

**South Ward Forum – Fort William and Ardnamurchan  
(Ward 22)**

**Monday 18 May 2015**

**Note of Meeting**

**Present**

- Councillors Thomas MacLennan and Brian Murphy
- Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chairman, Community Services
- Community Councils – Ardgour; Morvern; Sunart; West Ardnamurchan
- Members of the public x 35

**Officials in attendance**

William Gilfillan (Director of Community Services); Cameron Kemp (Area Manager, Community Services); Mike Mitchell (Service Finance Manager); Mike Leary (Assistant Area Manager, Community Services); Donald Dixon and Allan McCowan (Ferry Foremen); Dot Ferguson and Emma Tayler (CEO)

1     **Apologies** – Cllrs Andrew Baxter and Bren Gormley

2     **Corran Ferry consultation** – the background to the evening was set out with particular reference to the recommendations agreed by Highland Council at its meeting on 12 March 2015 (hand out given to all). The recommendations followed an exchange of letters between Cllr MacLennan, Chair of Lochaber Area Committee, and Cllr Mackenzie, Chair of Community Services Committee, with a clearly shared understanding of the need for the ferry service to be run ‘on an efficient and cost effective basis’. An outline was also given of the work strands which are currently underway. These include:

- extension of the socio-economic study, previously carried out by AECOM IN 2014, to develop equalities and rural impact assessments;
- assessment of State Aid issues – this includes the potential to enter into a Public Service Contract or impose Public Service Obligations for the provision of maritime carbotage services;
- need to break-even – an ongoing requirement in order to attempt to reduce costs and increase revenue;
- fare increases – linked to the requirement to break-even
- public consultation – a key aspect of the delivery of an effective and efficient service which meets the needs of the community and the service;
- the future – a strategic options appraisal is underway in order to identify the medium to long-term future of the service

**Financial Position** – the current financial position was set out, providing explanations for apparent increases / decreases and describing the current cost challenges being faced.

**Public Consultation** – those attending were asked to break into workshop sessions to consider and prioritise the following cost-saving measures which had come from two Community Councils previously (following a meeting with the Council’s Chief Executive on 6 February 2015) and to add any new ideas:

- disabled concessions
- charges for pedestrians and cyclists
- sponsorship / advertising
- challenge maintenance costs

In the feedback session, the following was agreed:

- to consider charging pedestrians and cyclists
- to pursue sponsorship / advertising
- to consider review of charges for coaches / lorries, with reductions for local companies
- to consider producing differing ticket book sizes eg 45 / 20 tickets
- to continue pursuing smart ticketing

It was further agreed to consider charges for disabled concessions, but with the subsidy being set against other Council budget rather than the Corran Ferry budget

The meeting also agreed that:

- the Council should pursue a change of policy by Transport Scotland to vary the terms of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), so that not all routes are treated the same way; and
- that further options to reduce maintenance costs should be considered

There was no support for any change to the Ferry timetable

**Next Steps** – suggestions made will be reviewed and costed by Community Services and this information will be circulated to the widest community using various mechanisms including paper copies; social media; press release etc. This will be concluded by the end of June 2015 and a full report will go to the first Community Services Committee in 2016. **Action CK / DF**

There being no further debate specific to the Corran Ferry, the Chairman opened the meeting up for general questions.

Concern was expressed about potholes which are dangerous but also about the new repair process which is occasionally leaving an uneven surface. This problem has been picked up and is being rectified.