



Scottish Council for
Development and Industry

POLICY SUBMISSION

SCDI RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT FERRIES PLAN

March 2012

POLICY SUBMISSION

SCDI is an independent and inclusive economic development network which seeks to influence and inspire government and key stakeholders with our ambitious vision to create shared sustainable economic prosperity for Scotland.

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Introduction

1. SCDI is an independent membership network that strengthens Scotland's competitiveness by influencing Government policies to encourage sustainable economic prosperity. SCDI's membership includes businesses, trade unions, local authorities, educational institutions, the voluntary sector and faith groups.

Executive Summary

2. SCDI welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Ferries Plan, put out for consultation by Transport Scotland.
3. We welcome the recognition through the Draft Ferries Plan that ferry services should be enablers for growth and not simply providing lifeline services. Our island communities can play an important part in sustainable economic growth and ferry services are crucial in supporting communities and businesses in our island and peninsular areas.
4. The Government Economic Strategy says that the Scottish Government will "accord greater priority to achieving more balanced growth across Scotland" to "ensure the most remote areas of Scotland can contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth". This will require significantly higher economic growth in the regions served by ferry services in Scotland. Gross Value Added per person for the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland all lag behind the Scottish average.
5. The European Union classifies the Northern and Western Isles, north and west Highlands, and Argyll and Bute as extremely or very peripheral. The promotion of new investment, exporting and employment, educational and life opportunities will depend on combating this remoteness. Connectivity will be critical and there are often no viable alternatives to links which ferries provide.
6. Ferry services are enablers for the growth of key sectors of the Scottish economy. Ferry services are crucial in getting products to market for the whisky industry and a critical part of the supply chain for fish farming and fish and shellfish processing sectors. They provide tourist routes through our island and peninsular communities supporting businesses there. They also offer future opportunities in the development of the renewables industry with new commercial prospects opening up for ferry operators. This needs to be factored into planning future timetabling and capacity decisions.
7. Ferry Services are an essential part of the transport network and the benefits to our islands communities both socially and economically of reliable and affordable ferry services cannot be downplayed. It is vital that we invest in our ferry services by procuring vessels that have the right capacity to meet the needs of our island and peninsular communities for generations to come.

8. We welcome the proposed improvements put forward in this consultation and recognise the benefits that many of the suggestions would bring, however without any costs or supporting STAG appraisals it is difficult to judge which proposals are achievable.
9. The Ferries Review process was initially described as a maritime equivalent to the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) for road and rail linked to the Scottish Government's strategic purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth. The STPR was designed to support the Government Economic Strategy, National Planning Framework 2 and the delivery of the three strategic outcomes identified in the National Transport Strategy:
 1. improving journey times and connections – to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport which impact on our high level objectives for economic growth, social inclusion, integration and safety
 2. reducing emissions – to tackle the issues of climate change, air quality and health improvement which impact on our high level objective for protecting the environment and improving health, and
 3. improving quality, accessibility and affordability – to give people a choice of public transport, where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car.
10. The outcomes of the STPR were structured on a tiered approach to investment, based around the priorities of:
 1. maintaining and safely operating existing assets
 2. promoting a range of measures, including innovative solutions, that make better use of existing capacity; and
 3. promoting targeted infrastructure improvements where these are necessary, affordable and practicable.
11. SCDI does not believe this is what the Draft Ferries Plan can be said to deliver.
12. In this submission, SCDI will make the following key points:
 - SCDI would have liked to far greater analysis of "spend-to-save" investments in infrastructure. In many cases improved harbour infrastructure would enable greater use for commercial access, in addition to more efficient vessels being procured for ferry routes.
 - Ferry Services are often the only transport links for the communities they serve and play a vital role in supporting economic development in some of the most fragile of our communities

- Minor improvements or reductions in service can have a huge positive or negative impact on the sustainability of a community.
- Ferry services should, as much as possible, integrate with other forms of public transport in order to provide better connectivity between rail, bus and ferry services. There may be scope to make improvements as part of the next rail franchise.
- In addition to residents, services must support industry and tourism in order to support economic development.
- With the need to upgrade harbour infrastructure as well as the procurement of new vessels, upfront costs need to be weighed against longer term efficiency and environmental benefits.
- The plan needs to be able to respond to changing demand and opportunities as they emerge.

SCDI RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH FERRY SERVICES DRAFT PLAN FOR CONSULTATION

How Should Ferries be funded and Procured

13. The Ferries Plan is only up to 2022. Ferry vessels generally have an economically useful life of 30 to 35 years, which is similar to Treasury economic appraisals for capital expenditure, and the Scottish Government's climate change targets are for 2050. The Ferries Plan should therefore look beyond 2022 and set out high level appraisals over 30 years. Over this longer period, there is the potential for hubs to be developed - either at existing ports or on new sites - alongside the introduction of larger or faster ferry services, and improved transport infrastructure on land. This would allow the consolidation of existing ports and services, while improving service frequency and overall journey times for all ferry users. Thorough research, consultation and piloting of this would be needed.
14. The scale and urgency of the investment requirements in our ferry services must be realised. The average vessel age will reach 22 years by 2013, double that of 1980 and the removal of the MV Muirneag from the Stornoway-Ullapool crossing in October 2013 highlights the need for the Scottish Government to move more quickly in the procurement of vessels.
15. SCDI fully appreciates the pressure on the Scottish Budget and welcomes the Scottish Government's work with CMAL on possible future financing options. Given the age of the current fleet, decisions on how the Scottish Government is to meet the vessel requirements going forward must be taken as a matter of urgency.
16. This Draft Plan shows that the Scottish Government is not able at present to determine the level of funding required over the period of the Ferries Plan and that the timing and funding of any changes is yet to be agreed. We understand the economic pressures the Government faces and the need to ensure that future ferry services are affordable and will meet the needs of communities.
17. The affordability and feasibility of new operating times and routes proposed have not been properly addressed in this Draft Plan and we would have liked to have seen STAG appraisals included. Along with proposals as to how new vessels will be procured and the timescale for their procurement we hope that full STAG appraisals will be part of the final Ferries Plan.
18. Significant cost savings in vessel procurement and operation could be achieved through collaboration, aggregation and standardisation. It is estimated that multiple orders could save tens of millions of pounds. Standardisation would allow for interchange between routes when breakdowns occur - reducing disruption to lifeline services - and provision of a relief vessel. There is also the opportunity to create further economies of scale through joint procurement of vessels with Ireland and Northern Ireland.

19. Vessels and harbour expenditure should also be planned together. Harbour developments could open up the network for use of more conventional vessels. SCDI recognises the potential benefits of having CMAL own all Ferries and Harbours used in the provision of subsidised ferry services, although understands the concerns local authorities may have.
20. Any move towards CMAL taking ownership of Harbours used in the provision of subsidised ferry services would need to undergo full consultation with local authorities affected and a consensual agreement reached. Neither party should be adversely affected in the transfer of any ownership.
21. Further discussion is also needed to look at how best to ensure our harbour infrastructure meets not only the future needs of ferry services but to enable more conventional vessels can make use of them. With offshore renewables there is potential for our harbour facilities to develop commercial traffic and for our ferry network to support the growth in this sector. Whilst the provision of ferry services will be the priority, scope should be allowed to ensure the full utilisation of our port and ferry infrastructure and develop commercial traffic.
22. Given the need for a full programme of vessel replacement to be brought forward, and the pressures on the Scottish Budget, SCDI believes that a move towards CMAL becoming a Community Owned Public Interest Company, which can then access private capital, would help to deliver the vessels and infrastructure needed going forward.
23. Governance arrangements would need to be drawn up in a way which establishes the autonomy of the Public Interest Company, while ensuring appropriate representation of the Scottish Government's interests, affordability of CMAL's investment programme for the Scottish Budget, a veto for the Scottish Government over any sale and step in rights in the event of financial problems.
24. SCDI also believes that the bundling of ferry services within the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services and Northern Isles Ferry Service is the right one. A single ferry network has a number of key advantages. Services for users are more easily integrated. There are economies of scale, for example with ticketing and marketing overheads, which are not available to operators for a single route. Cherry-picking of higher revenue earning routes would undermine the rest of the network. The tendering process for the Northern Isles has demonstrated the difficulties of unbundling.
25. Alternative ways should be found to promote innovation. The incumbent operators are presently too tightly constrained in the changes that they can make. Route development funds and rewards for service improvements, efficiency gains and control of operational costs should be considered.
26. We share the Scottish Government's view that it would be beneficial to have contract periods beyond the European Commission's preferred maximum contract

period of six years. A minimum contract period of ten years would be more suitable and provide the stability needed for our island and peninsular communities. When tendering for ferry services the Scottish Government should seek to avoid defining the process so tightly that innovation is stifled.

27. The top priority in questions on how ferries should be funded and procured must be meeting the needs of users and the local and national economies. Where there is competition, the evidence suggests that it can work in the interests of passengers and businesses. Western Ferries and Pentland Ferries both successfully compete with and complement the public sector operator on individual corridors, helping to reduce prices and add more capacity. The freight only service operated by Streamline on the same routes as NorthLink between the Northern Isles and Aberdeen has also ensured that there is competition.

Fares

28. Ferry services are a lifeline for the communities they serve. They sustain island economies and can be an enabler for future growth. When drawing up any fare structure it is vital that it balances the diverse needs of a wide range of users and operators and that it supports economic, community and tourism development.
29. The introduction of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) in the Western Isles has shown the positive impact that good value fares can bring to an island community. The roll-out of RET is welcome given that positive impact and a simple overarching fare-setting framework is welcome. The proposals to stagger the roll-out of RET could however disadvantage certain communities. The result of this will be cheaper fares to certain islands whilst fares on routes to other islands e.g. the Clyde islands could continue to rise in the region of 6% per annum until RET is introduced.
30. Island and Peninsular communities will benefit from the introduction of RET, however it is unclear if financial support will be made available for local authority run ferry services in order that RET can be introduced on those services.
31. SCDI understands the wish of the Scottish Government to allow operators to manage the demand on certain ferry services and to ensure that operators can manage their capacity effectively. Whilst flexibility in when certain journeys are undertaken may exist, it must be recognised that island communities are a captive market and must be protected from any operator charging excessive premiums. The level of incentives and premiums for certain timed sailings in relation to RET must be established, with maximum fares above RET being put in place. SCDI would welcome more clarification on how the intended balance between the simplicity of RET and demand management is to be struck.
32. Many of the proposals in relation to fares are welcome, helping to ensure services are affordable and that fare structures are understood, however the decision that larger commercial vehicles should not benefit from RET when it is rolled out, and

that it should be withdrawn from larger commercial vehicles on the current RET routes, is disappointing. Whilst there is a proposed enhanced pre-RET discount scheme for the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree, this is not believed to be sufficient in mitigating the loss for commercial vehicles on these routes. Hauliers have indicated that they will be unable to absorb the additional costs when RET is replaced and these will subsequently be passed onto the customer increasing the price of construction materials, agricultural supplies, fuel and food. SCDI would hope that this could be reconsidered to ensure that communities affected are not disadvantaged by this move.

33. On shorter ferry crossings such as those to the Clyde Islands and Gigha, RET could have a negligible impact on fares. Many low income families and frequent ferry users currently rely on multi-journey discount tickets and these passengers could therefore be disadvantaged if these tickets are replaced by RET. Consideration should also be given to the impact that removing multi-journey tickets could have on operator cashflows.

Who should be responsible for providing Ferry Services

34. The historical evolution of ferries has resulted in some ferries being subsidised and provided by local authorities with others remaining as part of the wider tender. This has resulted in mixed provision and has made it difficult to achieve an overarching service standard and economies of scale.
35. The Scottish Government is best placed to provide a consistent ferry provision in most cases, however discussion with local authorities and transport partnerships would be required to look whether the transfer of ferry provision is right in every case.
36. SCDI recognises that Transport Scotland contracts on their own are a wholly insufficient means of protecting individual communities and ensuring operators function as part of a wider transport network. We would therefore support the establishment of a ferry regulator.

Accessibility

37. SCDI welcomes the confirmation in the Draft Plan that the Scottish Government is firmly committed to equality for disabled people. We welcome the recognition that accessibility is an issue for a wide range of passengers with disabilities and others, for example, people travelling with small children and people travelling with luggage.
38. An “Accessibility Information System” would be beneficial however, the standards used to determine this will require to be clearly defined following consultation with ferry users, operators and owners of port infrastructure/vessels. An accessibility information system will also require to be applied consistently across the entire ferry network to ensure adequate standards are achieved on all services.

39. The 2010 consultation on the Scottish Ferries Review outlined the form this Information System is likely to take. The Final Ferries Plan should include more information on this. It is crucial that input should be sought from organisations such as the Mobility Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and RNIB to ensure the System is fit for purpose.
40. SCDI hopes that as part of a program of investment we will see not only improved accessibility as part of future vessel procurement but that harbour infrastructure will also see improvements to ensure that it meets appropriate standards.
41. We welcome the proposals to improve dialogue between the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Independent Trust Ports and private owners of vessels/marine infrastructure to ensure that those responsible for the provision of ferry services are fully aware of accessibility obligations under the current legislation.

Environmental

42. In remote and peripheral areas there can be conflict between policies aimed at growing the economy and preserving the environment. For example it is noted that the rollout of RET is likely to result in increased greenhouse gas emissions however, the additional patronage generated could have significant benefits for island economies. A more detailed assessment of environmental impact is needed in order to balance the needs to providing appropriate services, with reducing emissions.
43. Procurement of new larger ships could include LNG and efficient hull designs. Alternative fuels should be evaluated, with upfront costs weighed against longer term efficiency and environmental benefits. SCDI understands that LNG supply and distribution networks in the UK are underdeveloped and availability is low at present. Opportunities exist to address this underdevelopment of LNG supply and we would hope this could be taken forward.
44. SCDI welcomes the Scottish Governments proposals to invest in more fuel efficient technology such as hybrid ferries but evidence of reduced environmental impact should be established. Scotland has the opportunity to develop leadership in small, hybrid powered ferry vessels. These are already technically feasible and there is a supply chain of Scottish shipbuilders and battery manufacturers which could collaborate in their design and construction.
45. It should also be noted that peninsular ferry services such as the proposed service between Ayrshire and Kintyre remove traffic from the local road network therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
46. The role of air services on the same routes and their relative pricing and environmental impact should be considered. Given concerns about current carbon emissions from transport, use of environmentally friendly modes should be encouraged and pricing structures should send the right signals to travellers.

Routes and Services – Proposals by Community

Firth of Clyde

Arran

Our proposal is for (a) the Ardrossan to Brodick service to be upgraded to a two-vessel service operating a more frequent shuttle service through to the late evening and (b) services between Claonaig to Lochranza would be reviewed following these changes to the Ardrossan to Brodick service. We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019) or it may be that this change is only possible as part of the vessel renewal programme to be published as part of the Final Ferries Plan.

Q7. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

- a) SCDI recognises that the proposed two ferry service on the Ardrossan/Brodick route is a positive enhancement and would certainly support such a move, however it must be recognised that structural issues at Ardrossan will need to be overcome.
- b) On the proposal to review the Claonaig to Lochranza service following the introduction of an enhanced Ardrossan to Brodick service, SCDI would be concerned with any move to end this route, as it not only fulfils the needs for the movement of dangerous goods, but is an increasingly popular link for those wishing to travel through Arran from Ardrossan to Kintyre.

Bute

Our proposal is to enhance the Colintrave to Rhubodach service, running the service through to midnight, thereby extending the operating day. The intention would be to include this proposal as part of the next tender for Clyde and Hebridean Ferry services in 2013.

Q8. We recognise that this is not the principal route, or the route that may most often be used for commuting purposes. The community is therefore asked for their views on this proposal and whether an extended service on this route would be well used.

We understand that there is little support for the proposal to extend the operating hours of the secondary service to Colintrave to midnight, as the remoteness and public transport links of Colintrave would make the benefit of an extension to Midnight questionable. We do however understand that an enhanced service to 2100 in the summer timetable and on certain days of the week in the winter would be popular, as has been suggested by the Ferry User Group.

Whilst the cost of extending the operating day for the Wemyss Bay to Rothesay service are high this is certainly the primary route and the one we understand people would like to see enhanced. Consideration should be given to whether an extended Friday and Saturday service might be possible.

Cumbrae

Our proposal is to include a later evening service for one or two evenings per week. The intention would be to include this as part of the next tender for Clyde and Hebridean Ferry services in 2013.

Q9. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

SCDI welcomes this proposal and recognises the economic benefits that it will bring to Cumbrae.

Cowal Peninsula and Dunoon

Scottish Ministers were disappointed not to be able to continue the vehicle and passenger service. However, the current contract was the best that could be achieved under the circumstances (particularly the restrictions imposed by the European Commission).

We are absolutely committed to providing a ferry service that meets the needs of users and will continue to look at more options to improve the overall service and facilities.

Q10. The community is asked for their views.

SCDI welcomes the Scottish Governments commitment to providing a ferry service that meets the needs of users.

We welcome the commitment of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment to develop an improvement plan so Argyll Ferries can significantly improve the current service.

We would welcome a confidential options appraisal process to look at options for the provision of a vehicular ferry service operating between Dunoon & Gourock to see if a suitable solution could be found.

Mull (and Ardnamurchan/Morvern)

Our package of proposals are as follows:

- To upgrade the Craignure to Oban service to a two-vessel service, operating as a shuttle-service through an extended operating day;

- Following the upgrade to Craignure to Oban, to review operations on the Fishnish to Lochaline service;
- To replace the current passenger and vehicle service on Tobermory to Kilchoan with a passenger-only service.

We may be able to achieve these changes during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019) or it may be that these changes are only possible as part of the vessel renewal programme to be published as part of the Final Ferries Plan.

Q11. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

The proposed upgrade of the Craignure to Oban service to two-vessels and an extended operating day is to be welcomed.

SCDI accepts that both the Fishnish to Lochaline and Tobermory to Kilchoan services are secondary to the main Craignure to Oban service however a diminished service on these routes would have a real impact on the communities there.

Whilst we understand that the numbers using both the Fishnish to Lochaline and Tobermory to Kilchoan services are low these services play an important part in sustaining these communities and local businesses.

It is important that both of these routes remain as vehicular services.

Iona

Our proposal is for an additional 90 minutes of services in the evening, so the last service is around 8 pm.

This proposal would involve the provision of overnight berthing facilities. Given that significant funding is likely to be required this is a medium to longer term solution.

Q12. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

The proposed additional 90 minutes of service is of course welcome if the provision of a berthing facility can be achieved.

Ardnamurchan/Morvern (Corran Ferry)

We are not proposing any changes to the Corran Ferry service.

Q13. The community is asked for their views.

The Corran Ferry is very popular and provides a valuable link for commuters, businesses and tourists. It operates an extensive and frequent service and we would agree there is no requirement to alter how this is run by the Highland Council.

Lismore

Our proposal is to replace the two existing services with a single passenger and vehicle service between Port Appin and Point.

We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019).

Q14. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

SCDI welcomes the proposed replacement of the two existing Lismore services with a single passenger and vehicle service between Port Appin and Point, however understand that significant infrastructure improvements would be required to Port Appin in order to deliver this change.

Coll and Tiree

Our proposal is, subject to other proposals going forward, to improve the current service so that it operates for at least six days per week during the winter period.

We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019).

Q15. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

An improved winter service would of course be welcomed and we look forward to more information on how this would be delivered.

Kerrera, Luing and Easdale Island

Our initial findings suggest that these services are fit for purpose and meet most of the communities' needs.

The Kerrera ferry service is currently commercially run, whilst the Luing and Easdale services are currently provided by the Local Authority. Our proposal (in [Chapter 5](#)) on the future responsibility of ferry services is that we will discuss with Local Authorities whether they wish to transfer responsibility for routes currently under their jurisdiction to Scottish Government. Also, for commercially run services we will consider intervening where there is market failure and the service is considered to be lifeline.

Q16. The community is asked for their views.

On the Kerrera service, SCDI would like to see the vehicular service classed as a lifeline one in order to provide the reassurance, should there be interruption, that the Scottish Government would step in to provide one.

Whether the current services for Luing and Easdale are suitable or whether in the long run a fixed link option may be more appropriate should be considered. Given the need for investment in these two services in the future an appraisal should be carried out as to the most suitable links.

Northern Isles

Our proposal is:

That we retain a broadly similar level of service.

Q17. The community is asked for their views.

We agree that the level of service for the Northern Isles should remain unchanged.

Skye

Our proposal is to continue to have a summer and winter service. For the summer service, recognising the revenue potential, we will offer minimum subsidy only. The winter service will continue to receive a subsidy.

We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019).

Q18. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

SCDI understands the wish of the Scottish Government to offer a minimum subsidy level on the Mallaig to Armadale service during the summer months and a subsidy over the winter months, however it is unclear as to what changes are proposed.

This service is a popular tourist route which has been a real success and has seen major road infrastructure improvements at either end. We would be concerned by any reduction in frequency of capacity of this service.

We hope that the final Plan will clarify what is being proposed on this route.

Raasay

We have no specific proposals for Raasay at this stage but we intend to explore how we might extend the length of the operating day as part of the CHFS re-tender in 2013.

Q19. The community is asked for their views.

It is welcome that a new hybrid ferry is possibly to operate this route and we look forward to that coming into service in 2013. We recognise the cost constraints of extending the service day at present and welcome this being kept under review to look at what may be possible as part of the tender process.

Small Isles

Our proposals are:

- A new Sunday service to each of the Small Isles (for school children returning to school);
- A Friday/Saturday level of service on more days (i.e. two sailings as opposed to one sailing per day);
- At least one day per week where it will be possible for residents of each island to make a meaningful return trip to the mainland in the course of a normal working day.

We may be able to achieve these changes in the lead up to the next CHFS contract period.

In the longer-term:

- To replace the current single vessel with a two vessel service - a passenger and loose freight service on a daily basis to each of the islands, and a once-per-week roll-on/roll-off service.

We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019) or it may be that this change is only possible as part of the vessel renewal programme to be published as part of the Final Ferries Plan.

Q20. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

SCDI welcomes the proposed changes for the Small Isles and the improved ferry service to each of the islands served.

This enhanced ferry timetable will be of benefit to both residents and tourists and will support the economic sustainability of the communities there.

On the proposal to investigate a two ferry operation it would be important to ensure that the passenger only service is suitable for this route and that it can provide a reliable connection between the islands and the mainland in inclement weather.

Knoydart

Our assessment suggests that Knoydart would benefit from additional sailing days in both the summer and winter seasons.

The service is currently provided by a private operator with some public funding from Highland Council. Our proposal (in [Chapter 5](#)) on the future responsibility of ferry services is that we will discuss with Local Authorities whether they wish to transfer responsibility for routes currently under their jurisdiction to the Scottish Government. Also, for commercially run services we will consider intervening where there is market failure and the service is considered to be lifeline.

Q21. As a first step the community is asked whether or not additional sailing days would be beneficial and well used.

Knoydart would benefit from additional sailings and we understand the Highland Council would be interested in exploring with the Scottish Government the opportunity of developing a Mallaig hub for ferry services that would integrate the Small Isles, Knoydart and Armadale all focused on Mallaig. This may integrate with the proposed improvement of service for the Small isles, improve the service to Armadale and provide a better timetable to Knoydart and at the same time improve freight management to both the Small isles and Knoydart.

Southern Hebrides

Islay & Jura

Our proposals are:

- To offer no cost fares on the current service between Islay and Jura, when this journey is part of an onward journey to the mainland.
- To run more services from Port Askaig and fewer services from Port Ellen than was the case before the suspension of services from Port Ellen.

The service between Islay and Jura is currently provided by Argyll and Bute Council. Our proposal (in [Chapter 5](#)) on the future responsibility of ferry services is that we will discuss with Local Authorities whether they wish to transfer responsibility for routes currently under their jurisdiction to the Scottish Government.

Running more services out of Port Askaig will become effective when the works are complete at Port Ellen.

Q22. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

The ferry service to Islay now meets the needs of the community with the two ferry service being essential for the Islay – Kennacraig route to accommodate peak season tourist demand and haulage capacity to service the expanding Islay whisky industry.

Whilst we understand the proposal to route the majority of services to Port Askaig, we would also like to reaffirm the importance of services to Port Ellen. There should be at least enough sailings from Port Ellen that would enable foot passengers to leave from this port in the morning and return there on the last sailing to the island. This will allow foot passengers to leave their car at the port and pick it up on their return journey.

The proposed significant investment in the offshore wind farm adjacent to Islay could also have implications for ferry service provision in the second half of this decade. This economic potential must be borne in mind in any proposals.

SCDI welcomes the proposal by the Scottish Government to offer no cost fares for residents of Jura on this route when their journey is part of an onward journey to the mainland. Whilst the no cost fares proposal is welcomed we believe that the Jura service should be considered as a priority among routes that could transfer from Council to Scottish Government and could therefore be included in the next CHFS tender.

Further discussion will be required between Argyll and Bute Council and the Scottish Government regarding the potential transfer of this lifeline ferry.

Colonsay

Our proposals are:

- An additional sailing day in the summer;
- At least one day per week where there is a return sailing between Colonsay and the mainland;

We may be able to achieve this change during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019).

A commitment in the longer-term to work towards more sailing days during the winter if (and when) other vessels are released across a reconfigured network or when CHFS is re-tendered in 2013.

Q23. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

The proposal to extend the summer and winter sailing days to Colonsay are welcome along with that of at least one day per week where there is a return sailing between the island and mainland. This could bring a real economic benefit to the island.

Gigha

Our proposal is to extend the operating day in the evening by construction of an appropriate overnight berthing facility.

Given that significant funding is likely to be required this is a medium-to longer-term solution.

Q24. The community is asked for their views on this proposal.

The proposal to extend the Gigha service operating day in the evening by construction of an appropriate overnight berthing facility is welcome and we look forward to further details being brought forward.

Kintyre

Our proposals are:

- To retain the Kintyre to Portavadie service as is.
- To offer a vehicle service between Campbeltown and the Scottish mainland (for example Troon) one or two days per week.

This would be subject to two smaller vessels being introduced on the Arran route.

Q25. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

SCDI are pleased to see the commitment in the Draft Ferries Plan to retain the Tarbert to Portavadie ferry service. This route is not only an important connection but provides resilience in the event of trunk road closures.

The proposals to introduce a vehicle ferry service between Kintyre and Ayrshire are welcomed and could be significant for Kintyre given the recent significant investments in renewable energy and local tourism infrastructure/hotels associated with golf and high value tourism. Further clarification is required from the Scottish Government regarding the proposed destination ports/frequency/crossing times etc and local businesses and residents in both Kintyre and Ayrshire should be consulted to ensure that maximum local benefit is realised from any future service. It is also important to ensure that any service can meet the demands of freight transportation in order to ensure that it delivers the maximum economic benefit.

Western Isles

Our proposals are:

- The principal route for Harris and Lewis is the Ullapool-Stornoway route. Tarbert-Uig is the secondary route. The principal route for the Uists and Benbecula is Lochmaddy-Uig. Lochboisdale-Oban is the secondary route. Barra has only one direct route to the mainland, Castlebay-Oban;
- There is a need for all principal and secondary routes to be retained because of the distance between the ports; the population around the secondary routes and the need to ensure adequate exit ports for resilience purposes;

- Barra is the only landmass in the Western Isles which does not currently receive a service that meets the community's needs in terms of service profile. (Their current winter service is 3 days per week and ideally we want to provide at least five days);
- We think the secondary route (Lochboisdale-Oban) for the Uists and Benbecula should also be retained for the reasons given above ;
- We think the secondary route (Tarbert-Uig) for Lewis and Harris should also be retained for the reasons given above;
- We have considered options for improving the service to Barra. However, there are no viable cost effective options available without affecting the other Western Isles services. Within the Western Isles the Barra service will be given priority for funding in the future.

Our hope would be that improvements to Barra's winter service to the mainland could be achieved during the next CHFS contract (2013-2019).

Q26. The community is asked for their views on these proposals.

Whilst the Draft Plan sets out proposals which ensure the continuity of primary and secondary routes and services for the foreseeable future, any discrimination between these lifeline services could, at a time when there are even greater financial pressures, result in those of a perceived lesser priority being subject to a greater risk of reduction and even discontinuation. The classification of primary and secondary routes on each of the ferry routes to the Western Isles should therefore be reconsidered in the Final Ferries Plan.

We welcome the recognition that Barra does not receive an acceptable level of service. The proposal of increasing the number of sailings between Castlebay and Oban during winter months from three to five is welcome.

With the success of RET in growing demand for travel to the Western Isles other improvements may be needed to ensure that the demand for travel to the islands is met.

SCDI believes there is merit in investigating a new route being introduced from Lochboisdale to Mallaig. This would provide a shorter crossing and given the road improvements to Mallaig may prove a better route for freight. We would hope that the final Plan would include consideration of this option.

The Sound of Harris service has been a real success and has provided much greater links within the Western Isles. We recognise the service is still limited in the winter by the restriction of the hours in which this service can operate. We would be keen to see the hours of operation of this route extended in the winter timetable if this was achievable.

More Information

SCDI would like to continue to engage in this debate. We would welcome further engagement from government as this process develops.

For more information on this response, or to discuss this consultation in more detail, please contact Fraser Grieve, SCDI Highlands & Islands Manager on fraser.grieve@scdi.org.uk or 01463 231878.

Scottish Council for Development and Industry

March 2012