

ISLANDS TRANSPORT FORUM

Sixth meeting – 9 May 2019

Note of meeting

Attendees

Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands
Cllr Aileen Morton, Argyll and Bute Council – by audio link
Moya Ingram, Argyll & Bute Council – by audio link
Cllr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Iain Mackinnon, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Allan Henderson, The Highland Council – by audio link
Cllr Joe Cullinane, North Ayrshire Council – by audio link
Louise Kirk, North Ayrshire Council – by audio link
Cllr Graham Sinclair, Orkney Islands Council
Gavin Barr, Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Steven Coutts, Shetland Islands Council
Maggie Sandison, Shetland Islands Council
Cllr Ryan Thomson, Shetland Islands Council
Michael Craigie, Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans
Ranald Robertson, HiTrans
Chris Wilcock, Transport Scotland
Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland
Heather Cowan, Transport Scotland
Michael Bratcher, Transport Scotland
Brian Gordon, Transport Scotland
Don Morrison, Scottish Government – by audio link
Ravi Grandhi, Transport Scotland
Maria Pabolaza, Transport Scotland – by audio link
Val Ferguson – Transport Scotland (note taker)

Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

1. Mr Wheelhouse welcomed everyone to the sixth meeting of the Islands Transport Forum and invited those in the room and on the phone to introduce themselves.

Item 2 – Notes of fifth meeting – matters arising – review of actions

2. The notes of the meeting on 25 October and the follow up call on 19 December were agreed.
3. Mr Wheelhouse reviewed the action points as indicated in the chart appended to this note.
4. Matters arising included :-

- The additional information from CalMac on block booking savings was welcomed
 - Cruise passenger checks was no longer a major issue. Members agreed to alert Chris Wilcock if this became an issue in future. Maggie Sandison agreed to check the current situation with Lerwick port authority. It was noted that in Orkney local engagement with Border Force has been good.
 - Ferries budget figures were welcomed as useful reference and the Minister recognised the importance of ferry spending to islands.
5. Final point on CMAL provision of information is to be taken up with CMAL in future and **the action was carried forward**

Item 3 – National Transport Strategy (NTS) Review & Strategic Projects Review STPR2

6. The Minister introduced Heather Cowan who gave an overview of the paper issued before the meeting. Heather highlighted the aim to publish the consultation at the end of July with policy work ongoing and noting the need to minimise cost for connectivity for rural and island communities. The strategy will reflect the need for spatial variation. She confirmed that regional groups have been established for STPR2 including one to be taken forward for Shetland Islands.
7. Discussion on the paper followed with points noted:-
- Highlighted the age of current ferries and the need to be cleaner/smarter in future but in the short term a replacement program should be progressed to facilitate longer term aims.
 - Mapping out short term solutions was needed.
 - Aviation appeared disjointed from the process rather than integrated
 - The view was expressed that aviation is a core part of transportation dynamic and priorities for Islands and it should therefore be included within STPR. It was confirmed that Island Connectivity was within scope for STPR and that the regional transport working groups including the opportunity to identify priorities for regions including highlighting the importance of aviation.
 - Call for STPR2 to give recognition to internal air services and needs of local airports as these need to be recognised for investment.
 - Need for more agile ferries, lower crewing, environmentally friendly.
 - Previous scoping paper on air services and funding on air service would be useful moving forward.
 - Need to take account of neighbouring council collaboration.
8. The Minister noted comments tended to major on ferries, the next phase of the pipeline of investment for ferries procurement and internal services and he highlighted the commitment to work with passenger groups locally. Business cases will inform the capital needs of all fleets in Scotland with more integration.
9. Other points noted:-
- The need to look at transport down the line and how car traffic is likely to change
 - STPR is not the only delivery mechanism for NTS
 - islands connectivity priorities to feed in from regional groups
 - multi modal transport approach will be adopted to a problem and fixed links fall under evidence base of potential solutions in options that emerge

- Next Ferries Plan will be within the policy context in NTS – no timescale yet though needs to be in place no later than December 2022.
- RET has exceeded expectation in growth of vehicle carryings and tourism levels
- Evaluation of RET is underway
- Ferry system has evolved from moving people to moving vehicles with fewer ferry travellers using public transport links
- Need to rebalance towards travel for people, including vehicle users, and freight.
- The National Islands Plan will also be part of policy context for the next Ferries Plan
- Are there short term (3-5 years) solutions that can be done with existing fleet?
- Should be possible to build ferries faster (Isle of Wight ferry cited as recent example)
- Age of some current vessels - do not meet disability needs
- Cessation of ferry service would contribute to depopulation for internal ferries in Shetland
- RTPs had met the Infrastructure Commission and had made the case for short term ferries infrastructure investment
- The need for climate change consideration in the context of alternative or electric options for aviation

10. The Minister confirmed he was looking at more standardised design and engaged in discussion on the impact on harbour infrastructure.

Item 4 – Islands Act/Plan update

11. Mr Wheelhouse invited Don Morrison to summarise the paper issued ahead of the meeting. Following engagement with key community stakeholders the stage 2 consultation was launched on 6 April and closes 6 July. Face to face events are being held on 40 islands to inform the draft plan. Work on Island Community Impact Assessments (ICIA) guidance and templates is being carrying out at same time and will be integrated into consultation by end of year.

12. Issues emerging so far include:-

- Feedback indicated integrated timetabling was not happening
- Freight issues.
- Roads quality issues – Jura cited.
- Updates to be provided to Highlands and Islands leaders group in June –and to Islands Strategic Group in August

13. The Minister requested that interactions with transport and other policy areas ie housing materials and tourism be highlighted. Other comments included:-

- positive feedback locally on consultation
- first stage was less good on engagement with councils
- local transport partnerships need to be engaged going forward
- deeper consultation and ownership with councils needed
- national plan so must have national focus
- internal discussions are ongoing on the framework of the plan
- issues on comprehensive engagement are being addressed
- event feedback is being followed up with individuals and reports produced after the event

- individual islanders may not be aware of all the links to other services or the impacts
 - impact assessments must be put in place sooner than later
 - Ministers must act in the spirit of the Act now
14. The Minister recognised challenge and noted once ICIA's are in place they can be applied retrospectively. Fuel Poverty Targets Bill and Planning Bill are taking this into account. NTS work will also be in the spirit of the Act.
15. It was confirmed that HIAL is undertaking ICIA's for relevant projects at present and have been engaging with Islands Team officials to ensure that their ICIA's meet the requirements. A discussion between officials, HIAL and SG location director for Western Isles was suggested.

Item 5 – Ferries Paper

16. Mr Wheelhouse invited comments on the paper as it was confirmed all updates in it remain current.
17. On the Islay route local resistance to a larger vessel was highlighted and it was confirmed any replacement vessel will be no bigger than MV Finlaggan with design being developed within that footprint so as to fit existing port infrastructure. Fuel and internal design were being considered.
18. Craignure port discussions led by Argyll & Bute Council were ongoing on size of the pier to berth a range of vessels for resilience however a large pier did not commit to scheduling large vessels.
19. It was noted under NIFS procurement that an appeal has been lodged ahead of receipt of the written determination by the judge who found in favour of the Scottish Government so no comments could be made. Thanks were expressed to ferries officials for the support in allowing islands stakeholders to put their views before the court. Mr Wheelhouse thanked everyone for their input.
20. Tenders being reviewed this week and a decision is awaited on the complaints made to the EU commission.
21. On internal island services it was noted that lines of communication with all councils interested in transfer of responsibilities continues.

Item 6 – Update on HIAL strategy

22. Mr Wheelhouse confirmed the Scottish Government is committed to the continuation of the ADS and has renewed it until 31 December 2020. However we do not have the financial resources to extend the Air Discount Scheme to business users.
23. As part of the recent renewal of the scheme we have extended the geographic coverage of the scheme around Wick Airport. In addition, we

have amended the Terms and Conditions to remove the exclusion relating to students studying in the eligible area but whose main residence is not in the eligible area.

24. He invited Michael Bratcher to add anything on the HIAL update paper issued ahead of the meeting. It was confirmed that the strategy work would continue in parallel with work on NTS towards the shared vision of same day travel to Edinburgh from everywhere. HIAL are holding a consultation day today and one to ones continue with stakeholders.

25. Comments included :-

- A query on whether HIAL is restricted to SG and HIAL areas or will it include Argyle and Orkney internal services PSO? It was confirmed that HIAL's work is considering issues across the Highlands and Islands and is not limited to HIAL's airports.
- Disappointment was expressed that the HIAL paper 'A network business risk and resilience study for Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd' did not contain reference to HITRANS' previous work on Public Service Obligations (PSOs). The outputs of this previous work should be considered as part of the wider discussion around service provision.
- Noted a need to look at air services as a whole. It was accepted that the current delivery model was fragmentary and inefficient and confirmed that this was one of the areas that the HIAL work would be expected to look at. Attendees were encouraged to feed their thoughts into HIAL through HIAL's stakeholder engagement work.

Item 7 – Brexit Issues – only if time allows

26. Mr Wheelhouse thanked Maria Pabolaza for her patience in holding on though the meeting and she confirmed she had been in touch with Maggie Sandison about the possible redeployment of NI ferries her reassurance was welcomed.

27. There were no other issues raised.

Item 8 – AOB

28. No other business was raised

Item 9 – Date of next meeting

29. A date in August was agreed to coincide with the next Islands Strategic Group meeting to reduce travel.

30. An update to the Ferries Plan is to be on the agenda.

Action point – for next agenda to include an update on the next Ferries Plan

Summary of actions

Ministerial Engagement with CMAL on provision of information – carried forward from 19 December call.

Next meeting agenda to include an update on the next Ferries Plan

Review of actions from previous meeting

<u>Actions from 25 October meeting</u>	<u>UPDATE</u>
Graham Laidlaw to obtain further details from CalMac on block booking and provide it to members	<p>CalMac have advised that an additional 2688 metres was saved in March 2019. The total space saved figure from 1 October 2018 (the beginning of Contract Year 3) was 27,540.</p> <p>This brings the total space saved to 81,123 metres, the equivalent to 28,464 car spaces which equates to 309 MV Caledonian Isles car decks since October 2017.</p> <p>Last month CalMac issued each customer a report confirming their summer block bookings</p>
Update from NTS team on establishment of regional groups to be obtained and provided to members by TS	Paper issued for 9 May meeting
Mr Wheelhouse agreed to speak to Cabinet Secretary about difficulties on transport governance	Mr Wheelhouse confirm he had raised this with the Cabinet Secretary and would maintain a dialogue going forward.
Specific item to be added to next agenda to reflect island dimension in the discussions – NTS team to present.	Included in NTS paper for 9 May Meeting
TS to confirm engagement on cruise passengers' passport checks to enter UK and whether border force have manpower to cope post Brexit	Border Force works actively with Cruise Scotland and agents within the sector in terms of planning every season. The current arrangements on checks will not change although there is ongoing consultation with the sector at a UK level.
Ferries - figures for relative spend to be provided – by TS	Table with budget figures was issued ahead of the meeting
Mr Wheelhouse to raise the issue of stakeholder engagement with HIAL at his meeting with them on 27 November.	Mr Wheelhouse confirmed this was raised with HIAL and engagement will continue on this issue.
TS to arrange telephone conference on decentralisation of key posts	Telecall took place on 19 December 2018
TS to discuss out line funding for internal ferries for 2019/20 with Ministers	TS engaged with Ministers before Ministers subsequently reached a decision on the allocation of funding for internal ferry services.
Michael Craigie to amend paper with correct ferry operators	Michael confirmed paper was amended

<u>Actions from 19 December Telecall – all actions relate to decentralisation of posts</u>	<u>UPDATE</u>
NIFS working group (including some on this call) is due to meet on 20 December and will explore these matters further.	cleared
Minister will discuss further with Mr Matheson as HIAL is his portfolio responsibility.	Mr Wheelhouse to confirm
Minister to take up Erik Ostergard and Kevin Hobbs of CMAL on information sharing .	Minister is still to raise this with CMAL. – carried forward