

Note of Meeting	TITLE	Uist Association of Community Councils Meeting		
	DATE	Thursday 25 th June 2020	TIME	7.00pm
	VENUE	online		

Easing of Lockdown from an Island Perspective	
present:	Chris Wilcock, Head of Ferries, Transport Scotland Robbie Drummond, Managing Director CalMac Laurence Kenney, Ferries Unit, Transport Scotland Pauline Blackshaw, Head of Service Delivery Planning CalMac Robert Morrison, Operations Director CalMac
	Gail Robertson, CalMac Communities Board Cllr I A Macneil Cllr I Macleod Cllr U Robertson Cllr P Steele
	Chair : Peter Bird (Iochdar), Tracy Walker (Benbecula), Marie Campbell (Bornish), Vanessa Langley (Benbecula), John MacDonald (North Uist) Michelle MacDonald (North Uist) Donnie Steele (Iochdar) Morag Ann MacAulay (Iochdar) Graham Martindale (Lochboisdale) Sarah MacDonald (North Uist) Anne Bird (mins)
Intro:	PB began the meeting by welcoming the guests and reminded everyone of the purpose of CCS as set out by ScotGov i.e. Community Councils are voluntary organisations set up by statute and run by local residents to act on behalf of their area, they are intended to bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent and therefore play an important role in local democracy. PB concluded by stating that Community Consultation by any public body is incomplete without input from the local Community Councils. They are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland.
Tribute:	DS then paid tribute to the work of TS and CalMac, particularly frontline CalMac staff throughout the Lockdown phase recognising that the response to the pandemic by TS, CalMac and LoganAir is the main reason that Uist has remained virus free during lockdown.
	The meeting continued with a series of questions that have been asked by Community Councils, the answers given here are a summary of the responses (not verbatim):
1.	Will pets be permitted to travel on the ferry as before? RM: Yes, during lockdown-easing pets will be permitted in the usual pet areas. Pet owners to observe the 2m social distancing.

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2.	<p>Has there been any planning around the anticipated increase in demand for haulage as the island comes out of lockdown?</p> <p>RM: CalMac very aware of Importance of haulage in both directions, CalMac are continuing to work with hauliers, reviewing the capacity figures for each ferry. CalMac understand the importance of facilitating commercial and haulage bookings, especially during lockdown-easing as businesses start back up and many trades resume work.</p>
3.	<p>Will foot passengers be able to book ahead for Western Isles ferries?</p> <p>RM: planning is ongoing to manage the capacities, balancing the needs of different ferry users. CalMac understand the need for certainty for foot passengers arriving at the ports and the need to avoid queues forming at the smaller ticket offices. They anticipate that booking for foot passengers on all routes will be possible when new timetable kicks in using winter sailing times.</p>
4	<p>Has there been discussion re what contingency is in place if a visitor to the island develops symptoms and needs to self-isolate for 14 days?</p> <p>CW: acknowledged the difficulties that could arise e.g. health advice regarding tourism is that holiday makers should return home to self-isolate if they develop symptoms, but all public transport clearly disallows travelling with symptoms. There have been discussions with Health Boards and local Councils. Medical evacuation procedure would not normally apply to a visitor with symptoms who is otherwise well.</p> <p>CIlr UR offered to discuss the concerns with WIHB and feed back.</p>
5.	<p>Will the proportion of 'last minute' tickets be increased if there is a higher than expected demand?</p> <p>RM: Within the current restricted capacity (due to social distancing) 80% of capacity on each sailing will be bookable, these proportions could be reviewed in the future but for now everyone is encouraged to book ahead. CalMac will look at the phrasing used to refer to the 20% of carrying capacity that is not bookable in advance as phrases like 'last-minute' 'turn up and go' can be misleading, suggesting space is available when it may not be.</p>
6.	<p>Could visitors to the islands, with and without vehicles, be required to book returns or round trips only, not singles?</p> <p>RM: under the current contract, CalMac cannot insist that visitors buy a return or onward ticket.</p> <p>LK: During lockdown easing, the messaging around tickets could be amended to encourage all visitors to book return or onward travel.</p> <p>CW: Looking at current capacities through modelling derived from previous years, visitor demand for the remaining summer months are not expected to exceed 50-60% of last year's figures.</p> <p>GR: CalMac have been liaising with hauliers re changing needs.</p> <p>CW: TS engaged with local authorities to get a steer on opening. Communities have been expressing caution on opening up. Decisions have been based on people following the ScotGov guidance and have been made by MSPs who are informed by the latest health advice.</p>

	Community Councillors pointed out that up to 75% of respondents were asking for caution to opening up in a recent poll by Benbecula Community Council.
7.	<p>Could campervans/caravans be required to have an advance booking on a campsite for the period of their stay?</p> <p>CW: question has been raised with ministers based on the principle of restriction during the initial easing phase. CalMac contract may not allow them to restrict bookings in this way.</p> <p>UR: Harris Transport Forum have asked the Council if campervans/caravans can be required to be on campsites only and asked if Council can produce a by-law, which can take a while.</p>
8.	<p>Social-distancing requirements have allowed passengers to stay in their vehicles on the Berneray to Leverburgh ferry, can this be adopted as a permanent arrangement?</p> <p>RM: this is a dispensation from the MCA during the Social distancing phase only.</p> <p>RD: permanent arrangement would require a major change of vessel layout to allow for evacuation procedures.</p>
9.	<p>From the viewpoint of CalMac and Transport Scotland, what does an effective Ferry Users Group look like?</p> <p>RM: there are ferry committees all around the network which are very valuable for seeking a consensus and viewpoints on competing priorities. A Ferry Committee could cover just one ferry route or all routes in an island group. Input is usually twice yearly. Uist and Lewis have no active ferry committees. Some are Community Council based and have reps from haulage, tourism, residents' groups, Local Councillors.</p> <p>The 2nd tier after ferry committees is a regional forum, Ferry stakeholder groups. There is one for the Hebrides and meets twice yearly.</p> <p>The discussion then led to the conclusion that a committee covering all Uist routes would hopefully help to provide a more strategic view than having a different committee for each ferry route.</p> <p>LK: aligning such a ferry committee with the Community Council structure (perhaps as a sub group) would be helpful to ensure it is accountable to local communities and representative.</p> <p>GR: Ownership of a Ferries Committee – who would take the lead?</p> <p>UR: He is on the Hebrides Stakeholder Group along with 4 others from Uist, GR, Cllr MacNeil, Cllr Macleod and Joanna Peteranna HIE.</p> <p>UR: the Harris Transport Forum meets 4 times a year and is chaired by a CC Chair, Margaret Makenzie from Scalpay and includes one rep from each CC, Local Councillors and Outer Hebrides Tourism.</p>
	After some further general discussion, PB closed the meeting thanking all those in attendance.

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