



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

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# Action Plan – CalMac Ferries Communication Paper

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## Foreword

The Scottish Government is committed to maintaining and improving lifeline ferry services that play a key role in supporting the economic, social and cultural development of island and remote mainland communities. From my own engagement with communities, I am aware of current pressures on the ferry network and the impact that has on people's lives and businesses in our island communities.



Notwithstanding that level of commitment to, and investment in, Scotland's lifeline ferry services, capacity in peak periods can be a challenge for our ferry service users and any resilience issues can be particularly disruptive. That challenge is, clearly, greatest for visitors and local residents and businesses in the summer months when visitor numbers to our islands are at their highest and demand is at its highest.

This Government commissioned this Action Plan to help improve the performance of our ferry services, in light of concerns raised, and I have asked Transport Scotland officials to work together with operators to get this right for passengers.

The Action Plan is not a substitute for addressing challenges with fleet capacity and resilience, which require longer term action, and we are working with stakeholders to deliver the action that is needed in the medium and longer term, through development of, among other actions, the next Ferries Plan and the forthcoming updated Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan. The Action Plan itself complements investment in proactive maintenance, proposed new booking system and other resilience measures and aims, principally, to improve the customer experience and will include the following measures:

- communication strategy to passengers when there is service disruption
- clear guidance on how customers should engage with operators if they face difficulty travelling for emergencies, such as medical appointments or funerals
- a programme of commitments which ferry operators must adhere to

My aim is to ensure that everyone involved in the provision of ferry services is aligned in pursuing the Scottish Government's objective of using transport connectivity to support the socio-economic sustainability of our island communities and to maintain and enhance the quality of life for those communities served by Scotland's supported ferries operators.

*Kind regards*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wheelhouse'.

**Paul Wheelhouse MSP,  
Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands**

## **CalMac Ferries Ltd**

CalMac Ferries Ltd (CFL) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of David MacBrayne Ltd, which is wholly owned by Scottish Ministers. The second CHFS contract which commenced 1 October 2016 was awarded to CalMac at a cost of about £868 million over eight years.

CalMac Ferries Limited has one wholly owned subsidiary; Caledonian MacBrayne Crewing (Guernsey) Limited, which employs and supplies more than 1,000 sea going staff.

There are 31 ferries serving 52 ports on 49 routes in the Clyde and Hebrides. In 2018, the company carried more than 5.3 million passengers, 1.43 million cars and 80,291 commercial vehicles.

### **CHFS2 contract**

The Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service contract (CHFS2) sets out governance arrangements. The Transport Scotland (TS) contract management team works to manage all the contracts consistently and in line with requirements. This is irrespective of whether the operator is a private company owned by Scottish Ministers, such as CalMac, or a private sector body such as Serco NorthLink Ferries (SNF). CalMac is expected to deliver fully to the contract and the commitments it made in its bid.

The new CHFS2 contract is much more stringent than the previous contract in the application of performance deductions, especially in the case of technical issues or non-relief events that are within the operator's control.

The contract permits variations under certain circumstances.

### **What have we achieved?**

The Scottish Government has invested over £1.9 billion in ferry services, vessels and infrastructure across Scotland since 2007. That includes investment of over £1.5 billion in operational costs, over £255 million in new ferries and £113 million in investment associated with piers and harbours infrastructure.

On the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services, the Scottish Government has delivered investment through record spend on subsidies to CalMac and provision of capital investment to CMAL and other harbour owners.

In August 2018, we announced a £3.5 million Resilience Fund with an additional £4 million being allocated to this within the 2019/2020 budget to invest in services to ensure future reliability and availability of vessels.

This funding has resulted in 23 individual projects across most of the fleet. One of the most significant projects was the investment of £0.7 million in the Helicon-X3 propulsion control system from Rolls Royce. The MV Hebrides and MV Cale Isles

upgraded 2018/19 with the MV Clansman and MV Isle of Lewis work planned for 2019/20. This is a critical system which controls output between the engine and propulsion systems.

Another good example of the investment was the replacement of the draught gauging system which is used to optimise carrying capacity on 23 vessels. The obsolescence of the system and the relatively few spare parts remaining available meant that this system had to be replaced urgently. This process was begun in 2018 with 13 vessels being refitted and the remainder scheduled for 2019.

The Scottish Government has invested in new vessels and ferry infrastructure to renew the fleet, with the most recent examples being the two vessels currently being built at Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd with a contract cost of £97 million. The first of these vessels is going to serve the Arran service and the second to serve the Outer Hebrides (Uig – Tarbert - Lochmaddy).

There has been a welcome increase in passenger numbers following the successful introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) fares on the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services. The immediate impact of the roll out of RET has been to make ferry travel more affordable for those who live, work and visit our island communities. That in turn has had a very positive economic impact on the islands, particularly for the tourism sector. Since the full roll out of RET, passenger numbers across the Clyde and Hebrides services increased by 14% and cars by 25%. These outturn figures are calculated based on the change between contract years 2014/15 and 2017/18.

## **In the event of disruption**

Scottish Ministers have been listening and agree with island communities that more needs to be done to improve the customer experience in response to weather events and technical breakdowns. Ministers recognise the significant importance of ferry services to the socio-economic development of the island and remote communities to secure these ferry services going forward and in time for the 2019 summer season.

### **Masters' Decision**

The decision to delay or cancel a sailing is never taken lightly. The importance of ferry services to island and isolated rural communities is fully recognised by CalMac. However, the Master of the ship is required to always put the safety of passengers, the crew and the ship first. The Masters' right to cancel a sailing on the basis of safety is enshrined in law, principally in the Merchant Shipping (Masters' Discretion) Regulations 1997. Notwithstanding any aspect of this action plan or Public Service Contract, the Masters' decision to sail is entirely their own and no individual has right or obligation to influence this. All Masters have full backing of CalMac and Scottish Ministers to discharge their responsibilities in a manner in which they see fit to ensure the safety of passengers, crew, cargo, ship and harbour.

## Communications

The operator and Traffic Scotland provide full service details via their websites:

CalMac:

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/service-status>

Traffic Scotland:

<https://trafficscotland.org/publictransport/>

Disruptions will be communicated via:

- vessels and Ports – customers on board vessels and at ports will receive service information updates
- CalMac Status app – customers who download the CalMac Status app (available for Android and Apple users) can view service information straight from their smartphone or tablet
- service status by text – customers who have subscribed to receive mobile phone service updates will be sent a text alert
- social media – customers who follow the service updates Twitter account @Calmac\_Updates will receive service information
- automated telephony – 29 routes are updated each morning and throughout the day on the automated IVR system, allowing customers to listen to service information
- reservation alerts – customers who have made a reservation and provided a mobile number, will be sent a service information text alert
- visual message boards and HiTrans boards at various locations across the road and public transport network display generic messages with passenger advice and timetable information
- external communication – a disruption notice is issued to newspapers, TV/Radio stations, government bodies and local island ferry committee groups

## **Customer assistance**

CalMac already do much to assist their customers in relation to passengers with accessibility challenges:

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/travelling-with-calmac/help-for-passengers/passenger-assistance>

For example, customers with mobility challenges, such as those in a wheelchair, can expect that, if required, the operator will provide one to one assistance when accessing or egressing the vessel. CalMac Ferries Limited are progressing the rolling out an Assisted Boarding project which will see motorised wheelchairs being deployed across the network to assist passengers with mobility challenges to access and egress the vessels.

CalMac also intend to publish an Assisted Travel Guide which will set out the assistance that disabled passengers can expect when travelling with CalMac.

For those travelling with accessibility or specific needs, please contact:

CalMac Assistance Team  
0800 066 5000  
+441475 650 397 (International Customers only)  
[assistanceteam@calmac.co.uk](mailto:assistanceteam@calmac.co.uk)

## **Urgent medical appointments**

A protocol has been agreed between Transport Scotland and CalMac to fully support island residents with urgent or unplanned travel where and when needed. The aim is to prevent island residents missing appointments / treatments due to lack of capacity on CalMac ferry services, thereby minimising delays in medical diagnosis and treatment commencement. Full communications will be issued to island communities to advise of the protocol and support that will be provided by CalMac for customers' priority medical travel.

## **Complaints procedure**

The CalMac website provides full details in relation to fare/disruptions/compensation and complaints processes:

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/faqs/disruptions>

## **Compensation**

The EU Passenger Rights legislation [[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index_en.htm)] provides compensation to passengers affected by technical delays. Compensation is available in certain circumstances if a sailing is cancelled or delayed due to a technical fault or an operational reason, as per EU Regulation 1177/2010.

All CalMac customer facing staff are aware and familiar with the claim process and should be advising customers where they can find details on what can be claimed and how the claim can be made (i.e. directing customers to website <https://www.calmac.co.uk/faqs/disruptions>). This information is also displayed on vessels and at ports.

## **Future commitments**

Transport Scotland will continue to closely monitor operator performance under our public service contracts, including when it is in place, the measures in the Action Plan.

Officials will also work with CalMac to consider the measures available to reserve deck space until nearer departure time, allowing passengers to book space to fulfil urgent needs for travel.





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