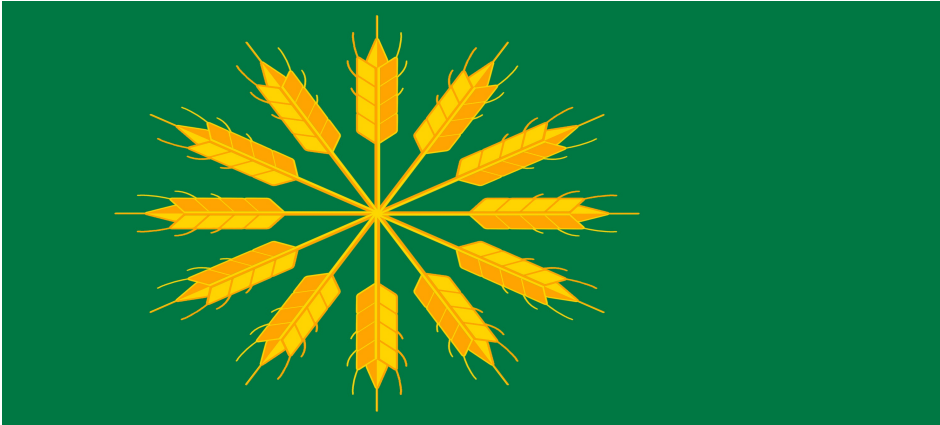


CALMAC FERRY UNRELIABILITY

TIREE COMMUNITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION



Introduction:

In Feb, following wide media comment, including a public statement from John Finnie MSP, CalMac's unreliability was brought to the attention of Tiree Community Council, (TCC) and made an agenda item for TCC's March meeting. Catriona MacLennan of MacLennan Motors (MM), a provider of Tiree life-line services, was invited to address the meeting. Following the meeting's public discussion it was agreed that TCC would make a submission to the CalMac Community Board (CCB) on the issue and specifically request CalMac to advise the criteria it applies in deriving its decision on weather dictated cancellations.

Weather dominates Tiree's days with most Tirisdeach's checking Met Office /Windguru /XC weather forecasts several times a day. Tirisdeach's 'know' weather and plan their trips to, and from the mainland, to make competent judgment calls re ferry cancellations due to weather. Latterly these have tended to be speculative, as, with increased ferry unreliability, such judgement calls have become a lottery.

Submission

TCC has studied Mull's presentation **CalMac Winter Reliability** to Robbie Drummond (23/2/2019), and whilst Tiree's submission does not offer a comparable detailed statistical presentation, **Tiree's anecdotal evidence echoes Mull's presentation and supports its conclusions**

TCC's submission:-

- **(1)** Highlights inputs to unreliability which require a response from CalMac
- and
- **(2)** Attaches submissions from three Tiree businesses, two of which are ferry dependent to deliver Tiree's life-line services, and the third, ferry dependent in delivering a major sector of Tiree's economy.

INPUTS to UNRELIABILITY . Tiree echoes Mull's submission

- **Management:** TCC wishes CalMac to comment upon these management influences, requirements, and their relevance or irrelevance to the current perception of increased unreliability

Have the criteria for cancellation been increasingly impacted a/o influenced, by any of these features?

- Underwriter's stipulations re H&M Insurance issues following CalMac's recent claims record
 - Increased risk aversion from management, ship's officers and crew
 - Statutory Health and Safety issues
 - Collateral Network scheduling implications
 - Unidentified management issues
- **Weather Forecasting :-** what are the criteria to decide upon any weather-dictated cancellation?

Possible changes in weather patterns have been spuriously offered as a cause of increased ferry unreliability

If the weather forecast is the sole criterion to decide a weather cancellation, what forecasts are studied to meet CalMac's criteria for weather cancellations?

The common perception is the ship's captain's authority, as the ultimate arbiter of the safe and efficient operation of the ship, dictates any weather-influenced cancellation decision.

But how does maritime law define the relationship between the captain and ship owner? At grave risk of over simplifying maritime law, the legal authority of the captain is fundamentally based on the law of agency. The shipowner, in this instance CalMac, is the principal, and the captain is the agent. The agent, the captain, must have authority over key decisions when out at sea, or indeed when loading and unloading.

A Master's authority has becoming increasingly challenged. This link is to a recent conference and paper on the issue. It only has passing relevance to this submission <https://www.shippinglbc.com/cadwallader-debate/14th-cad/>

But any **decision**, prior to sailing, to cancel a sailing, is not a master's exclusive decision however any decision, when at sea, is a master's exclusive. But CalMac cancels sailings up to 24 hours in advance, ergo the management issues identified above, may influence the cancellation decision.

Tiree requires CalMac to advise the criteria it applies to derive any cancellation decision.

A few years ago Tiree asked CalMac what weather forecasters it used. From memory Tiree was advised it was XC. This was met with Tiree ridicule. Weather forecasting has become more reliable although Tiree's experience suggests that whilst the substance of the forecast may be correct, the timing may vary.

Tiree shares Mull's submission hi-lighting some glaring anomalies and inconsistencies in the criteria to weather dictated cancellations.

The weather forecasts for Sat 13 /Sun14 / Mon 15 April were of considerable significance, as the wind and swell direction were those most prone to dictate a Tiree cancellation. Reviewing the weather forecasts over this 3 day period evidences anomalies and inconsistencies in arriving at Monday 15th April's cancellation. The initial customer service information was vague, and deteriorated to the asinine.

App A presents these in sequential detail.

Manifestly Monday's cancellation, 18 hrs in advance, was not the master's sole decision . The evidence suggests that with the application of consistent cancellation criteria Monday's sailings could have been cancelled much earlier than 13.36hrs, possibly even before the inappropriate customer service advise , updated @ 06.52 on the Sunday to ' *travel earlier* '

A cancellation is a logical decision, therefore an explanation of the criteria applying to the determination of a cancellation decision is required. This in turn may inform better judgement calls for the Tiree travelling public, and minimise the current lottery in making such a judgment call.

A collateral issue is the quality of communication prior to deciding any cancellation. This is highlighted by the puzzling advise in the build-up to Monday's 15th cancellation.

What is the time-line to a cancellation notice? Is early cancellation advise for the benefit of the long distance traveller ie from the South England ,or short distance traveller from say Glw to Oban for Tiree ?If the former 24 hours notice is desirable if the latter 9-12 hours is more than sufficient ,but if push comes to shove the latter can work with 3 hours notice. The cancellation notice requirements of a Tiree tourist may not be the same as a Tiree resident, or indeed Tiree's life-line services. The time line to a cancellation notice has to be reviewed

Conclusion:

Tiree requires CalMac to advise the criteria it applies to derive any cancellation decision.

Priority re-booking for life-line service provider's should be default facility in the event of any ferry cancellation.

CalMac's Customer Services communication of cancellations must be urgently reviewed to ensure accurate, relevant information is offered, as opposed to banal generalities

Submission from MacLennan Motors

Catriona MacLennan, Propr MacLennan Motors (MM) addressed TCC 's March meeting , on the current difficulties MacLennan Motors faced as a consequence of ferry unreliability. Stewart MacLennan has re-capped her address below and raises some other issues.



What we have witnessed this year is that cancellations are being made either far too early before the sailing (12+ hours) or 10 minutes before the Oban office closing for the day resulting in not being able to rebook. In previous years ferries would at least attempt to dock at Tiree/Coll and sometimes have to abort to prevailing conditions alongside Tiree/Coll. This service modus operandi would appear to have been dropped as we cant recall one failed attempt to dock on Tiree and Coll this winter. This suggests some cancellations are premature with the process lacking clarity and consistency As a consequence Mm has to plan a week ahead for all eventualities . This demands disproportionate management resources.

In the event of cancellation Calmac lacks an awareness, or the priority required to maintain life line services. The fact that a freight provider is not automatically booked onto the next sailing is unacceptable. MM has challenged this booking anomaly on numerous occasions A prioritizing matrix is should be be in place for freight & general traffic the event of cancellations.

The result of no priority sailing from cancellations has affected MM this year both for freight and fuel tankers. The cost a tanker being held in Oban or Tiree until space is available is passed onto the island. The management of selling fuel on Tiree is extremely challenging aving to factor the correct time to order a tanker due to capacity of tank and volume of sales. It also has to work into when a DG is available on the ferry for a petrol tanker which at times might only be 1 day a week. A cancellation or error in booking can have devastating impacts for Tiree, as occurred earlier this year.

Communication from Cal Mac is probably the poorest we have experienced, and may be a consequence of constant changes in management and personnel within the company. Anecdotal evidence indicates this is a widespread perception throughout the CHFS network.

MM currently serves 4 islands from Oban (Tiree, Coll, Colonsay & Mull) with Tiree being the primary destination.MM has faced serious disruptions on the Colonsay service with ast minute cancellations etc dictating re-routing via Kennacraig. This does not fit-in easily with MM's logistics matrix ,and requires disproportionate management resources to resolve It is h-lighted in this submission to illustrate the challenges MM face from cancellations .

In conclusion:

- (1) MM believes more clarity re cancellations is required offering why/how the cancellation decisions was made
- (2) When cancellations are made , the default position should be automatic priority booking for life- line service providers on the next sailing ,with the port confirming the booking to the service provider. The onus to re-book in these circumstance should not lie with the customer.



Cal Mac's lack of confidence and a loss in public faith in service delivery ability

The last two years have shown obvious problems with Cal Mac's ability to deliver a resilient and fit for purpose service to the Inner and Outer Hebrides. Continued under investment from the Scottish Government in the ferries sector on the west coast will eventually take its toll with an ageing fleet of vessels and more and more technical issues presenting themselves over time. That is only logical.

However what only a few are talking about are the more subtle changes in the 'demeanour' of the Cal Mac service to the Hebrides...

Island locals lives focus around ferries and their ability to reach and service their islands. There is a strong understanding of the likely outcomes that weather forecasts will have on Cal Mac's ability to function their service to each island port on a daily basis. My own business requires that I monitor weather at a 'clinical' level with coastal health and safety being the key consideration. To all intents and purposes after 25 years in this sector I would be classed as an expert in this field by any standard...

With that in mind, Cal Mac's activity during 2018 and 2019 has baffled many.... To offer anecdotal examples...

Ferries are cancelled on days when children play in rowing boats in the same port as the ferry docks. Ferries are deployed the very next day in far worse forecast predictions and tie up and unload in relative ease. Who is making these decisions? Is it really the skippers of the ferries who are, for the most part, highly seasoned professionals with a wealth of knowledge and technology on hand to assist their decision making? Or are office based decision makers playing a larger part in today's decision making processes?

One thing is for sure - the effect on the public of the apparent irrational decisions coming out of Cal Mac has led to a loss of confidence in the service and its ability to deliver for the islands it serves. What might be affecting this change:

- Changing attitudes towards health and safety with far greater concern for pier workers and deck staff
- Skippers not having the full confidence of the company's operation management Innocent until proven guilty should apply but does not appear to currently.
- Pressure from insurance underwriters - too many claims and now a culture of safety emerging....
- Too much weather information - predictions are exactly that... They are predictions until they deliver. Early calls (up to 24 hours in advance) have some credibility fair but some ferries are being cancelled up to 48 hours in advance and often the weather outlook moves and moderately leaving island communities isolated in the wake of a premature cancellation.
- Even within a 24 hr weather window, the Tiree reality is such that the timing of features in the weather forecast can be woefully wrong

The results:

- Local businesses under huge pressure to be adaptable at a moments notice with no apparent rationale to plan around
- Staffing costs for such businesses sky rocket as staff are on call around the clock to allow businesses to function for the end users

- Further pressure is put on fragile island communities, already on the brink of sustainability. Tourism cannot flourish and trade and industry is put on standstill but not due to a lack of willingness from its participants. It is only the delivery mechanism that is failing.
- Depopulation and everything that goes with that - falling schools registers, lack of housing (due to spiralling cost of building/cost of deliveries), lack of work.

I hate writing negative reviews like this without offering some kind of recommendation as to how to 'fix' the problem but you cant fix the problem until you identify what is wrong... So Cal Mac, what is wrong? Engage with communities you service, discuss your problems and let these communities assist you in coming up with ideas that will allow you to overcome your difficulties... It is in all of our interests to work this out. Let's not hesitate, the results could be terminal, since without a resilient ferry service, life in the islands as we know it is over.

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APP A

Anomalies and inconsistencies in the criteria to weather dictated cancellations.

Sat 13 April sailing on amber and sails on time .

Weather forecasts from Met Office (MO) /WindGuru /XC weather are in the range :

Wind SSE 30-35mph gusting 36-46mph (ie all consistent in direction but variable speed/gusts)

Windguru shows wave height 2.7 m /period 7 / SSE swell.

Sun 14 April Broadly similar to Sat 13, on amber and sails on time.

Moving onto the cancelation of Monday 15thApril:-

At **6.52 Sun 14th** with the Tiree ferry due to sail 23 minutes later @07.15 and with cars required to have been checked in 22 minutes earlier @ 06.30 CalMac 's Customer Service '*updated* 'advise was:*Due to forecast of adverse weather, customers intending to travel on Monday 15th are advised to travel earlier where possible. Reason: weather conditions. Last Updated: 14 Apr 2019 06:52*(In this context what does '*travellers being advised to travel earlier*' mean?)

As of **08.00 Sun 14 April** the weather forecasts for **Mon 15th April** were:-

MO Office 35-gusting 45 mph/XC 45- gusting 55mph/WindGuru 40-gusting 50kph

WindGuru showed wave height 3.5m period 8 ie an increase in forecast increased wind and gust speeds.

Were these increases the primary input to the subsequent cancellation decision , or was it the increase in swell height of greater relevance?

Then at **13.36 Sun 14th** CalMac advised that Mondays (15th April) sailing was cancelled notwithstanding that the Met Office /XC/WindGuru **had shown no material change** from their 08.00 forecasts .

(Note as of 14.15 hrs :MO 36-39 mph SE /XC 41-55/ mph/WG 35-46K Swell 3.3. period 8 SSE ie near as damn it same as 08.00 and At 16.00 hrs Sun 14th the respective forecasts were: MO 35-46/XC 43-55 / WG 36-49k with no change in swell forecast)

Self evidently the data deriving Sunday's decision to cancel Monday's sailing cancellation existed long before 13.36 Sun 14th ,and prior to the banal customer service advise at 06.52.