an award from the travel industry.

[www.shipsocalmac.co.uk](http://www.shipsocalmac.co.uk)

[www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

[www.firstgroup.com](http://www.firstgroup.com)