

**Report To:** Safe and Sustainable Communities Committee      **Date:** 31 August 2010

**Report By:** Corporate Director Regeneration & Environment      **Report No:** ECP/ENV/AB10.57

**Contact Officer:** Alan G Barnes      **Contact No:** 01475 715910

**Subject:** Scottish Ferries Review - Consultation Document.

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee with regard to the Scottish Ferries Review consultation document and to seek approval for the response as indicated in Section 4.3.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will recall previous reports to this Committee on this subject. The Head of Environmental and Commercial Services has represented the Council at several meetings throughout 2008/2009, led by representatives of the Ferries Division, Scottish Government, and which were attended by other Council representatives. This Review is now going through a consultation stage and attached at Appendix 1 is the Executive Summary of the Consultation Document. The full document is available to download from the Scottish Government website at –  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport/ferries-ports-canals/14342/Review>

## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee consider the terms of this report and remits its decision to the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Resources for implementation, as accords.

Alan G. Barnes  
**Head of Environmental and Commercial Services**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 A presentation was held in Boardroom 1 on Wednesday 14 July, given by Judith Ainsley and Colin Grieve of the Ferries Division, with representation from MSP's, elected members and senior council staff.

4.2 A public meeting is scheduled for the 23rd August 2010, to be held in the Gamble Halls Gourock at 7.30 pm.

4.3 Further to that presentation, a draft response to the consultation questions has been prepared for members' consideration and comment. These are -

4.4 **Consultation Question 1:** Do you agree that a change is required, to improve consistency in provision and secure funding for the future?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** Due to the differing route lengths, frequency, challenges, etc experienced throughout the country all areas served by ferries need to be assessed in a consistent and a properly funded manner.

**Consultation Question 2:** Do you think that harbours should be self funded through dues or do you think the current system of funding through grants should continue?

**Answer - funded through grants**

**Comments:** We need to look at the varying range of slipways / harbours and frequency of ferry services to develop a suitable policy approach to support harbours that would otherwise be uneconomical.

**Consultation Question 3:** How much of the funding should come from the users of the service?

**Comments:** Users of the ferry services require to be established so as to determine the level of funding required to sustain both communities and services equally.

**Consultation Question 4:** Do you agree that we should test the market by tendering some routes on a single basis with the option for the operator to bring their own vessel(s)?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** To avoid damaging an overall strategic approach the fares policy firstly requires to be established. Neither testing the market to establish the level of fares nor testing the fares to establish the market should be undertaken.

**Consultation Question 5:** Do you agree that Ardrossan – Brodick, Wemyss Bay – Rothesay, Oban – Craginure, Largs – Cumbrae and the Pentland Firth are the correct routes to consider tendering as single routes?

**Comments:** To ensure a consistent approach to service standard, service level, cost, interchange opportunities, ticket type and economies of scale, etc associated with shore staffing, vessel acquisition, etc there could be advantages in bundling routes to include other Clyde routes. However, bundling of the above routes would require to be debated with Argyll and Bute Council in conjunction with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

**Consultation Question 6:** Should we allow single routes to be tendered as a bundle or should we stagger the tenders?

**Answer - allow a bundle**

**Comments:** Economies of scale and flexibility can provide the flexibility and safeguards in the event of vessel breakdown of operation to provide vessel relief and service continuity being cost effective in providing the overall service.

**Consultation Question 7:** Should the remaining routes stay within 2 bundles?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:**

Should the remaining routes stay within 2 bundles it would be essential to ensure that they maintain close links with other bundles to ensure economies of scale sharing of

expertise, potential interchangeability of vessels, joint marketing etc?

**Consultation Question 8:** Should we consider the implications of a looser tender, where a minimum level of service is required but where the operator has flexibility to innovate and reduce costs where they see fit?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** The provision of a minimum level of service has the potential to enable the operator to match supply and demand requirements. Irrespective of the differences in demand between summer / winter operations, the environmental implications of operating effectively empty vessels and the effects of the winter weather the ferry services require to provide a reliable and quality link with remote communities.

**Consultation Question 9:** Should we specify climate change objectives within the tender and require the operator to specify how he intends to meet them? Do operators have views on how emission reductions should be defined? How would they measure and monitor performance, and demonstrate delivery?

**Comments:** Yes. Vessels operating at differing levels of capacity will have varying impacts on the environment. Specifying the minimum level of climate change objectives would help to negate such effects.

**Consultation Question 10:** What else do you think should be specified in a tender document? E.g. accessibility requirements, integration requirements etc.

**Comments:** Accessibility, especially for the disabled, integration with other forms of public transport including timetable integration and ticketing integration should form part of the contractual standards.

**Consultation Question 11:** What should be the rationale for, and purpose of, the fares policy?

**PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

- a) Fairness of fares across Scotland
- b) Community sustainability
- c) Supporting economic development
- d) Supporting tourism
- e)  Supporting the particular need of the particular community
- f) Reduce the cost to Government
- g) the manage the demand on ferries ie a policy that encourages people to travel at different times
- h) To support "low carbon travel"
- i) Other

**Comments:** Each of the above could contribute equally to a fares policy. Point (e), however, has the greatest potential to sustain communities and services.

**Consultation Question 12:** To what extent should fares differentiate between islanders/residents of peninsular communities and other ferry users?

**Comments:** Fare levels will contribute to the potential to sustain communities and services. A reasonable fare level for islanders has to be provided because ferry services are the lifeline between the islands and the mainland. However, fares should not be too high so as to discourage visitors to the island because of their contribution to the economic vitality of the islands.

**Consultation Question 13:** Should there be one fares policy across all of the supported Scottish ferry routes or should there be a different fares policy dependent on the need(s) of the community?

**Answer - different fares policies**

**Comments:** It would not be possible to provide one fares policy across all of the supported Scottish ferry routes due to the variation in demand between summer and winter operations, class of vessel, journey lengths, catchment, type of service, etc

**Consultation Question 14:** Do you agree that there should be a consistent and fair way of deciding what ferry services should be funded?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:**

Besides providing equitable methods of funding ferry services it needs to be decided if we are reducing disparity between regions of Scotland or whether we are focusing on those areas that have the greatest potential to contribute to growth.

**Consultation Question 15:** Do you agree that the ferry service should be designed to meet the most important needs of the community?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** The needs of the community can often depend on the sustainability of the indigenous and tourist industry where large numbers of tourists often visit the islands through out the year. This has a positive impact on the needs of the communities and their economies. Services will have to provide minimum linkages.

**Consultation Question 16:** Is our assessment correct for your community? Please tell us what your community needs are and whether our assessment is right.

**Comments:** Community needs include commuting, support to the economic development activity, tourism, links with Argyll & Bute and public transport integration.

**Consultation Question 17:** Do you agree that investment should be prioritised in those areas that have most potential to contribute to Scotland's economic Growth?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** Although this is the focus of economic development activity and so the basis of investment and support is probably already set it should be questioned if the ferry services are to assist in reducing the disparity between regions of Scotland.

**Consultation Question 18:** Do you think that the responsibility for ferries provision should be more consistent across Scotland?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** To consider a more consistent approach for ferry provision across Scotland there requires to be government intervention and the clear setting of a national policy framework.

**Consultation Question 19:** Do you agree that it would be wrong for all ferry services to be the responsibility of the Scottish Government?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** Local issues may determine the ferry operation requirements. As such, therefore, responsibility and accountability should be a local issue.

**Consultation Question 20:** Do you agree that the Scottish Government should become responsible for all ferry services providing necessary transport links for island communities to access the mainland and Local Authorities or Regional Transport Partnerships should be responsible for the provision of all others?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** As Consultation Question 19 there may be difference between local and national issues, therefore local operation need not be determined at a national level.

**Consultation Question 21:** The split of responsibilities above assumes that where an island is attached to the mainland via a bridge, it is treated as the mainland. Do you agree this is the correct way forward?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** Although a bridge would provide 24 hour access there needs to be consistency within definitions of access. Peninsula locations, may in theory be part of the main land, they may actually have restricted access due to ferries operating only over part of the day. Hours of operation of the ferry can isolate peninsula locations as much as some island location.

**Consultation Question 22:** Do you agree that the provision of ferry services would be better placed within the remit of Local Government?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** There are differences between lifeline and local services. Lifeline services involve national issues which require to be accounted for nationally. Local issues can be accountable for locally. It would not, therefore, be reasonable to group all services together.

**Consultation Question 23:** Do you agree that Regional Transport Partnerships could play a key role in the procurement of ferry services?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** Involving RTPs within the procurement of ferry services could lead to fragmented approach nationally although they would be able to offer advice re locally based issues.

**Consultation Question 24:** How should the responsibility be split between Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships?

**Comments:** Local Authorities make up part of the RTP: the RTP is answerable to Local Authorities therefore there is no distinct split of responsibilities between, and the working of RTPs and Local Authorities.

**Consultation Question 25:** Do you agree that the provision of ferry services should continue to be split between Central and Local Government?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** Central Government should be responsible of ferry services of national importance, Local Authorities can better determine for local issues.

**Consultation Question 26:** If a continuation of a mixed responsibility role is preferable going forward (i.e. responsibility continues to be split between Central and Local Government), how should the split be determined?

**Comments:** Scottish Government should be the lead authority concerning ferry services.

**Consultation Question 27:** Should there be a central provision of procurement expertise? For example, Local Authorities/RTPS could determine what services/vessels they wanted to provide and specify those services/vessels, with a central procurement team purchasing them on their behalf.

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** The central and specific location for expertise should be at the national level in an effort to avoid duplication. However, since LAs would not have this expertise close liaison between users LAs / RTPs, Scottish Government and CMAL and successful bidders for any contracts would need to be established as part of the procurement process.

**Consultation Question 28:**

(a) Do you think that recommendations A – G (See below) should be implemented now?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** Should be dealt with case by case which would give the opportunity of addressing other specific issues. Can not provide a one case fits all solution eg Levels of access will vary dependent on location.

(b) When tendering do you think these recommendations should be included in any future tender requirements?

**Answer - NO**

**Comments:** Not applied as a prescriptive standard but will need to vary location to location with access requirements forming part of the tender process.

(c) Are there any of these recommendations that you consider to be of particular importance? Are there other issues that should be addressed?

**Answer –**

A. The design of new ferries and harbour / shore infrastructure should take full account of the DPTAC guidance, for example the provision of handrails, ramps and assistance telephones. Consideration where possible should also be given to their use in smaller ferries and ports.

B. The need for regular, recognised disability awareness training is viewed as a relatively cheap and quick solution in helping to reduce many of the barriers faced Good customer care and assistance by staff is often viewed as the key factor when deciding if ferry travel is possible, practicable or comfortable.

C. Port and Ship operators need to plan their communication and information dissemination to take full recognition of PRMs. Audio visual or other disabilities need to be considered, especially when considering passenger safety.

D. Accessibility information should be readily accessible to PRMs in order to aid journey planning. Where possible websites should be improved to take recognition of the needs of PRMs and make it easier to access this information.

E. Disabled Persons Assistance policies should be developed by all ferry operators as a matter of best practice.

F. A policy for those passengers who may require additional assistance which fall outside the general categorisation of PRM, for example people travelling with small children, or heavy / awkward luggage or baggage, should be encouraged.

G. Provision where appropriate of some form of left luggage facility which would aid those passengers that are waiting onward travel connections.

**Comments:** Need to supply sufficient information and assistance to enable PRMs to be able to easier both plan and undertake journeys.

(d) Are there other issues that should be addressed?

**Comments:** Consideration of possible conflicts of “time penalty”, ensuring all passengers can access vessels safely, and punctuality needs to be avoided. PRMs require to be able to access vessels safely and comfortably.

**Consultation Question 29:**

(a) Do you think that an Accessibility Improvement Fund should be set up? Who would administer this fund?

**Answer - YES**

**Comments:** There would need to be discussions on financing and return on investment. Staff training and infrastructure requirements should be considered together since requirements will vary dependent on location.

(b) How should this be funded?

**Comments:** This could be funded through the overall tender process for all routes and distributed on a grant basis to specific locations or being considered within specific tenders. The latter suggestion may lead to tenderers being disadvantaged on a port by port basis dependent on the number of improvements / number of staff requiring to be trained.

**Consultation Question 30:** Do you think that an information system indicating the degree of accessibility would be useful? Are there any particular aspects you would like to see considered?

**Comments:** This could be useful although an overall system needs to be consistent to allow comparison of facilities at each location.

**Consultation Question 31:** How could the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from ferries be delivered to assist in meeting the potential emissions reductions set out in the Climate Change Delivery Plan?

**Comments:** Matching of supply and demand including size of boats: type of fuels and fuel technology.

**Consultation Question 32:** Operators would likely appreciate the fuel-efficiency benefits of such a measure. Would operators be willing to implement such a measure on a voluntary basis? If not, can they provide suggestions for alternate methods of delivering speed reductions?

**Comments:** No comments

**Consultation Question 33:** Would passengers support longer journey times as part of a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction programme? If not, can they provide suggestions for alternate methods of delivering CO<sub>2</sub> reductions from ferries?

Reduction of speed / increase in journey times subject to journey integration with other modes of transport could be considered.

## 5.0 CONSULTATIONS

Financial Implications - One off Costs

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Proposed Spend this Report</b>	<b>Virement From</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>

Financial Implications - Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>With Effect from</b>	<b>Annual Net Impact</b>	<b>Virement From (if applicable)</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>