

# Public Consultation for the next Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services Contract (CHFS3)

## Reliability and Resilience

Community feedback highlighted that the resilience & reliability of ferry services needs to be addressed as a priority due to the impact on business & communities when ferry services are disrupted.

Q1. Do you think that the current performance measures of the ferry services are the right ones:

Yes

No \*

Please explain your answer

*There is no definition of a lifeline service in the current contract, therefore the new contract should be designed around a clear definition of provision of a lifeline service. This should be the standard by which performance is measured and include KPIs/milestones. This should sit alongside penalties that reflect failure to meet this standard.*

*Communities should be able to influence how the funds from non-performance are utilised.*

*The present system allows services cancelled in advance not to affect performance statistics, and this should not be part of future reporting systems.*

*Contractual performance reporting should also reflect performance against timetable, and this should capture late running as it does with other modes. 5 minutes should be reported as late running on all crossings under 1 hour in crossing time. 10 minutes should be reported as late running for any sailing over 1 hour and under 3 hours of crossing duration. This could extend to reporting late running as a performance failure of 20 minutes, for sailings with a crossing time of greater than 3 hours up to 6 hours.*

*This would ensure a more rigorous reporting of poor performance as reasonably understood and experienced by passengers for all CHFS services.*

*Also, 'Contractual Relief Events' allows the home vessel to be deployed elsewhere on the network when a vessel becomes unavailable on another route, therefore depriving local communities of their service. There is no penalty against the operator for this and is effectively a cancellation for the affected communities, but not recorded as such in current performance measures, therefore this should not be part of future systems of performance.*

*Regarding arrangements for scheduled non-availability the current contract states: For each route, we will maintain continuity of service by planning the deployment of the fleet to cover scheduled non-availability – this undertaking has not been adhered to, as MV Lord of the Isles was removed from her timetabled route in June 2023, and for periods preceding this, resulting in a £3m loss of business trade in the Uists.*

*This contractual undertaking should be included as an element in the required definition of a 'lifeline service' and as one of the main KPIs, undertaking to contractually provide a continuity of service offering for both scheduled/unscheduled non availability.*

*Current vessel deployment plans are redacted regarding 'Available for Relief Vessels' for scheduled/unscheduled availability events. The new contract should provide this information alongside the measurement and effectiveness of all vessel deployment plans including in the fulfilling of any enhanced timetable commitments.*

Q2. Are there any additional or alternative performance measures that you think could be introduced to improve resilience and reliability of ferry services?

Yes\*

No

Please give us your views

*The Scottish Government should make a national commitment to a permanent standard for the maintenance of assets used in the delivery of the ferry services. This should include average age of the CHFS fleet, a life extending maintenance program, and a minimum % of income from landing dues that must be reinvested in assets. There must be ongoing planned and protected budget provision to ensure long term investment and renewal.*

*Island representatives from the communities of the Western Isles should be represented on all relevant forums to evaluate performance and seek improvement or changes, through a formal mechanism whereby contract*

*variation proposals or service changes are made to either Transport Scotland and/or the operator.*

*KPIs for the CHFS contract should include community/customer satisfaction rates, and gathering of this data must be done in a way which is not burdensome on communities.*

*Accurate and easily understandable daily and monthly KPIs on each route of the CHFS network, including performance penalties per route should be added. These should include reliability and punctuality measures, and disaggregate cancellations into weather or technical causes, providing detail of the technical issue and the time it will take to resolve.*

*Regarding weather cancellations it would be useful to provide evidence-based information on the types and extremities of weather patterns, and how these link directly to more causes of disruption.*

*Explanations of the terminology and criteria used in measuring performance requires inclusion on the same resource, rather than being directed to another website as is the case with the current information. The performance data calendar should be in consecutive monthly order as opposed to the reverse order as depicted presently.*

*Enabling of a potential legal definition of a 'lifeline service,' and suitable KPIs and milestones developed to meet this definition as stated above would be welcomed.*

*As well as the reasons for cancellations, and for delays and diversions needing to be provided, full explanations and advance notice of delays occurring during maintenance schedules should be provided against KPIs for maintenance schedules.*

*The current contract states that: 'We will investigate the opportunity for in-water surveys (IWS): Quarterly and Annually, and Commencement Date,' and as these reduce drydock times, these surveys should be classed as contractual undertakings and identified as a KPI.*

*The current contract states: 'Contingency plans will be developed by the planning team, to cover overrunning maintenance events, both for vessels and ports.' There has been considerable disruption to services on the Sound of Harris in particular, and also on the Sound of Barra.*

*The Comhairle contends that these vessels should be included in Phase 1 of the Small Vessel Replacement Program.*

*Manufacturing of an engine part for the Sound of Harris vessel MV LochPortain has taken 5 months, and prior to the introduction of MV Alfred to assist there was a severe knock-on effect to inter-island trade in what are already fragile communities.*

*Therefore, KPIs also require to be assigned to Contingency Plans regarding the impact of overhauls and vessel non availability, to improve reliability on these lifeline routes.*

*Standardising lifesaving apparatus across the fleet should be included as a KPI, to enable the engineers to become familiar with equipment and improve maintenance performance resulting in a greater consistency and reliability of service for users at a reduced cost to Transport Scotland. The procurement of additional MES systems is a pre-requisite if a reduction in the out-of-service periods is to be achieved.*

*To further improve reliability enabling earlier publishing of the timetable that is dependent on out of service periods, or alternative vessel deployment plans is required.*

*Performance penalties (technical related) and delays in drydock (cost of the knock on effect on community through possible lack of service) should be retained by the affected communities, and to an extent a compensation pertaining to weather related cancellations which are so prevalent due to the age (original asset life expiry of 20 years of many vessels now surpassed), and design of the assets in not being able to cope with severe weather.*

*Also, with respect to technical problems requiring the use of divers where currently the contracted divers are Dunoon based (adding a delay of up to 2 days for travel to communities), CHFS3 should include locally based divers in each of the communities to be contracted.*

## Capacity and Demand

Fares have significantly reduced and made Scottish Islands more accessible to everyone through the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) however, we understand there is a balance to be struck between vessel capacity and passenger demand, therefore we need to find a better way to manage the number of users and the available space.

Community feedback has highlighted the high demand for ferry services during summer. Therefore, there is a requirement to consider the balance between capacity and demand to ensure car spaces are available to make essential or urgent travel.

Q3. We know that vehicle space capacity is at a premium during peak time sailings.

Do you have any suggestions that could be introduced to reduce vehicle space demand?

Yes\*

No

If yes, what are your suggestions?

*Poor public transport connectivity increases the requirement for passengers to take their own vehicles. Improving the quality and availability of bus, coach and train connections at either end of the ferry service would encourage people to travel more sustainably.*

*Interventions to consider could include increasing support for rural bus services, increasing the availability of demand responsive transport services in islands, and introducing Car Clubs at ferry terminals.*

*The current contract states: 'When we deploy a substitute vessel during planned and unplanned events we will appraise the options available (which may include vessels outwith the CHFS fleet) to retain as near an equivalent level of service as resources permit.' The use of non-CHFS vessels needs to be maintained as an option to address the current shortfall in capacity going forward into the new contract, and an equivalent level of service should be provided and defined as a KPI, rather than a near equivalent level of service.*

*Increase the frequency of sailings by extending the operating day, and if capacity allows potentially transport motorhomes/coaches on the freight ferry or sailings that do not have high demand.*

*Provide information on CalMac website regarding public transport to and from the ports, and promote car hire services that are available on the islands.*

Q4. To reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times, would you be willing to ports and from a port using public transport?

Yes

No \*

If no, please explain your answer.

*Onward connections need to be fully integrated with ferry timetables.*

*The new CalMac ticketing system is not integrated with other service providers, and CalMac is not currently integrated with other transport modes.*

*The use of public money to support a ticketing system that did not facilitate intermodal ticketing demonstrates that the operator's needs appear to have been prioritised over customer needs. See more at answer to Q13.*

Q5. To reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times, would you be willing to travel to and from a port using active travel modes (walking, wheeling, cycling)?



Yes

No\*

If no, please explain your answer.

*Inclement weather in the Western Isles and a lack of active travel infrastructure, coupled with distance from ports, do not make active travel an option.*

*Investment in Active Travel Facilities can improve the ability of those living nearer the main ferry terminals to travel sustainably, but even for relatively short distances the need to carry luggage will deter this as an option.*

*There have been significant increases in cycle tourism recently, which is to be encouraged.*

Q6. Should operators be required to hold dedicated vehicle deck spaces on busy routes for the use of island residents and key worker personnel required to travel at short notice?

*Yes\* A definition of key worker should be provided so as not to exclude certain professions. For example, are all of the following personnel included in this definition: offshore workers, heating engineers, nurses, delivery drivers?*

If no, please explain your answer

## Community Voice, Transparency and Accountability

Community feedback suggests there could be more dialogue and consultation carried out across the network, giving local communities a better opportunity to provide feedback, which will aid decisions related to ferry services.

Community feedback highlighted that ferry services need to be appropriately timetabled to balance the needs of different users.

Q7. How could communities be provided with a stronger role in providing input on ferries related decisions?

Please give us your views

**Transport Scotland**

*Enhancing the role of Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships in their ability to input to ferry related decision making should be explored to ensure that the community voice is a full part of an accountable body. See also response to Q.9.*

*Communities and relevant stakeholders should be fully consulted timeously before a timetable is finalised. We need to have more senior based management based outside Gourock and out on the wider network itself. That would certainly help their understanding of the difficulties faced by islanders, and lead to more coherent decision making.*

*It is also critical that islanders are on the DML Board.*

Q8. Are there ways in which Operators' engagement with local communities can be improved?

Please give us your views

*Current operator-led engagement reflects the detachment of CalMac HQ based in Gourock, contrasted with the reality experienced by those communities which actually rely on these services. The leadership of CalMac accordingly feels remote and designed to serve the company not the islands. The Northern Isles operator maintains its headquarters on a dispersed model, based in all the communities served by the network.*

*Provide sufficient notice and full information regarding cancellations, and improve response times at the call centres. There is also a need to have an out of hours service provision.*

*When an operational decision is taken such as withdrawal of a mezzanine deck, a full technical explanation as to the rationale should be provided. The potential cost to the community regarding the withdrawal of a particular service, should be measured against proposed changes to capacity of vessels .*

*The CalMac Network/Resilience Manager and Director of Community and Stakeholder Engagement should meet with communities and their elected representatives on a regular basis to pre-empt any concerns.*

*The Current contract states: 'We will monitor the effectiveness of our community engagement using the community dashboard regular reporting and having effective management and control mechanisms in place.' On checking the CalMac website, location of the community dashboard was not readily available.*

Q9. Is the Ferries Community Board representative of island populations?

Yes

**Transport Scotland**

No\* *(not fully, as the FCB is not democratically accountable, and is established and its Terms of Reference prepared by CalMac).*

If no, please explain your answer

*Fora such as Ferry User Groups, Regional Transport Partnerships, the Islands Transport Forum, and elected members provide democratic accountability.*

*However, the Comhairle does meet monthly with local members of the Ferries Community Board, the MSP and OHT and these regular meetings and working together have proven to be very useful.*

*The FCBs purpose as stated on CalMac website is to provide: 'A channel for effective and improved community engagement across the term of the CHFS contract'.*

Q10. Does the Ferries Community Board reflect your interests for the next contract?

Yes\*

No

If no, please explain your answer

*The FCB is not responsible for areas such as day to day operational services, contingency planning, setting timetable details, broader route specific issues, design of new vessels, transport policy matters, and is therefore quite limited in its remit. CFL work with the FCB to produce a biannual report (it is not stated as to what this work entails) on the website.*

Q11. Should communities have greater say in the development of timetables, so they suit the needs of ferry users?

Yes\*

No

Please explain your answer

*The Comhairle contends that ferry services should facilitate day trippers to the Western Isles, and that services should be faster, flexible and more frequent, through the provision of extended operating days via an improvement and revision of the crewing model allowing increased onshore time.*

*Communities should fully input into timetable development.*



*Currently the timetable operates to time rather than to capacity, which seriously affects the island economy.*

## Carbon Reduction and Environmental Impact

We are making good progress towards a net zero future; however, low carbon ferry engine technology is still being developed so we need to think of alternative ways to reduce our carbon footprint and our impact on the environment.

Q12. In what ways can ferries reduce their carbon emissions in line with Net Zero targets?

Please give us your views

*Use of battery or Hydrogen fuel cell powered electric motors in Small Vessel Fleet. Conversion to Ammonia or Methanol fuelling for Major Vessel Fleet. To support the fragile island communities that CalMac serves, batteries should be charged, Hydrogen fuel cells refuelled and Ammonia / Methanol supplied at island berths. The CHFS3 contract should require the appointed supplier to engage with island Local Authorities around existing plans for on-island electrification from Renewables and Green Hydrogen production.*

Q13. Would you consider reducing your car use when travelling by ferry?

Yes

No

If no, please explain your answer?

*A Car Hire or Car Club option should be available either side of ferry crossings, but the cost should be road-equivalent to incentivise travellers to use the service, otherwise they will simply use their own car.*

*Many ferry trips involve the movement of bulky items, for example a shopping trip to the mainland for household fixtures and fittings, and it would be unreasonable to expect travellers to empty these bulky items from a Hire/Club Car near the mainland port, transport them unaided to the ferry berth, haul them up a passenger walkway then haul them back down the passenger walkway and into their own cars at the home port.*

*The decision whether or not to travel with a car should be entirely discretionary for the traveller and should not be forced by the ferry operator – elsewhere in Scotland's travel network, travellers are able to*

## Transport Scotland

*get from point A to point B in a single mode of transport (car, train, bus, 'plane etc) without disruption.*

*Islanders should not be disadvantaged by having to disrupt their journey with different modes of transport (car, foot passenger on ferry, rental vehicle, bus, train etc) against their will.*

*For anyone travelling by foot it would be necessary for bus and train connections to work better than they do at the moment.*

*We also have the problem of constantly changing ferry timetables, which is making integrated travel almost impossible.*

*Any move by Transport Scotland to disincentivise cars on ferries must be subject to a rigorous Island Impact Assessment process on each island community.*

*The National Transport Strategy's vision for Scotland's transport system relates directly to creating an inclusive and accessible transport system contributing to a more equitable society. 'Reduces Inequality' is one of the four priorities underpinning the vision.*

## Onward and Connecting Travel

Looking at how onward and connecting travel can be promoted will enable us to provide opportunities for better connectivity and ferry user-access via active travel, public transport, and other more sustainable transport modes.

Q14. What do you think could be introduced to improve public transport connectivity between ferries, rail and bus operators?

Please give us your views

*As covered under Q.3 increased investment in public transport could greatly enhance the alternative options for access to ferry services.*

*There is a need to ensure onward travel on public transport and ferry arrival/departure times are aligned to facilitate a journey dependent on public transport.*

*An integrated ticketing system, such as the GO-HI app would improve connectivity between operators.*

*Offering reduced fares options to users of integrated public transport services.*

*Air connectivity is also very important for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, and timetabling could be improved to integrate with ferry services.*

## Accessibility

Community feedback showed that some equality groups face additional challenges when accessing and using ferry services.

Q15. Would you support a regular accessibility audit taking place with accessibility groups such as Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS), with the aim of improving accessibility at ports and onboard vessels.

Yes\*

No

What else you think could be done to improve accessibility on our ferry services?

*These needs should be made evident for each ferry dependent community through a rigorous ICIA.*

*The ICIA should not be on a CHFS wide basis.*

## Freight Services

Feedback provided by the community has highlighted that freight bookings can impact available vehicle spaces on vessels.

Q16. Are there ways to improve the Operator's collaboration with hauliers and businesses to better plan commercial traffic volumes?

Please give us your views

*All hauliers in the West Coast used to meet annually with the operator, and it is felt that this engagement should be reinstated.*

*We understand that in Shetland if there is capacity on the ferry an artic that is empty travels for free.*

*An artic carrying hay/shellfish only pays for one trip if the artic is returning empty. Barratlantic travels with an empty artic and returns full with Co-op provisions, and it's felt the same principle of only paying one way should also apply to general goods as is the case for the loads of hay/shellfish.*

Q17. Do you have any suggestions to better manage or reduce the demand on routes which experience high freight volumes?

Please give us your views

*The introduction of additional freight services on routes with high levels of freight traffic would free up capacity for general users, increase economic growth, and also bring more resilience into the fleet.*

*A freight fares review has not been concluded. The research report to inform the review was published on 23 June 2015, and the Working Group last met in March 2017.*

## Monitoring and Review

Feedback has highlighted that communities would like greater clarity and accuracy on performance reporting to be embedded within the next contract. Community feedback indicates that the true passenger experience is not reflected in the way the operator reports performance.

Q18. Would you welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to improve services?

Yes\*

No

If yes, how often should this happen and how should this be conducted?

*Quarterly, and more frequently if the situation requires a more immediate response.*

*There should be local representation on the board of DML, and the Comhairle has long contended for relocation of CalMac management positions into the islands communities to enable decision makers to experience at first hand the results of actions taken.*

*Feedback can be provided through elected members, the Ferry Users group, RTPs, the Ferries Community Board, and the Islands Transport Forum (ITF). The ITF existed as a standalone body previously, before being subsumed into the Islands Strategic Group.*

*Awareness and consultation around community engagement regarding these fora needs to be improved.*

Q19. Do you have any suggestions on how the Operator could provide a more accurate reflection of the passenger experience?

*As stated in Q1. Contractual Relief Events should not be permitted in CHFS3 as this is effectively a cancellation due to the home vessel being deployed elsewhere on the network where the vessel is unavailable on that route, therefore depriving local communities of their service.*

*There is no penalty against the operator for this and is effectively a cancellation for the affected communities, but not recorded as such in current performance measures.*

**Transport Scotland**

*Also, cancellations should report definitively as being due to weather (providing more evidence based measurement), or to technical issues (explaining the reason and how long it will take to resolve).*

*It is important that patient travel difficulties are captured. This tends to be one of the biggest complaints received by elected members in terms of ferry travel.*