

Corran Ferry project Community bulletin



Welcome to the first Corran Ferry project community bulletin. The Corran Ferry is operated by The Highland Council carrying over 250,000 cars per year making it the busiest single vessel vehicle route in Scotland. In recent years, a number of operational, financial and other challenges have emerged which present both short and long-term threats to the future sustainability and viability of the service.

Recognising this, the Council commenced work in mid-May 2019 to progress an outline business case, which will determine future proposals for capital investment in vessels, slipway structures, service delivery methods and future fares. The project is focused on the immediate transport problems associated with the ferry service, and the actions required to ensure its future sustainability.

Project Governance

The Head of Roads and Transport Services is Project Sponsor and the Project Manager is working closely with the area Roads Operations Manager. A steering group is part of a larger project governance structure that involves Lochaber Committee with decision-making powers being deferred to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

Key contacts have been established and essential consultation with Council Members, Community Groups and appropriate stakeholders including Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) and Transport Scotland is underway.

Fixed Link

The Council has an aspiration for a fixed link across the Corran Narrows. This is a longer-term proposition and any future fixed link will be a matter for Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 and does not form part of this work but is being addressed in a separate study with Highland Council, HITRANS (Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Community Engagement



It is very important to Highland Council that links between the community and officers involved are maintained and regular users of the service are kept informed on project activity and are given a strong voice to represent their communities. A project steering group has been set up and all 5 community councils have been invited to nominate a representative to take part in this forum. Members will act as a sounding board and will provide support and guidance to the project team on any issues critical to the success of the project.



MV Corran Vessel Survey

A vessel inspection was recently carried out on the MV Corran by Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) on behalf of Transport Scotland (Ferries division) and Highland Council in order to ascertain its general condition. The report commended the MV Corran for being well maintained and in good condition at close to 20 years old. The vessel however requires major investment with an increasing risk of longer downtime periods.

Vessels and Slipways Analysis

Using information provided in an options appraisal report (EDI Committee - 08/11/18) the project analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each of the shortlisted vessel and slipway options.

The conclusion was that retaining two vessels is an expensive luxury. This infrastructure arrangement is unique for this scale of operation and is at odds with other ferry networks in Scotland. A new larger roll-on/roll-off vessel, with a refit/relief second vessel secured from elsewhere will be the preferred vessel and slipways option. This will deliver economies of scale benefits and is in line with CMAL Ferries operated by Calmac.

As with any of the options the main challenge for Highland Council is affording the capital expenditure to replace any of the major assets associated with the ferry service.

The next step is to develop the preferred option prior to any procurement. We will be meeting with CMAL early next year for advice on their approach on tendering vessel design/slipways replacements and profiling the likely capital spend. CMAL are a single-purpose-company delivering multiple west-coast passenger ferry services.

Chief Executive Corran Ferry visit

As part of a tour of Lochaber (September 2019) the Council's Chief Executive and Budget Leader travelled on the Corran Ferry and visited the ferry operations offices in Ardgour. They spent time listening to the views of staff and members of the public hearing different perspectives on the localised challenges and opportunities for service delivery. The Project Manager and the Area Roads Operations Manager presented them with a project brief and joined them at Strontian where a questions and answers session was held with representatives from the community councils.

Procurement – Market Testing

The next project milestone is to contact prospective contractors (early January 2020) to give notice that a procurement opportunity for the ferry service may be coming forward. A questionnaire will seek the views of suppliers and potential suppliers of ferry services to the Council.

The Prior Information Notice is not a contract tender invitation but a market testing exercise to understand what the ferry operator market thinks is appropriate in terms of:

- vessels and refit/relief/breakdown cover,
- slipways and infrastructure,
- crewing model, and
- fares structure.

Should you have any concerns or need further information regarding the project, please contact us at the following address:

Email: Corranferryproject@Highland.gov.uk