



## **Dunoon Community Council**

### **Meeting of the Dunoon Community Council held in Queen's Hall, Dunoon on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025.**

#### Community Councillors Present:

Gill Robertson (GR) (Convener)  
David Clough (DC)  
Lindsey McPhail (LM)

Debz Wright (DR)  
Paul Graysmark (PG)  
John Jameson (JJ)

#### Via Teams:

Tom McCowan (TMc) (Secretary  
Councillor Daniel Hampsay (DH)

Tim Moss (TM ) (Treasurer)

#### ABC Councillors Attending:

Councillor Ross Moreland (RM)

#### Dunoon Observer:

Chris Martin (CM)

#### Police Scotland:

Not in attendance

#### Guest Speakers:

Gordon Ross (Western Ferries)

#### Members of the public:

Frauke Thornton (FT)  
Finlay Currie

Ciorsdain Fagen

## Apologies

Tom Warren (TW) (Vice Convener)

Abigail Apps (AA)

Yvonne Love (YL)

Audrey Forrest (AF)

1. Gill Robertson (Convener) opened the meeting at 1900hrs and welcomed everyone to the meeting. The convener told those in attendance that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of taking the minutes and the recording would be destroyed after the meeting scheduled for Monday 09<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and the minutes have been approved. She invited anyone not happy with being recorded to leave the room or remain silent. She reminded everyone that questions should be directed to herself and not to talk over people.

### 2. **Recording of members attending and apologies received.**

As Above:

### 3. **Declaration of Interest.**

As listed at Annual General Meeting.

4. **Minutes of previous meeting were discussed.** No issues were raised with the minutes from the last meeting held on 08<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

**Proposal. Dunoon Community Council accepts the minutes of the meeting held on 08<sup>th</sup> September 2025 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.**

**Proposed: DW**

**Seconded: DC**

**For (4)**

**Against (0)**

**Abstained (2)**

**Result: Passed.**

### 5. **Appointments/Resignations/New Members.**

**Presentations** – Gordon Ross introduced himself as the Managing Director of Western Ferries. He said that last year, Western Ferries carried out 32000 sailings, in comparison, CalMac carried out 17000 sailings. He said that Western Ferries reliability was 99%. He said that Western Ferries

operate four link spans, and this has helped improve the reliability of the service. It also provides additional resilience. He went on to speak about the fares. He said that Western Ferries continues to be a cheaper crossing than CalMac. He pointed out their fare increase this year was 4.5% where CalMac increase was 10%. He also said that Western Ferries do not get the RET (Road Equivalent Tariff) discount that CalMac receive on other routes . If CalMac were to lose their subsidy on the Gourock to Dunoon route , they would have to quadruple their prices to operate commercially.

Western Ferries are completely nonsubsidised and have to pay for their own maintenance, infrastructure projects etc. He said in the previous year (Up to August 2025) Western Ferries carried 1.3m passengers in comparison to CalMac's 0.2m. GR spoke about the White Heather report from 2020. DC asked for clarification on the term passengers, GR told him the term passenger was every soul on board regardless of if they are traveling in a car, coach or by foot. He said that Western carry a majority of the SPT passengers, this is due to a culmination of cheaper fares and more regular sailings.

He said that he finds it very unfair that under 22's are traveling for free on buses yet those over 65 are still required to pay on the ferry. He went on to talk about subsidies; he informed members that CalMac receives £4.5m in subsidies every year which equates to £21.63 per passenger carried. Western Ferries used 1.1 million litres of fuel during their 32,000 sailings (can you please add the CalMac figure for comparison). Western Ferries employ 60 local members of staff (again the CalMac comparator). They also donate £25k to local groups whereas CalMac donate the same, however this is across the whole of their network. Western Ferries turnover last year was around £10m. They also provide the free out of hours ambulance transfer service. The floor was opened to questions from members.

PG asked if Western Ferries would be willing to take over the CalMac route in addition to the service they provide. GR said his personal feelings are mute as the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and CalMac have ensured that there is no competition on this route. PG said that people wanted a service that would take them from Dunoon and would connect with the trains to take them to Glasgow. This isn't happening anymore and asked how we get that kind of service back. GR said his primary focus is to ensure that Western Ferries provides the best possible service it physically can. GR said given the talent and expertise of the CalMac staff, he cannot work out why the service is so bad. PG asked where the service has gone so wrong, GR said that he thought the focus was wrong, in 2011 when the service reduced to passenger only, too much time and effort was taken up fighting to get the car service reinstated. This approach had caused delays.

He referred to the White Heather report from 2020 where it recommended that new vessels be purchased, yet we are now in 2025, and no new vessels have been ordered for the route. He said that the infrastructure hasn't been updated and needs a lot of work, he said again that the focus was wrong and CalMac should have been focusing on the RET and keeping the SPT low, they should have been focusing on getting new vessels and most importantly, providing a reliable and safe service. GR went onto speak at length about the issues regarding new ferries and the problems the delays have caused for CalMac.

DC said he raised with Scottish Ministers last week that the new ferries being built for the Colintrave route are being built for a route with 7 cancellations, where there are no new vessels being built for a route with thousands of cancellations. He cannot understand the logic in replacing a ferry that has not failed yet nothing for a service that is continually failing.

FT wanted to thank Western Ferries for finally getting women onto the boat crews. She asked if Western Ferries would be able to put up a webcam showing the car park so people can see the state of the queue for the ferries. GR responded and said that Western Ferries have never had a policy that denied employment for women. It was all down to the CV's and applications they received. He said things have moved on and now Western Ferries employ a female purser and now a female boat master, but employment opportunities are open for everyone.

He said that regarding the Rest and be Thankful (RBT) he is part of the group set up to look at the RBT. When ordering the two new vessels, no decision has been made on what to do with the additional ferries. He said that depending on demand, they may retain one of the ferries for resilience and to give extra capacity where needed. He is aware that it can get busy on both sides at peak times and they can immediately add in an extra crossing to minimise the traffic on the road. He said that to move away from first come, first served basis would be a nightmare to marshal and implement, he pointed out that if there was a genuine emergency, people can always ring the office and Western Ferries will, where possible, try to accommodate them. He said that they have the capacity to increase the service, should needs arise, to twelve sailings an hour. FT suggested that they could make better use of social media and make announcements when they are busy. GR said he would take this away and look at it. He said that he is in discussions with Transport Scotland regarding the RBT, he said that currently there is no operational need to retain the fifth vessel, however, if there is going to be a significant increase in traffic because of improvements to the RBT, Western Ferries have the option to retain the extra vessel.

CM asked if there was any possibility of having a waiting room at either end for foot passengers. GR said that they are currently running a three-vessel service and does not see the need for waiting rooms. He said in the past, they have had toilets, however these were vandalised and were withdrawn.

CM asked if there were any plans to introduce a loyalty scheme for people who travel frequently. GR said that there was a lot of questions regarding e ticketing, this is where a loyalty scheme could fit in, however there are connectivity issues that prevent this being implemented. GR said that there was already a significant discount on prepaid tickets.

CM asked, as Dunoon is a peninsular and already has a very reliable service, could this be a reason why CalMac are not making the Dunoon route a priority. GR said that Campbeltown still doesn't have its service returned and the Tarbet to Portavadie route has continually been re-routed to assist elsewhere. He said that until the Scottish Government/Transport Scotland are willing to unbundle the service, then nothing will change.

DW suggested that Western Ferries sell their surplus vessels to CalMac as these are both reliable and functional. GR said he would quite happily charter the two vessels to CalMac. DC asked about the connectivity issue, he said that if the train services can use it, even in some very remote locations why can Western Ferries not upgrade to allow e ticketing. GR said that they

have looked into several ways they could improve the ticketing system from having shore side ticketing to onboard ticketing, The problems arise when onboard as there is no way to immediately cancel a ticket and without this, the system could be open to abuse. He told members that this is constantly being looked at and if a viable option comes to market, it will be considered. DC also spoke about the ticket pricing system and how it could potentially put people off visiting Dunoon. The prices on board are significantly higher than if purchased from an agent. GR said this is well advertised through their website and on social media. He said that Western Ferries are trying to promote and encourage people to purchase their tickets in advance. He pointed out that the onboard sales are very small in comparison to pre-purchased tickets. He also pointed out that their tickets never go out of date.

DW asked if there was any way that the ticketing system could be linked to the Saltire card or something like the Oyster Card. GR said that they spend a lot of time looking at ways to improve the ticketing systems but still have to operate the agent system.

The Convener said that there is a rumour circulating that Western Ferries are going to open a route between Toward and Rothesay. GR said that he would love to do this. He has spoken to the gentleman who is building the AI facilities at Toward, He is having issues putting in power to the area, to do so would require a clean-up of the basin. GR said there have been previous conversations with the Bute Estate, who were interested. He said that this opportunity had been looked at before.

PG asked what the criteria was for getting the RET. GR said that he couldn't answer that question and it should be directed to Transport Scotland and your SNP councillors/MSP

The Convener brought the discussion to a close and thanked Gordon Ross for attending and answering our questions. Gordon ended by thanking everyone for being loyal customers and said Western Ferries wouldn't be here without their customers' support.

6.

7. **Police Report** – No questions were raised for the Police.

8. **Action points and updates from previous meetings.**

- a. **Highland Mary Railings** – PG said he has not done anything as he was unsure if the Council wanted him to proceed. The convener said she was under the impression that there would be a report produced to show a plan and costings. PG said there were several ways to do it but hasn't proceeded as he wasn't sure it is something that was wanted. PG agreed to supply a plan and costings at the next meeting. Finlay Currie suggested that this is something that the BID would be able to assist with and suggested that PG speak with the BID Manager. It was agreed that PG would liaise with the BID manager and report back to members next month. CM said that he has been trying to find out who is responsible for the maintenance of the Highland Mary statue, He is still to find out who is responsible, Historic Scotland are saying it is Argyll and Bute Council and the Council are saying it is Historic Scotland. RM said he would make enquiries.

Page 5 of 14

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9. **Monthly Reports.** There were distributed to members on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October. In addition to the monthly reports there were discussions held on the following subjects.

- a. **Secretary** - The secretary spoke about the upcoming Poppy Appeal and the need for volunteers.  
**He also spoke about the monthly reports.** Members are not submitting the reports. These reports are to save time in the meetings. The idea of the written report is to stop members giving a verbal report and only answer any questions members may have. If members are not submitting a written report, they should not be giving a verbal report at the meeting.
- b. **Treasurer** – The treasurer gave a monthly report. There was confusion as to what had been produced and what was reported on. The published report only included transactions up to and including the 30<sup>th</sup> September, all other transactions will be covered in the October report. Due to the discrepancy, there was no vote on the financial statement. The full report is available on the shared drive.
- c. **Transport** - The Transport member spoke briefly about the issue regarding the Kilfinan Community Council and the Mull Car Club, hopefully this will be resolved.
- d. The transport member is continuing to engage with Scottish Ministers regarding the ferries.
- e. There is now a change to the 480-bus service which will bring it along the shore road and through Kirn. There have been some changes to the stops on this route in and around Milton.
- f. Emergency Resilience Plan – PG said he is continuing to report blocked drains to the Council. He said he is having issues reporting issues, as it often comes back as “No further action” as it has previously been reported. However, the fault still has not been repaired. He suggested a presentation from the Roads and Amenities team on how their system works. PG said there is an ongoing issue where the Council are not maintaining the drain network, they are responding to faults. DC asked if there was any progress on the ERP, PG said that he no longer has access to the Shared Drive. LM said that she believes the drains are cleared by a rota.

#### 10. **New Business:**

- a. **Angel Tree Donation** - The secretary said for the past couple of years, Dunoon Community Council has donated £100 to the Angel Tree that is organised by Dae it Yersel. This goes towards helping those less fortunate within our community. He is asking if Dunoon Community Council would be happy to continue doing this.

**Proposal. Dunoon Community Council purchase £100 worth of Morisson Vouchers to be donated to the Angel Tree.**

**Proposed: TM**

**Seconded: DW**

**For (8)**

**Against (0)**

**Abstained (0)**

**Result: Passed.**

### **11. Updates from Argyll and Bute Councillors:**

- a. Councillor Hampsey informed members that he has been busy with case work and local committees. He spoke about the visitor levy and the new CalMac wintertime table. He spoke about the reduced service provided by CalMac. Councillor Moreland like Councillor Hampsey has been busy with case work and committee level meetings. He has also been busy with the visitor levy. He briefly spoke about the delays in the supporting communities funding. He said that some of this money has been allocated to the fire site in Argyll Street as agreed in an earlier EDI meeting. He asked if the planters at the War Memorial were having an effect and if members see anyone parked there, can they take a picture and send it onto him.

### **12. Questions to Argyll and Bute Councillors.**

- a. FT asked for an update on the traffic issues around Milton Road. Councillor Hampsey said that it has been added to the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) list. There will be a meeting soon regarding the TRO. He pointed out that himself and Councillor Moreland have been waiting for a very long time for the TRO review but understands this will take place before the end of the year. Councillor Hampsey said he has also added the Food Bank loading bay to the TRO list.
- b. CM said that the Swimming Pool will be closing next week for a period of 8 weeks due to essential maintenance, he asked if the Council were any closer to identifying a new site for a leisure centre. Councillor Moreland said there has been a site selection meeting, but at this point cannot discuss any further.
- c. CM also asked for more information on the £150k from the levelling up fund. Councillor Moreland said it was contained in the EDI report and will forward it on. He also said this is coming from the Community Regeneration Partnership. This money can not be spent yet due to changes in personnel in Westminster and the Council.
- d. CM asked Councillor Hampsey how he got informed about the return of the Argyll Flyer, He has been trying to find the information but can't find anything. Councillor Hampsey said that himself and DC had asked them, and he was unsure why they wouldn't tell him.

### **13. Any other business:**

- a. CM said following the announcement today by the Scottish Government approving the updating of the SSEN Infrastructure from Dunoon to Loch Long. This will involve considerable construction to erect 29 steel pylons ranging from 23m to 39m high over a length of 18 miles some of which will cut through areas of special scientific

Page 7 of 14

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interest (SSI) He asked if Dunoon Community Council has any views on this topic. The Convener said that Dunoon Community Council does not have a view on the announcement, but would have a look at it, in more depth. JJ said that there seems to be a general acceptance to ignore SSI's and just let projects happen, like the fish farm in the middle of a national park. He asked about the need for legislation when it is just ignored. CM said that there is a fair amount of opposition to the planned upgrade.

#### 14. Questions from the Public:

- a. FC asked for clarification as to what organisations were discussed regarding the parking. DC clarified that it was Dunoon Presents.

The Convener thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20300hrs. The next meeting will be held on Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025, in the Argyll room, the Queen's Hall, Dunoon.

Signed by:

{Original Signed}

T McCowan

Secretary Dunoon Community Council

Distribution:

All DCC Councillors

Cllr Moreland

Cllr Forrest

Cllr Hampsey

Melissa Stewart

Police Scotland

Chris Martin (Observer)

Queens Hall Reception

Library

Page 8 of 14

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**Dunoon Community Council  
Transport Report October 2025**

Apologies but September and the days leading up to the weekend of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> October have been time consuming hence short report.

**Tasks that have been undertaken since the last meeting.**

1. Held meeting with Mull CC to discuss negative comments from July 2025 survey.
2. Continue to make 'noise' with MSP's about possibly worst ferry service in Europe.
3. EOI for tendering the Gourock / Dunoon ferry service issued.
4. Meeting held with CGTL to discuss responses to EOI and agree next steps
5. Contacting known candidates for Cowal / Highlands in next year's Holyrood elections to bring them up to speed with the state of the ferry service (Amanda Hampsey / Alan Reid).
6. Winter timetables obtained from WCM – new 480 timetable to provide service from Hunters Quay along the promenade to Dunoon.

**Items requiring discussion/approval from members.**

1. Endorsement of tasks undertaken since last meeting.

**Items requiring further action by Transport Lead member.**

1. Revising connectivity workbook with new CalMac and WCM winter timetables.
2. Issue of press release from Dunoon CC about new ferry and bus timetables from 20<sup>th</sup> October.
3. Issuing summary actions from meeting with Mull CC.
4. Update distribution workbook with latest updates from volunteers in readiness for 2026 (o/s from last report x 3).
5. Continue to lobby 16 x MSP's and Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity ref ferries.
6. Further work on proposal from WCM for revised 907 service adding in passenger revenue models (o/s from last report x 2).
7. Continue to lobby Transport Scotland for clear plan for replacement ferries.
8. Continue to make 'noise' with MSP's about possibly worst ferry service in Europe.

Report compiled By: David Clough

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025

## Appendix

### New 480 timetable

Changes are mainly to align WCM services to best meet with CalMac connections, where possible.

Service 489 has minor revisions mainly to late afternoon and evening journeys to best meet CalMac connections. Revised Sunday timetable now with reliable options for CalMac connections, first departure now 10 minutes earlier at 0840.



TT 489  
20.10.2025.pdf

Service 480 is operating a new route via Marine Parade following DCC request and will serve an amended route around Milton. Covering current route around Cowal Place as far as John Street but will continue down to Morrisons then via Marine Parade to Hunters Quay. Passengers who previously boarded on Cromwell Street, Hill Street or Edward Street can board from John Street or service 489 at Auchamore Road. All other areas of route will continue to be served but with a new timetable. Copy attached.

Page 10 of 14

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TT 480  
20.10.2025.pdf

Service 478 has minor timetable improvements including trips previously operating to Colintraive Ferry Terminal now extending to Kyles View (previously only served on school day trips only). Last departure from Dunoon now at 1740 (previously 1745) to maintain onward connections at Colintraive Ferry Terminal.



TT 478  
20.10.2025.pdf

## MSP update issued 8<sup>th</sup> October

Reference: DCC/MSP/25100801

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025

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The ongoing saga of the worst ferry service in Europe continues.

The Argyll Flyers current date for return to service is 24<sup>th</sup> October – nearly 7 months since it was withdrawn from service due to a pre-existing fault since 2011. Then on 27<sup>th</sup> October Ali Cat is being withdrawn for its annual overhaul until 12<sup>th</sup> November – so it's the 13<sup>th</sup> November before we are back to a regular 2 vessel service. That's just under 6,000 sailings cancelled since the end of May this year.

CalMac have advised the following.

### *Current Route Utilisation*

*Since the extended single vessel period was confirmed on the route from 1 April, and up to 31 August. We have operated 4,458 sailings. Of these sailings:*

*Only 7 sailings operated with more than 50% of the available passenger capacity used.*

*Only 10 sailings operated with more than 40% of the available passenger capacity used.*

*Only 31 sailings operated with more than 31% of the available passenger capacity used.*

*Average utilisation on all sailings across the period was 7.4%.*

Not surprising when you consider the unreliability of the service – you cannot plan medical appointments (reminder – no NHS Dentistry on Cowal so all patients must travel across The Clyde), college courses, work and leisure. Indeed, for the Cowal Highland Gathering, one if not

Page 11 of 14

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the single biggest attraction to bring people into Dunoon CalMac cancelled the last sailing of the Saturday evening.

In August this year a Facebook post was put onto the Dunoon Argyll Scotland group.

*Could anyone in the group advise please on the following : we are planning to make Dunoon our permanent home but I would have to commute to Glasgow almost daily. Would this realistically be manageable (weather wise) if I was to take the ferry (as passenger)? What have your experiences been like? Many thanks in advance .*

There were 66 responses, which I've attached to this update both as an embedded document and an attachment to the covering e-mail. Please take some time to read though and see the economic and environmental impact this ferry service is having on Cowal. All those people commenting are no doubt voters, the huge majority of whom want the Ferry situation fixing. And this is before the 3 cancelled return sailings comes into force later this month.



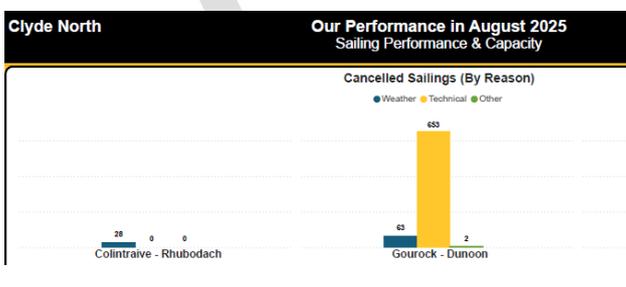
Carmen Barcan FB post August 2025.doc



It was also interesting to read last week that CMAL have announced that work has commenced on the new Colintraive – Rhubodach ferry.

Can I draw your attention to the August performance statistics published by CalMac recently, which show similar passenger numbers carried on this route, and no technical failures. Compare that with the Gourock / Dunoon route, which had 653 technical failures.

In terms of priority, where should the priority be – replacing what seems to be a very reliable ferry and fit for purpose, or replacing 2 unreliable ferries that are clearly not fit for purpose?



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In case the clips from the CalMac performance report are not clear, the originals are attached to the covering e-mail and can also be found here.

<https://assets.calmac.co.uk/media/zrhjt05/clyde-north.pdf>



clyde-north August  
2025.pdf

Can I assure you that the overall satisfaction rating for the residents of Cowal is not 89.6%. Because the service is so bad and the Community has repeatedly been given failed promises of new vessels for over a decade they have given up – a sad reflection on Transport Scotland and the Government.

The Press release which was circulated to you all on 9<sup>th</sup> September contained details of the current activity of the Cowal Gourock Transport Link group. The Expression of Interest has attracted responses, and the CGTL are going to start some initial discussions with the interested parties soon.

And we also found out in the past few weeks that the Clyde Clipper, a charter vessel operating on the Clyde (<https://clydecruises.com/our-boats/clyde-clipper/>) with a passenger capacity of 240 has recently been sold to a company in England. Whilst its hull shape suggests it would still be subject to weather limitations as the current 2 vessels, from a reliability and comfort point of view it would have been a good substitute vessel for this spring and summer and perhaps even a replacement for either Ali Cat or Argyll Flyer. It was proposed as such to CalMac by DCC Transport Lead earlier this year, and last year.

And there has been progress on the Orkneys in ordering new ferries for their inter island service. <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/latest-news/ferry-replacement-programme-phase-1-complete-and-first-images-released-for-consultation/> Should not pressure be applied to Transport Scotland to establish links with the Orkney Islands Council because instead of developing new design plans why not discover if the ferries planned for the seas off Orkney could cope with the Clyde, thereby saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in design and development costs, and potentially source identical ferries giving the shipbuilder economies of scale in production. Do we really want a re-run of the Fergusons procurement debacle?

I repeat the point made in my last update - how is the attention of Holyrood to this appalling situation going to be effected – it can only be by you, the elected representatives.

Yours sincerely

Page 13 of 14

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David R Clough

David Clough

Community Councillor - Transport Lead

Dunoon Community Council

Approved

Page **14** of **14**

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