

TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Infrastructure and Finance  
Transport Scotland

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF



Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:  
8 March 2021

Dear

Thank you for your correspondence dated 20 and 21 February 2021 addressed to Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister of Energy, Connectivity and the Islands regarding foot passengers of Arran and the ferry service operating out of Troon during the upgrade works. I have been asked to respond.

The Taskforce's decision was guided by community requests to maximise the reliability of the service for all ferry users, whereby we took cognisance of the potential for significant disruption had services continued to operate from the Irish Berth. Therefore using Troon Harbour on a temporary basis will offer the most resilient option possible during the period of necessary works at Ardrossan, anticipated to be around 18 months.

I can confirm that service continuity planning for the project is key and this work is progressing. The next stage will be for further community engagement on the development of the ferry timetables themselves which will look at key issues like transport integration and connectivity with other modes. This will allow Transport Scotland and CalMac to focus on what is needed including regular bus connections to and from the Troon port for users attending medical appointments and for onward travel. CalMac continues to engage with bus providers such as Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and more information on the community engagement will follow in the coming months.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

**TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Infrastructure and Finance**

TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management  
Transport Scotland

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF  
Direct Line:



Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:  
29 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email, dated 24 April 2021, to Rt Honourable Nicola Sturgeon MSP, regarding the Arran ferry service and the recent change in service following the technical issue with the MV Loch Seaforth on the Ullapool-Stornoway service. The Scottish Parliament election is scheduled to be held on 6 May 2021, and as we have now entered the pre-election period, 25 March to 6 May 2021, I have been asked to reply.

I can confirm that The MV Isle of Arran, and MV Hebridean Isles, are the core relief vessels used for the majority of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service network. Due to the technical issue with the MV Loch Seaforth, CalMac took the decision to redeploy the MV Isle of Arran to operate the overnight freight service on the Ullapool-Stornoway service leaving the MV Caledonian Isles to operate a single service on the Ardrossan-Brodick route from 29 April. During this time CalMac will provide additional sailings between Claonaig-Lochranza to assist capacity.

Whilst CalMac strive to minimise the time that a vessel may be unavailable, on certain routes, they will always seek to make the best decisions to balance the needs of communities across the network, ensuring that island connectivity, including delivery of essential supplies, is maintained.

I hope this has been helpful

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
**TRANS: TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management**

[REDACTED]

Our Reference:  
Your Reference:

[REDACTED]

9 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 01 March 2021 to Mr Paul Wheelhouse MSP Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, regarding the feasibility study carried out into a possible community ferry initiative and subsequent email regarding the resilience of the MV Isle of Lewis (29 March 2021). As we have now entered the pre-election period, 25 March to 6 May 2021, as the Senior Strategic Policy officer in the Ferries Unit, I have been asked to reply.

The attached study makes for interesting reading and the Ferries Unit would be interested in hearing your long term proposals for ferry services to Barra and Vatersay. We are commencing work on the Islands Connectivity Plan, as the replacement to the Ferries Plan, and are in the initial stages of considering future vessel deployment on the Oban-Castlebay service given the age of the MV Isle of Lewis, so your contribution is timely and welcome.

Could I suggest that once the election process is completed that we schedule a meeting with officials for the second half of May? Please feel free to contact me at the details below once possible dates are known and I will be more than happy to send out the invites to yourself and colleagues for a mutually suitable date and time. Due to rules on staff travel, at the present time we are unable to travel to Barra but are able to meet on MS Teams, if that works for you.

[REDACTED] [@transport.gov.scot](mailto:[REDACTED]@transport.gov.scot)

Regarding the resilience issues you have raised concerning the MV Isle of Lewis, I understand that [REDACTED] has already provided a breakdown of the work carried out on the MV Isle of Lewis thrusters whilst in dry dock.



However, allow me to reassure you that the maintenance and upkeep of the vessels to enable lifeline services to be maintained remains of the utmost importance to those responsible for their delivery. Careful consideration continues to be given with regard to the timing of repairs and routine maintenance in order to minimise the effects felt by communities.

Apologises if this was not be the answer you were looking for at this time, however I look forward to hearing from you to discuss your long term vision for the ferry services to Barra and Vatersay.

Yours sincerely

  
**TRANS: TD A, M, FandC Ferries Policy**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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[REDACTED]

Our Reference:  
Your Reference:

[REDACTED]

12 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 24 March to the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse MSP, on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED], regarding ferry services to the Western Isles.

The Scottish Parliament election is scheduled to be held on 6 May 2021, and as we have now entered the pre-election period, 25 March to 6 May 2021, I have been asked to reply.

Much work has been done by CalMac and Transport Scotland in order to safely maximise capacity on ferries, ensuring that ferry services can support the reopening of the tourism sector that is so essential for the sustainability of island and ruraleconomies, as well as enabling islanders to travel. Timetables are being scaled up to align with the easing of travel restrictions. Booking ferry travel in advance wherever possible continues to be strongly encouraged for all passengers, including islanders.

I can confirm that a small amount of capacity will continue to be held for turn up and go travel, which will be of particular benefit for islanders travelling at short notice. CalMac are reviewing this capacity on a route by route basis to ensure that overall utilisation is being maximised. Islanders with urgent medical appointments will also continue to be able to contact CalMac, who will accommodate their return journey within the turn up and go capacity.

Transport Scotland and CalMac will continue to keep all of this under review and we will continue to engage closely with our stakeholders, whose participation has been crucial in helping inform and shape our response and restart of services.

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I hope this is helpful to you and your constituent.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[REDACTED]

Our Reference:  
Your Reference:

[REDACTED]

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Thank you for your email of 01 March 2021 to Mr Paul Wheelhouse MSP Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, regarding the feasibility study carried out into a possible community ferry initiative and subsequent email regarding the resilience of the MV Isle of Lewis (29 March 2021). As we have now entered the pre-election period, 25 March to 6 May 2021, as the Senior Strategic Policy officer in the Ferries Unit, I have been asked to reply.

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[REDACTED] [transport.gov.scot](mailto:[REDACTED]@transport.gov.scot)

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Yours sincerely

  
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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow  
G4 0HF

[REDACTED]  
info@transport.gov.scot



Your ref:

[REDACTED]

Our ref:

[REDACTED]

Date:

March 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter dated 22 February 2021, addressed to Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, regarding the recent disruptions on the ferry service on the Coll/Tiree/Barra route, and the use of the MV Pentalina. I am replying on behalf of Mr Matheson in my capacity as [REDACTED] Transport Scotland.

We work closely with CalMac Ferries Limited, to ensure that all efforts are being taken to minimise disruption, and I fully understand the impact this has had on the communities. I have been advised that food provisions were transported on the Oban – Castlebay Service on Saturday 20 February.

Every vessel, within the fleet, requires maintenance work carried out over the winter months, and because not all vessels are suitable for every route, the scheduling of the overhaul programme, including the relief vessels used must also factor in dry dock availability. Each year following completion of the dry dock schedule it is Calmac Ferry Limited's practice to conduct a review of the completed programme to establish if improvements could be made in future years, this review will be carried in the coming months.

We recognise the key role ferry services play in supporting the economic, social and cultural development of island and remote mainland communities. That is why a Resilience Fund was established in 2018/19, to invest in ferry services and to ensure future reliability and availability of vessels. This has amounted to £7.5m between 2018 – 2020, with a further £3m allocated this financial year.

I understand customers' frustrations during periods of disruption and the Scottish Government remains committed to supporting vital lifeline services.

The offer of the MV Pentalina has been discussed on a number of occasions. This was previously dismissed for a variety of reasons, such as the terms of the charter and views around the suitability of the vessel, and although we have no immediate plans to charter an additional vessel we will keep this under review

However, any proposal would also have to be compatible with the operational requirements of the route or network, be affordable and represent value for money in the service it delivered. I would assure you that we continue to keep this under review in this context.

I hope this is helpful

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

[REDACTED]

Our Reference: [REDACTED]  
Your Reference: [REDACTED]

12 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 24 March to the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse MSP, on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED], regarding ferry services to the Western Isles.

The Scottish Parliament election is scheduled to be held on 6 May 2021, and as we have now entered the pre-election period, 25 March to 6 May 2021, I have been asked to reply.

Much work has been done by CalMac and Transport Scotland in order to safely maximise capacity on ferries, ensuring that ferry services can support the reopening of the tourism sector that is so essential for the sustainability of island and ruraleconomies, as well as enabling islanders to travel. Timetables are being scaled up to align with the easing of travel restrictions. Booking ferry travel in advance wherever possible continues to be strongly encouraged for all passengers, including islanders.

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Transport Scotland and CalMac will continue to keep all of this under review and we will continue to engage closely with our stakeholders, whose participation has been crucial in helping inform and shape our response and restart of services.

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I hope this is helpful to you and your constituent.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands  
Paul Wheelhouse MSP

T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Our Reference:  
Your Reference:

24 March 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your letter of 25 February to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson MSP, regarding proposals to make changes to ferry timetables to and from the islands. I am replying as Ferries forms part of my portfolio as Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands.

I understand the concerns that you have set out in your correspondence and appreciate the difficult context of the prolonged recent severe weather which has caused a lot of disruption to sailings. However I can assure you that the consultation on timetables was a separate matter relating to the ongoing challenge of how we continue to best support life line ferry travel in the midst of a global pandemic.

Transport Scotland have been working with CalMac Ferries Ltd (CFL) throughout all phases of lockdown to continuously review whether services are running at the appropriate levels. Winter timetables were not reduced at the start of the current lockdown, due to the already reduced services levels in winter and the wider scope for essential economic and social travel. However, some stakeholders had raised concerns about the number of sailings operating with very few passengers across the network, and the impacts on ferry crews, the environment and public finances.

Transport Scotland officials, in response to this feedback, therefore agreed that CFL would develop potential timetable reductions, while maintaining essential lifeline connectivity, for consideration by stakeholders through consultation. This consultation was regarded as a normal part of that process to ascertain community views before any decisions were taken to implement reductions. I appreciate the

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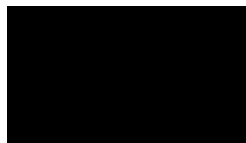
messaging from CFL could have been better and Transport Scotland officials have discussed that with them.

In almost all cases, communities were not supportive of these proposals – that feedback provided a robust counterweight to the criticism we have received. In light of the feedback, the decision was taken not to reduce winter timetables, unless that the strongly expressed community preference.

Transport Scotland officials and CFL are continuing to engage with stakeholders on summer timetables, in light of the Strategic Framework announced on 23 February. We are continuing, broadly, with winter timetables until 25 April, given the likelihood that passenger demand will remain low. The full summer timetable will continue to be available for booking journeys during the period from 26 April, in order to support islanders and the recovery of the tourism sector, which we all hope to see. I would only make the one caveat, that clearly these bookings may be subject to change depending on any ongoing restrictions or changes in the prevalence of the virus. The 16 March announcement of the timetable for easing restrictions noted that island communities may wish to retain some level of travel restrictions and that we would engage with island communities. We will also engage with island communities on timetables alongside this.

I would also wish to emphasise that CFL and Transport Scotland will remain flexible and responsive to stakeholder feedback and any increases in demand. We have ensured that CFL are prepared and able, through recruitment of seasonal crew, to deliver a full summer timetable quickly when this is required.

I hope this is helpful.



**PAUL WHEELHOUSE**

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TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management  
Transport Scotland

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF  
Direct Line:



Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:  
21 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email, dated 16 April 2021, to the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse MSP regarding service provision by CalMac on the Largs - Cumbrae ferry route.

I am replying as a member of the Ferries Unit within Transport Scotland.

You raise the issue in your email about making the service bookable and this issue has indeed been raised with CalMac by the local community. I can confirm that CalMac's Area Operations Manager consulted with the local community in 2020 regarding making this route bookable, as well as giving priority boarding to residents and the community is split on this issue. CalMac advise that commuters prefer the flexibility of turn up and go whilst other residents want the option to book. Furthermore, the current situation is that until there is the shore infrastructure to support this provision, CalMac cannot realistically manage a booking system on the route.

I can also confirm that prior to the pandemic there was no priority for the school bus but due to the current circumstances they are temporarily giving priority to it.

I hope this has been helpful.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
**TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management**

TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management  
Transport Scotland

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF  
Direct Line:



Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:  
15 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email, dated 14 April 2021, to Scottish Ministers regarding the ferry service on Lewis and the subsequent mechanical failure of the MV Loch Seaforth ferry which operates the Stornoway – Ullapool service. I am replying as a member of the Ferries Unit within Transport Scotland.

Ministers acknowledge customers' frustrations during periods of disruption and remain committed to supporting vital lifeline services. We fully recognise the key role ferry services play in supporting the economic, social and cultural development of island and remote mainland communities.

The decision to cancel sailings is never taken lightly by the operator. If a CalMac vessel encounters a technical issue engineers aboard, supported by its shore service teams, immediately undertake assessment and rectification of the matter at hand. It is unfortunate that repairs cannot be rectified in situ and the vessel requires to enter dry dock for repairs to be carried out.

Vessel deployment is a matter for the operator and not Transport Scotland. We are in close contact with CalMac Ferries Limited (CFL) who are working to find ways to continue the freight and passenger service between Stornoway and Ullapool.

Finally, CalMac strive to minimise the time that a vessel may be unavailable and seek to make the best decisions to balance the needs of all communities across the network, ensuring that island connectivity, including delivery of essential supplies, is maintained, while also meeting the legal requirements for vessels.

I hope this has been helpful

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
**TRANS : TD A, M, FandC Ferries Contract Management**



---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 30 March 2021 12:19  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

### **Your Request**

Thank you for your request dated 27 February 2021, and follow dated 23 March 2021, under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) for: *“in electronic format, all documents, including paper, emails, notes and details of telephone contacts and meetings between Transport Scotland staff and CalMac about the Tarbert to Portavadie ferry route from 1st January 2021 up to the date of this email” (27 February 2021).*”

## Response to your request

I can provide all of the information you requested in the format you asked for. This is detailed below.

Extract from an email between Transport Scotland and CalMac on 22 January 2021 regarding Tarbert – Portavadie route:

### Tarbert to Portavadie

	Forecast 2018	Actual 2018	Forecast 2019	Actual 2019	Forecast 2020	Forecast 2021	Forecast 2022	Forecast 2023	Forecast 2024	Forecast 2025
Tarbert-Portavadie	42%	48%	48%	50%	50%	51%	51%	52%	28%	29%

1. The route is currently served by the MV Isle of Cumbrae (1986) which is intended to become surplus following the planned cascades following the delivery of 801/802.
2. *Future vessel deployment on this route will be considered as part of the Small Vessel Replacement Programme.*

Extract from an email between CalMac and Transport Scotland on 1 February 2021 regarding carrying forecast analysis

Peak 9 weeks (July and August) capacity utilisation

Route	Vessel & Vehicle Capacity Limit (PCUs)	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042
Tarbert-Portavadie	Isle of Cumbrae (12) Lochinvar (2024-on) (22)	50%	50%	51%	51%	52%	28%	29%	29%	29%	30%	30%	30%	31%	31%	31%	31%	32%	32%	32%	32%	33%	33%	33%	33%

Extract from email between Calmac and Transport Scotland on 5 February 2021 regarding proposed passenger certification (pc) level - 20 January 2021

### Small Vessel Replacement Programme

Route	Class	Current Vessel	PCU now	PCU max proposed	Forecast sailings 15+	Pax now	Pax max proposed	Forecast sailings >150
Tarbert-Portavadie	IV	Isle of Cumbrae (1976)	12	15	6%	138	150	0

Extract from an email between CalMac and Transport Scotland on 05 February 2021 regarding reduced Timetable Options:

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> Feb we will make reductions on the following routes due to crew availability, again as a result of crew having to shield or self-isolate to ensure we can run lifeline services.

Tarbert-Portavadie.

At present Tarbert – Portavadie is on a reduced service between 12 February 2021 – 25 March 2021.

Extract from Potential Options to Reduce Service Lockdown

Tarbert/Portav adie	MV Catriona MV Loch Riddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 return sailings per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce to 4 per day</li> <li>• <b>Note</b> MV Loch Riddon providing overhaul relief until 2 Feb 2021</li> </ul>
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Extract from CHFS Covid-19 Impacts Local Authority Session on Thursday 25 February attended by Local Authorities, CalMac and Transport Partnerships.

### **Caledonian MacBrayne Summer time-table**

Tarbert – Portavadie

Retain reduced timetable currently in place on route. 5 return sailings Mon-Sat 4 return sailings Sun. Timetable will be reviewed on 26 March 2021, crew availability impacted by shielding guidance.

Tarbert– Portavadie

Current reduced timetable will continue, mainly due to the crew availability impacted by the shielding guidance. This will be and reviewed 26 March 2021.

Regarding the 26 March as a review point that doesn't mean the service will start on the 26th March or a summer service it means that will be the next review point where we will go out and communicate the next change to the communities.

### **Your right to request a review**

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to Transport Scotland. Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF.

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 40 working days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review in accordance with FOISA as soon as possible, and not later than 20 working days from the day following the date we receive your review request. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. More detailed information on your appeal rights is available on the Commissioner's website at:

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/Appealingto> Commissioner.aspx.

Yours sincerely,

  
Ferries Unit Transport Scotland





Please see our [privacy policy](#) to find out why we collect personal information and how we use it

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Saturday, February 27, 2021 12:39:40 PM

**To:** [info@transport.gov.scot](mailto:info@transport.gov.scot)

**Subject:** Freedom of information request

I would like, in electronic format, all documents, including paper, emails, notes and details of telephone contacts and meetings between Transport Scotland staff and CalMac about the Tarbert to Portavadie ferry route from 1st January 2021 up to the date of this email.

Please confirm by return receipt of this email.

	<b>Constrained Route (as defined by VRDP)</b>	<b>Forecasted Carryings Forecasted Demand (VRDP)</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>Any Indication of Appropriateness of Demand Levels</b>	<b>Inference</b>
<b>PCUs</b> TARBERT LF- PORTAVADIE	No	in general agreement		appear consistent with expected levels	forecasted demand levels ok

	<b>Constrained Route (as defined by VRDP)</b>	<b>Forecasted Carryings Forecasted Demand (VRDP)</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>Any Indication of Appropriateness of Demand Levels</b>	<b>Inference</b>
<b>PASSENGER</b> TARBERT LF- PORTAVADIE	No	in general agreement		appear consistent with expected levels	forecasted demand levels ok