
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

20 February 2024

Cabinet

Title:	Transport Scotland - Public consultation for the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract
Purpose:	To seek approval for the proposed North Ayrshire Council submission to Transport Scotland's public consultation for the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract.
Recommendation:	That Cabinet approves the submission of the proposed response to the consultation provided at Appendix One.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Transport Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Government, has launched a public consultation on the next Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS3) contract. The current contract ends at midnight on 30 September 2024. The consultation is seeking views until 8 March 2024 on current ferry services and how the new contract can best meet local needs to inform the specification. This report seeks approval for the proposed submission to the consultation provided at Appendix One.

2. Background

- 2.1 Transport Scotland currently subsidises, on behalf of Scottish Ministers, the vital ferry services serving the west coast of Scotland and the Clyde Estuary. They work with CalMac Ferries Ltd (CFL) and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) through a tripartite arrangement to operate the services. CFL provide the ferry services under the current tendered Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) contract with Scottish Ministers.
- 2.2 These services play a crucial role in the transport system in North Ayrshire, providing vital links for residents, businesses, and tourists to and from our islands. This includes services between Largs and Cumbrae, Ardrossan and Brodick, and Lochranza and Claonaig. The provision of a modern, sustainable ferry service is therefore critical to our islands and the wider North Ayrshire economy.
- 2.3 Transport Scotland are currently developing the new CHFS3 contract and are seeking the views of communities and service users on their expectations for the service. This is in recognition that there are areas where enhancements can be made in the contract. The focus for the new contract has been to review and reflect on the existing feedback from the ferry-dependent communities, key stakeholders and reports conducted throughout the current CHFS2 contract, including the recent report by the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland.
- 2.4 The consultation notes that Scottish Ministers' preferred route for procurement of the

next CHFS contract is a direct award via a Teckal arrangement. This is an exemption which allows in certain circumstances for a contract to be directly awarded to an in-house operator, without undertaking a competitive bidding process. This would be subject to a satisfactory due diligence exercise, with a final decision expected summer 2024. The new contract is scheduled to commence on 1 October 2024.

- 2.5 The consultation closes on 8 March 2024 and aims to provide an opportunity for those who have asked for change to directly contribute to the contract development process. Views are being sought on areas such as improved resilience; greater transparency; better communications; responsiveness; flexibility in service; and certainty for communities and service-users.
- 2.6 To ensure that our island communities' views are reflected, Officers have liaised with both the Isle of Arran Ferry Committee and the Cumbrae Ferry Users Group to prepare the proposed response. Both ferry committees will also be submitting their own responses directly to the consultation. The proposed response is provided at Appendix One. Key points from this include:
- Welcoming the consultation recommendation to rebuild public confidence in ferry services starting with measuring performance in a clear way that inspires trust.
 - Highlighting that the current performance measures are insufficient and the need to measure performance in a clear way within the new contract, which inspires confidence and trust within island communities and ferry users. The direct award of the contract would not be supported without such provisions on this basis.
 - Proposing that clear criteria for measuring reliability could include weather impacts, maintenance, servicing and repairs, community and customer service and satisfaction metrics and a needs assessment.
 - Noting that a range of measures could support sustainable travel to/from the islands and reduce vehicle demand. This could include greater co-ordination between all transport modes, on island transport improvements for active travel and public transport, improved integration of ferry ticketing and timetabling, consideration of the impact of delays on passengers and the introduction of a discounted ticket for combined public transport journeys.
 - Identifying the need for improved communications regarding the operation of the ferries. The next contract should include specific requirements for the operator to work with and be accountable to local authorities and ferry-dependent communities on service delivery and decision making. The contract needs to provide sufficient time for the ferry user groups/committees to be consulted and provide feedback on proposed timetable amendments.
 - Highlighting that the construction of the Ardrossan Harbour works and Cumbrae Slip improvements, and the delivery of the new vessels will assist with achieving the net zero targets for the services.
 - Proposing that the new contract should include clauses to ensure that any accessibility issues are addressed within an appropriate timescale.
 - Outlining that the provision of a dedicated service for freight would potentially assist with demand, especially at peak times.
 - Proposing that a clear and SMART strategy be included within the new contract, setting out how feedback will be analysed and the approach to improvements informed by the feedback.
- 2.7 In addition to the CHFS3 consultation, Transport Scotland's Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) will shortly consult on the draft ICP Strategic Paper. This will set out a proposed vision and priorities for the delivery of ferry services in Scotland, and the Long-Term Plan for Vessels and Ports setting out plans and proposals for a programme of investments in the CHFS and Northern Isles Ferry Service (NIFS) networks until 2045.

It will also propose how to prioritise decisions during a period of funding constraints, when difficult choices between projects are expected to be needed. A further report will be brought to cabinet when this consultation commences.

3. Proposals

3.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix One.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 No direct impacts from this report.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The provision of a modern, sustainable ferry contract and service will support the reversal of economic, social and physical decline and reduce socio-economic disadvantage. Ensuring that any new contract considers the views of the public is therefore vital for our local communities. It will also contribute to the delivery of the Isle of Cumbrae and Isle of Arran Local Island Plans, their key themes and priorities. Both plans recognise the multiple impacts of the unreliability and capacity of the existing ferry services to island residents, businesses and the local economy. Reliable ferry provision is identified as a key priority for the Isle of Cumbrae Plan and ferry provision and infrastructure is identified as a key priority for the Isle of Arran Plan. The provision of a modern, sustainable ferry service is critical to our islands and the wider North Ayrshire economy. The Centre for Economics and Business Research Phase 2 report (September 2022) identified that in 2019/2020 the ferry operations contributed, in terms of GVA, £1.48million to the Arran economy and £0.109million to the Cumbrae economy. Additionally, the Fraser of Allander Institute report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy identified that on average, each day of ferry operation contributes just under £170,000 to the island's economy. It is therefore essential that the new contract provides ferry services that fully meets the needs of island communities, residents, visitors and workplaces.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 The provision of a modern, sustainable ferry contract and service aligns with the Council's Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy workstreams of Energy and Transport by reducing emissions and encouraging low carbon behaviours in relation to energy use and supporting more active and low carbon methods of travel. Furthermore, it aligns with the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions through our declaration of a Climate Emergency and will contribute to the ambition to achieve net zero by 2030.

Key Priorities

4.6 Transport Scotland is seeking views on the requirements for a modern, sustainable ferry service contract. This will align with the Council's mission of working together to improve the lives of our people in North Ayrshire. It will contribute to several of the

Council Plan priorities to transition to a wellbeing economy, delivering prosperity, wellbeing and resilience for local people; we will have active, inclusive and resilient communities; and achieving net-zero by 2030.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified transport as a barrier to inclusive growth at a local level. The provision of a modern, sustainable ferry contract and service for our islands is vital to local communities and delivering inclusive growth and Community Wealth Building.

5. Consultation

5.1 Transport Scotland has committed to engaging with ferry users to understand the impact of problems with the existing ferry services contract and examine how the new contract can best meet local needs. The proposed Council response was prepared by Officers from across the Place Directorate, including Regeneration, Economic Policy, Growth and Investment, and Roads. It has also been informed by input from the Isle of Arran Ferry Committee and the Cumbrae Ferry Users Group.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Claire Fitzsimmons, Interim Senior Manager – Regeneration** on **01294 315305**.

Background Papers

Fraser of Allander Institute report: The Impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy, September 2020.

Cabinet Report: Net Zero Energy and Transport Committee – Inquiry into a modern and sustainable ferry service for Scotland, 22 August 2022.

Centre for Economics and Business Research: The socio-economic impact of CalMac ferry services: Phase 2 report, September 2022.



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

Hebrides Ferry Services Contract (CHFS3) **Transport Scotland**



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

Ministerial Foreword



I am pleased to present this public consultation on the new Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services Contract (CHFS3).

Scottish Ministers' preferred route for procurement of the next CHFS contract is a direct award via a Teckal arrangement, (which allows in certain circumstances for a contract to be directly awarded to an in house operator, without having to go through a competitive bidding process). This would be subject to a satisfactory due diligence exercise, with a final decision expected next summer.

In terms of value and importance to our island communities, this is one of the most significant contracts this Government will enter into, and as such it is vital that communities have the opportunity to contribute and help us shape the future of these vital ferry services.

This public consultation will provide an opportunity for those who have asked for change, including improved resilience; greater transparency; better communications; responsiveness; flexibility in service; and more certainty for communities and service-users to directly contribute to the contract development process.

Throughout this process we will continue to engage with our communities and stakeholders to inform the development of the contract to help shape the future of these services.

The public consultation will be available for 12 weeks from 15 December 2023 to 08 March 2024.

For more information, please visit [Transport Scotland's website](#).

Fiona Hyslop, MSP

Minister for Transport

Consultation Statement

We are seeking your views on potential ferry service improvements through the CHFS3 contract.

Background

The Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services play a crucial role in our transport system, providing vital links for residents, businesses, and tourists across the west coast of Scotland. However, we recognise that there are areas where enhancements can be made. We are therefore planning to introduce a new, enhanced contract for these ferry services which is scheduled to commence on 01 October 2024.

To date our focus for CHFS3 has been to review and reflect on the existing feedback from our ferry-dependent communities, key stakeholders and reports conducted throughout the CHFS2 contract period, including the recent report by the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee [A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland | Scottish Parliament](#). The feedback provided by these sources and further focused discussions with key stakeholders has aided the development of the consultation themes and questions.

Consultation Process

This consultation will be open for a period of 12 weeks from 15 December 2023 to 08 March 2024 and we invite you to share your views during this time to actively shape the forward thinking of the Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services Contract.

You can do this by completing the online consultation, providing [a response by email](#) or submitting a written response to:

CHFS3 Consultation
Transport Scotland
George House
2nd Floor
36 North Hanover Street
Glasgow G1 2AD

Hebrides Ferry Services Contract (CHFS3)

Transport Scotland

Assessing impact

We are committed to assessing the impact of CHFS3 on ferry-dependent communities and other stakeholder groups across Scotland.

This consultation will support development of the following impact assessments: Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA); Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA); Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA); and the Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA).

We will publish these impact assessments on the Transport Scotland website. We would like your views on these. Views can be provided to us by emailing [Transport Scotland](#).

For example, your views will inform us about the likely impact of our policy on advancing equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering good relations for people who share certain protected characteristics such as:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Race and religion or belief
- Pregnancy and maternity

We will take a robust evidence-based approach to the development of our impact assessments and will work in close consultation with key stakeholders and representatives of groups that are likely to be impacted.

Next Steps

In addition to the CHFS3 consultation, Transport Scotland's Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) will shortly consult on the draft ICP Strategic Paper which sets out a proposed vision and priorities for the delivery of ferry services in Scotland, and the Long-Term Plan for Vessels and Ports which sets out plans and proposals for a programme of investments in the CHFS and NIFS networks until 2045, and proposes how to prioritise decisions during a period of funding constraint when difficult choices between projects are expected to be needed. A further update on this consultation will be provided by Transport Scotland in the coming weeks.

Once the CHFS3 consultation period has ended, responses will be reviewed by a specialist independent analysis team and a recommendations report will be provided to Transport Scotland to consider when finalising the terms of the CHFS3 contract.

We value your input and look forward to hearing your views on how we can improve our Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services.

Please note that this is a public consultation, and all responses will be made publicly available, although personal details will be kept confidential. Should you wish for your comments not to be made publicly available, please select the appropriate box at the end of the consultation.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important process.

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

North Ayrshire Council has previously expressed concern regarding the efficiency and reliability of the ferry services being delivered by the Scottish Government and its associated bodies to our island communities. The inadequacies of these services are resulting in inconvenience to residents, substantial disruption to the holiday trade and the loss of business to the island.

The impact of this is illustrated by the Arran Recovery Group estimate that losses exceeded £2.7m as a result of the removal of the Isle of Arran vessel (2021) to cover routes elsewhere in Scotland. The Fraser of Allander report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy (2020) identified that on average, each day of ferry operation contributes approximately £170,000 to the island's economy.

Our islands need reliable, resilient, and well performing services that provide for everyday journeys for rural communities, tourism, leisure and business needs. There

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are no alternative transport modes for journeys to and from Arran or Cumbrae therefore vessel and service resilience, performance and reliability is critical. Reliable and resilient ferry services are critical to the supply chain between mainland and island businesses and the sustainability of our island businesses going forward. Unless the performance measures are improved and more focussed on the users' experience then the proposal for a direct award, via the Teckal exemption, would not be supported. The inclusion of such measures within any updated contract should be carefully considered on this basis.

The new contract should provide a service for passengers which fully adheres to the Regulation (EU) No 1177/2019 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the Guidance on Obligations of carriers and terminal operators in the event of interrupted travel (guidance note 6) (updated January 2021). The current contract provides an inadequate response to this requirement. The new contract should include the provision of suitable accommodation in such circumstances.

As part of its contract management arrangements, Transport Scotland has a series of performance measures to assess its ferry operators. It reports two of these to its senior management team, namely:

- **Reliability:** The Performance Measure for Reliability is the completion of each Sailing referred to in the Published Timetable. This is the percentage of scheduled sailings that take place.
- **Punctuality:** The measure will be deemed to have been met if the Operator and connecting public service agree to delay the connecting service beyond its scheduled time so that passengers, including any with a disability, to board the connecting vehicle or vessel. This is the percentage of sailings that are on time.

There are further performance measures relating to Compliance, Customer Care and Accessibility Process, Services - Vehicle Accommodation and Call Centre. However, it is not clear as to how these are reported so greater transparency of the process and sharing of performance would be welcomed.

Each ferry contract sets out the financial penalties that will apply for failures against the measures. Performance deductions are not made against reliability and punctuality measures when a sailing is cancelled or delayed due to a 'relief event.' Relief events include adverse weather, tidal conditions, traffic problems and other issues of safety. Other reasons for cancellations, or the late running of services, include vessel breakdowns or crew shortages.

CalMac's criteria for measuring reliability are opaque, poorly understood and apparently not widely trusted within ferry-using communities. It is often unclear as to when and how relief events are measured, with no clear details provided or measured. It is often the case that timetables are altered to ensure that reliability and performance measures are met. The current contract requires CalMac to sail at set times using set vessel. The contract should be less prescriptive with flexibility built in, for example, to operate a minimum number of sailings per day. Furthermore clarity is

required around the classification of issues in relation to sailings to ensure transparency and that customers are appropriately compensated

As noted in the Executive Summary of the “Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland, 11th Report, 2023” (Executive Summary) there is an urgent need for better performance metrics and reporting to drive improvement and create more trust in the service. The root causes of the current problems include an ageing fleet, lack of resilience, increased usage and a “pass the parcel” of responsibility culture in governance structures.

We would also suggest that customer service metrics must be included within the performance criteria for the new contract. This will help to ensure that the lived experience of our ferry-dependent communities is given due consideration when assessing the operator’s performance. These should promote a proactive approach by the operator to service delivery and support early resolution of issues on the network.

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

North Ayrshire Council would agree with the findings of the Executive Summary that closer working between the operator and local authorities and communities, simplified contract variation processes, collection of more data on which to assess value for money and key performance indicators require to be included in the new contract.

Clear criteria for measuring reliability should be agreed with key stakeholders and included within the contract. This should include but not be limited to:

1. Weather impacts – has extreme weather increased? Are other routes operating when the Arran and Cumbrae services are not?
2. Maintenance, servicing and repairs – is this taking longer than previously?
3. Community and customer satisfaction rates. Needs of the community to be clearly identified and agreed. New contract needs to satisfy the needs of the community.
4. Carry out a needs assessment for each route and include the outcomes within the new contract.
5. The lateness measurement on the short crossing to Cumbrae is considered lenient for a short crossing. On crossings that are under 10 minutes they should not be more than 2 minutes out of step for departures and arrivals. The existing Level 1 and Level 2 lateness (5 or 10 minute thresholds) are far too lenient for these short routes.
6. Consideration of the cumulative impact of ferry delays, including onward connection issues.

The reporting on performance indicators should also include detailed reporting on which relief event was associated with reliability and punctuality measurements. Statistics must accurately reflect the lived experience of travellers. At the very least, the "actual performance" figure for cancellation or significant delay of services should be published alongside the "contractual reliability" figures cancellations to better reflect the customer experience. A route cause analysis may inform this process.

The recommendation of rebuilding public confidence in ferry services starting with measuring performance in a clear way that inspires trust is welcomed. However, unless there are measures in place to enable and secure an immediate improvement in performance this will have little impact in rebuilding confidence in the ferry services.

Future performance indicators should consider and draw attention to best practice in ferry provision and service including considering examples from private enterprise or internationally. Lessons should be learned from private operators' service models. They should be adapted to the different needs, experiences and solutions of different islands and communities.

To improve performance and reliability the new contract should also consider the following:

1. Introducing accountability clauses and incentives to ensure the operator provides an excellent service.
2. The reliability and performance measurements should not just include the percentage of sailings but also detail all performance relief events to establish a pattern of performance and identify issues to address.
3. The contract should provide the operator with more flexibility to respond to circumstances. For example the contract should aim to provide a minimum number of sailings per day regardless of the time of sailings.
4. Provision of a longer term contract with changed structure which would be more attractive to operators.
5. The inclusion of customer service metrics within the performance criteria for the new contract. This will help to ensure that the lived experience of our ferry-dependent communities is given due consideration when assessing the operator's performance.

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?

It is clear from the evaluation of the impact of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) that there has been a significant impact on both the Isle of Arran and especially Cumbrae. RET has led to substantial increases in the number of private vehicles accessing the islands and the lack of integration between the ferry, rail and bus services further exacerbates this.

Ferry services should be suitably flexible to respond to local pressures associated with RET. For example, campervan restrictions are currently applied on some routes on the network but there is not currently flexibility to extend this to other routes where required. Any measures to help reduce the impacts of RET would be welcomed.

Consideration should be given to:

1. The provision of funding for on-island transport improvements. Improving active travel infrastructure will make it easier and more attractive for visitors to travel around islands by alternative modes such as active travel and reduce the need and attractiveness to take cars to our islands.
2. Improved on island and ferry terminal cycling infrastructure is vital to reducing non-essential car use, reducing carbon emissions, and maximising vehicle space on vessels for essential business and personal travel.
3. Building provision and responsibility into the contract for onward travel for foot passengers if there are delays would also support modal shift.
4. Developing a regional/national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system that coordinates all forms of transport.
5. Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government progressing the on-island aspects of the Islands Connectivity Plan promptly including consideration of all sustainable transport options. This should be informed by engagement with island communities, ferry users and Local Authorities.
6. The introduction of a discounted ticket for a combined public transport and ferry travel to incentivise sustainable travel journeys and seasonal or discounted tickets for foot passengers.
7. Formalising the prioritisation of islanders travelling for medical purposes and appointments. Port staff at Cumbrae and Largs operate a process to prioritise islanders traveling for urgent medical appointments which generally works well but would benefit from being formalised.

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

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N/A

~~Yes~~

~~No~~

If no, please explain your answer

As per Q3 above the following needs to be considered to help travellers make this decision.

1. The provision of funding for on-island transport improvements. Improving active travel infrastructure will make it easier and more attractive for visitors to travel around islands by alternative modes such as active travel and reduce the need and attractiveness to take cars to our islands. Improved on island and ferry terminal cycling infrastructure is vital to reducing non-essential car use, reducing carbon emissions, and maximising vehicle space on vessels for essential business and personal travel.
2. Building provision and responsibility into the contract for onward travel for foot passengers if there are delays would also support modal shift.
3. Developing a regional/national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system that co-ordinates all forms of transport.
4. Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government progressing the on-island aspects of the Islands Connectivity Plan promptly including consideration of all sustainable transport options. This should be informed by engagement with island communities, ferry users and Local Authorities.
5. The introduction of a discounted ticket for a combined public transport and ferry travel to incentivise sustainable travel journeys.

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)?

N/A

~~Yes~~

~~No~~

If no, please explain your answer

As per Question 3 above the following should be considered to support ferry passengers to make sustainable travel choices:

1. The provision of funding for on-island transport improvements. Improving active travel infrastructure will make it easier and more attractive for visitors to travel around islands by alternative modes such as active travel and reduce the need and attractiveness to take cars to our islands. Improved on island and ferry terminal cycling infrastructure is vital to reducing non-essential car use, reducing

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- carbon emissions, and maximising vehicle space on vessels for essential business and personal travel.
2. Building provision and responsibility into the contract for onward travel for foot passengers if there are delays would also support modal shift.
 3. Developing a regional/national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system that co-ordinates all forms of transport.
 4. Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government progressing the on-island aspects of the Islands Connectivity Plan promptly including consideration of all sustainable transport options. This should be informed by engagement with island communities, ferry users and Local Authorities.
 5. Improvements to mainland public transport connections to/from ferry terminals and ensuring balanced pricing to incentivise public transport options.

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

No

Unsure

If no, please explain your answer

The introduction of a dedicated vehicle space would introduce a priority system that would require significant consideration before implementation. Agreement on the prioritisation criteria, management and priority queuing areas would be required. This would require careful management and could potentially lead to misunderstanding or abuse. It is noted that whilst there are arrangements in place currently for emergency medical related journeys, the return journeys are not always suitably accommodated.

Holding dedicated space on the Cumbrae ferry would also be challenging operationally as it is a non-bookable service. If it is considered appropriate to hold back a percentage of space for short notice trips, the criteria should be agreed with all stakeholders noting that additional separate queuing facilities may be required at ports/slips and clear management responsibilities would require to be included in the contract.

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

North Ayrshire's islands communities are represented by two well-established, recognised ferry groups, the Isle of Arran Ferry Committee and the Cumbrae Ferry Users Group. The island communities however need to be able to better understand what they can influence and the process to do so. Sufficient time is however also needed to ensure that consultation exercises are not meaningful and take account of the community view.

Early consultation needs to be undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient time to influence the decision making process. The community voice should be more inclusive and reflected in the contract. The contract should be focussed on providing a service to the community, not just delivering the timetable. The new contract should include specific requirements for the operator to work with and be accountable to local authorities and ferry-dependent communities on service delivery and decision making.

Decisions on timetables need to be informed by an assessment of the wider economic and social need, including the overall impact on the islands' economies, rather than the cost to the operator to provide the Service.

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

Please give us your views

There is a clear need for improved communications regarding the operation of the ferries. At present much of the information comes via media channels first rather than directly from the Operator. Procedures to engage with the community and clear mechanisms for an escalation of disagreements and to provide feedback on service provision within the contract are essential. This should outline roles and responsibilities for the organisations involved and detail how feedback will be collated and used.

At present the stakeholder process is fragmented with no one organisation having a clear responsibility to respond to issues or address weaknesses in service provision. As noted at Q7, the next CHFS contract should include specific requirements for the operator to work with and be accountable to local authorities and ferry-dependent communities on service delivery and decision making. This should include a clear approach and communication on how feedback is used and agreed actions are progressed within identified timescales.

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

Yes

No

If no, please explain your answer

At present the Ferries Community Board has representatives from the Cumbrae Ferry User Group and Arran Ferry Committee.

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

Yes

No

If no, please explain your answer

Largely yes however the Board only considers strategic issues that affect the whole network, not island specific issues. The consideration of island specific issues and escalation processes may be useful on this basis.

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

At present North Ayrshire Council and the ferry user groups and committees have the opportunity comment on proposed timetables as part of the general consultation with the public. Timetable decisions do not currently take account of the impact on residents and businesses and focus on the cost of Services. A wider range of factors should inform decision making and be agreed with Local Authorities and communities. Clear feedback on the changes made or not made informed by consultation would be beneficial. This would allow consultees to understand how their feedback was being considered and addressed. The current lack of information results in consultees being unclear if their feedback is being fully considered.

More transparency including clear explanations as to why decisions are made regarding operational matters is required. This includes decisions in relation to timetables where early engagement and ability to influence would be beneficial. The difficulties in considering multiple opinions are acknowledged, however it would be beneficial if any proposed changes were discussed with the recognised ferry groups/committees prior to any wider public consultation exercise. This would allow these groups the opportunity to input to and inform the process.

The Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group meets every six months and are therefore not able to respond to timetable changes in a timely manner. Therefore, the contract needs to build in sufficient time for comments and amendments.

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

Ferry decarbonisation would be a matter for the Scottish Government however North Ayrshire Council would welcome this policy to help reduce carbon emissions. This aligns with the Sustainable North Ayrshire strategy.

We would however note that the provision of a reliable and resilient ferry service is critical to our island communities and their economies. Future procurement should therefore focus on proven technologies to ensure continuity of service. Whilst we recognise the desire and ambition to look at new technology, this should not be at the expense of the connectivity of our island communities. Tried and tested technology and engineering should be used to help ensure that the delivery programme can be achieved.

Delays to the Ardrossan Harbour works and Cumbrae Slip improvements and Claonaig slip improvements, and delays in the delivery of the new vessels are contributing to the existing carbon emission levels. Progression and final delivery of these will assist with achieving the net zero targets.

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

N/A

~~Yes~~

~~No~~

If no, please explain your answer.

As per our responses to Q3 and Q4 above, we would welcome measures which encourage more sustainable travel to, from and on our islands. This could include:

1. The provision of funding for on-island transport improvements. Improving active travel infrastructure and sustainable travel options will make it easier and more

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attractive for visitors to travel around islands by alternative modes such as active travel and reduce the need and attractiveness to take cars to our islands.

Improved on island and ferry terminal cycling infrastructure is vital to reducing non-essential car use, reducing carbon emissions, and maximising vehicle space on vessels for essential business and personal travel.

2. Building provision and responsibility into the contract for onward travel for foot passengers if there are delays would also support modal shift.
3. Developing a regional/national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system that co-ordinates all forms of transport.
4. Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government progressing the on-island aspects of the Islands Connectivity Plan promptly including consideration of all sustainable transport options. This should be informed by engagement with island communities, ferry users and Local Authorities.
5. Improvements to mainland public transport connections to/from ferry terminals and ensuring balanced pricing to incentivise public transport options.

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

Ardrossan, Brodick, Cumbrae and Largs are the only ports in the area with adequate public transport links to provide the connectivity between ferry, bus and rail. North Ayrshire Council has limited powers to manage the bus and rail network, a function carried out by the Scottish Government. We are however supportive of the development of a regional rail network and ensure the multi-faceted role of rail in the region is recognised by investment decision makers. This would help ensure the rail system provides reliable and punctual services, offers good value for money and high levels of passenger satisfaction, increasing integration of the rail system with ferry services.

There needs to be greater co-ordination between all transport modes including connecting modes on islands and on the mainland. On both Arran and Cumbrae, bus services are largely timed to meet the ferry on arrival. Reliability issues with the ferry can therefore have a significant knock-on impact for the wider transport network. If the buses wait for late-running ferries the timetable is not met which impacts the buses serving the wider communities on the islands.

On both Arran and Cumbrae these bus services are also critical to school transport. The impact of unreliable ferry services therefore disrupts residents, school pupils and tourists. Furthermore, residents and visitors disembarking at Ardrossan being inconvenienced by relying on rail travel which is similarly synchronised with expected

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ferry arrival times. Greater co-ordination between Scottish Government departments responsible for rail and ferry services would raise the profile of the need to improve connectivity.

Better integration of ferry ticketing and timetabling with bus and rail services, and improved cycling infrastructure is vital to reducing non-essential car use, reducing carbon emissions, and maximising vehicle space on vessels for essential business and personal travel. There also requires to be an acknowledgement of the wider policy benefits from integration public transport with ferries for example reducing carbon emissions and increasing the attractiveness of sustainable travel.

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?

Of the five ports/slips within North Ayrshire Council only the Brodick terminal could largely be considered as accessible. The terminals at Largs, Cumbrae and Lochranza have slopes with substantial gradients that require assistance to negotiate at certain times. With regards the Ardrossan ferry terminal, it is not currently fully accessible however future planned improvements will improve the accessibility. The Council is also aware that improvements are proposed for Cumbrae Ferry slip.

Any improvements should be designed to ensure that the ferry is fully accessible. An accessibility review should be carried out at Largs and Lochranza slips with any recommendations being addressed. A clearer accessibility policy and promotion of accessibility information are essential to enable informed journeys. Repairs to accessibility infrastructure should be addressed as a priority, noting that lifts are often out of action for prolonged periods.

It is envisaged that any new ferries procured by the Scottish Government will meet the accessibility requirements. Regular accessibility audits of both ports and onboard vessels would be of value however the new contract should include clauses to ensure that any accessibility issues should be addressed within an appropriate timescale.

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

North Ayrshire Council Services including our Roads Network and Waste teams generally have a good line of communication with the current operator. However, the experience for many years is that Council Services including the Roads Network and Waste teams do not receive the same treatment as other hauliers when being allocated space on the ferry. For example, when undertaking resurfacing works a minimum number of spaces per sailing (both ways) is required for tar lorries. This is to make the works financially viable and ensure best value for the works.

Despite being a frequent and high volume user of the services, the Council does not receive early notification of service issues and cancellations. Council Services are therefore reliant on the wider public communications to manage their operations. It would therefore be beneficial to be given a higher level of priority when making such bookings and to improve communications.

The Council requires to make these journeys to maintain the road network and manage waste for the island communities, but often finds itself disadvantaged when trying to take materials on and off the islands. Furthermore, the lack of bookings allocated and disruption to the service over the last few years has left the Council in a position where many contractors are refusing to undertake works and projects on the island which is to the detriment of our island communities. Clearer ticketing is also required for agricultural users, particularly for vehicles towing trailers and consideration should be given to maximising the use of facilities to the benefit of users.

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

Additional sailings, particularly during the summer season, would assist Council Services' operation through associated freight journeys. For example more allocated space could be provided on these sailings to support road improvements and other work being delivered by the Roads Network team. The provision of a dedicated service for freight would potentially assist with demand, especially at peak times. This should include provision for Council services including Roads Network bookings. The definition of freight should be broader and take account of the needs of island freight requirements.

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?

Yes, the Council would welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to improve services both as a user of the services and alongside the island communities. The feedback should consider not only the value of the ferry to Arran and Cumbrae's economy, but also the negative impacts of ferry uncertainty, cancellations and delays, and whether these factors would be considered in developing the contract. A clear and SMART strategy should be included within any new contract that sets out how feedback will be analysed and what/how improvements are being made because of the feedback.

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

Please give us your views

Any new approach to accurately reflect the views of passenger should be tested on user groups that include representatives of ferry-dependent communities and other regular ferry users. We would support the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee recommendation that the Scottish Government provides an update on the status of the revised communications and stakeholder strategy highlighted in their response to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. This should include a copy of the strategy and information on how it is implemented and how performance is being measured, including feedback from communities.

We would also suggest that customer service metrics should be included within the performance criteria for the new contract. This would help to ensure that the lived experience of our ferry-dependent communities is given due consideration when assessing the operator's performance. Improved and transparent communication is required with customers, providing clear information when service changes and cancellations are required.



Respondent information form

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our [Privacy Policy](#)

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

North Ayrshire Council - Regeneration

Phone number

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Cunninghame House
Irvine

Postcode

KA12 8EE

Email

transportation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Are you responding as a:

- CHFS network resident (Islands including Peninsulas)
- CHFS network resident (Scottish Mainland)
- Are you a CHFS network visitor or tourist?
- CHFS network business (Island and Scottish mainland)

If you are a CHFS network resident (Islands, Peninsulas, Scottish Mainland) please advise which CHFS community in which you are resident, and which local authority area you live in. If you are a visitor or tourist, please advise in which location you are resident:

Why do you mainly use CHFS network services?

- For Business
- For Work/Education
- For Personal/Leisure
- All of the above
- Other

How frequently do you use CHFS services?

- 5-7 times a week
- 2-4 times a week
- Once a week
- Once every other week
- Once a month
- Occasionally
- Seasonal (Summer Period)
- Other

Are you:

- Under 16
- 16 to 18
- 19 to 21
- 22 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 or over
- Other

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
- No

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.



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