



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 05/09/2018

Time: 11:00

Location: Wick Town Hall, Wick

Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
Thomas Meikle	Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
Bill Mowat	Gills Harbour
Alex Macmanus	Highland Council
Julie McGee	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Kenny Hurst	Network Rail
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour Trust
Kris Bevan	Serco NorthLink Ferries
Marco Bardelli	Transport Scotland
Brian Gordon	Transport Scotland
Paul Linhart-MacAskill	Transport Scotland
William Sutherland	Wick John O'Groats Airport

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all present for attending.

1.2 Apologies were received from:

Eann Sinclair	CNSRP
Rachael Storey	Direct Rail Services
Roger Saxon	Dounreay Stakeholder Group

Graeme Mackenzie	Highland Council
Jonathan Gunn	Highland Council
Joanne Sutherland	Highland Council
Kathryn Scollie	Pentland Ferries
Steve Mackintosh	ScotRail

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 13.06.2018

- 2.1 Alex Macmanus noted a minor misspelling in recording of Jonathan Gunn's name
- 2.2 Subject to this being rectified, the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

3. Review of actions from last meeting

CTF(2018)M001/A002 - *Frank Roach to provide further information on economic benefit of Midnight Train to Georgemas project once available.* **COMPLETE**

Subsequent to the meeting, Frank advised that a copy of the report will be available shortly – this will be circulated to the Forum once available

CTF(2018)M001/A003 - *Frank Roach to provide details of freight trial once available.* **COMPLETE**

It was noted that DRS are progressing with this and that an invite was due to be issued to members of the Forum when plans finalised. More detail is available in the Direct Rail Services update (see **Appendix A**)

CTF(2018)M001/A005 - *Frank Roach to provide details of station analysis once carried out.* **ONGOING**

No update was received from Frank on this.

CTF(2018)M001/A008 - *Marco Bardelli to provide details of traffic management plans for Berriedale.* **COMPLETE**

Marco noted that those tendering for the contract have been given a clear set of restrictions as to how traffic should be managed.

Full closure of the road is only permitted with prior agreement from Transport Scotland, 15 weeks' notice to be given, only closures to be between 7pm and 6am with two-hourly amnesty periods and full access for emergency vehicles at all times.

Two-lane running between 6am and 7pm is to be preserved wherever possible – where closure or single-lane running is required, this must be by prior agreement with Transport Scotland.

Trudy Morris queried whether business would be consulted on these closure periods – Marco noted that Transport Scotland would try to consult where possible, and that they welcomed feedback at any stage of the works.

CTF(2018)M001/A009 - Jonathan Gunn to provide details of Highland Council programme of works for next financial year. **ONGOING**

No update was received on this.

CTF(2018)M001/A010 - Jonathan Gunn to feed back on what impact winter overspend will have on rest of Highland Council road programme. **ONGOING**

No update was received on this.

CTF(2018)M001/A011 - Marco Bardelli to provide details of BEAR Scotland programme of works for next financial year. **COMPLETE**

Marco Bardelli provided a link to the live map of planned road improvement locations¹ and a copy of the most current programme of planned improvements.

Marco provided further details on planned works over the coming weeks as part of his update.

CTF(2018)M001/A012 - Marco Bardelli to provide details of study on stopping places on A9. **ONGOING**

Marco noted that this is still planned but has not yet been progressed.

CTF(2018)M001/A014 – David Swanson to provide Marco Bardelli with additional information on A99 incidents during severe weather **ONGOING**

There was some discussion of this and Alex Macmanus clarified that the relevant section of road is to be found just past Hempriggs House heading southbound. Marco agreed to follow this up and report back.

Trudy requested that Transport Scotland / BEAR Scotland provide more frequent feedback on actions between meetings.

CTF(2018)M001/A001 – Marco Bardelli to follow up with BEAR Scotland on A99 south of Hempriggs House

CTF(2018)M001/A015 - Forum members to provide suggestions for A9 improvements once Berriedale works complete. **COMPLETE**

No further suggestions were received following the last meeting and it was agreed to close this action off.

CTF(2018)M001/A017 - Daniel Laird to feed back on proposed Stagecoach fleet changes. **COMPLETE**

It was noted that new buses have been introduced to the area, and that a new minibus is now operating on the 78 (Thurso town service) route.

Trudy noted her disappointment that no feedback on this had been received direct from Stagecoach.

¹ <https://maphub.net/BEARScotland-NorthWest/map>

Bill Mowat raised an issue with the new timetables from 20 August, noting that the timetable for the 77 service present at the Wick St. Fergus Road stop made no mention of Gills Bay. David Swanson agreed to follow this up with Stagecoach.

CTF(2018)M003/A002 – *David Swanson to raise lack of Gills Bay on 77 timetable with Stagecoach*

CTF(2018)M002/A001 – *David Swanson to follow up with Frank Roach at HITRANS on progress of timber transport by rail* **ONGOING**

No response was received from Frank on this. David noted that no mention of this project was made in the latest publicly available HITRANS Partnership Meeting Agenda (20.04.2018)

CTF(2018)M002/A002 – *David Swanson to circulate information on proposed new services.*
COMPLETE

Consultation on proposed new services has now finished and a new timetable is in place as of 20 August 2018.

CTF(2018)M002/A003 – *Daniel Laird to feed back to meeting after consultation has closed.*
COMPLETE

As above

CTF(2018)M002/A004 – *Daniel Laird to provide copy of proposed timetable to Marco Bardelli.*
COMPLETE

As above

CTF(2018)M002/A005 – *David Swanson to write to Transport Minister urging resolution and noting that the area is in favour of RET introduction* **COMPLETE**

This was done and a response received and circulated.

CTF(2018)M002/A006 – *David Swanson to speak with Highland Council to make a contact to discuss the issue of signage and access to historic monuments* **ONGOING**

David noted that he had been in touch with the Highland Council Historic Environment Team regarding this. Regarding signage and access to sites and monuments from non-trunk roads, in the first instance the generic contact details should be used².

It was noted that in terms of access, it would depend on where the individual sites are and what the specific issues to be raised are. It was agreed that David Swanson would liaise with Bill Mowat, who originally raised this issue, to get a more specific list of sites.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 There were no matters arising.

² https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/99/roads_information

5. Transport Updates

5.1 ScotRail Alliance

- 5.1.1 A written update was provided on behalf of the ScotRail Alliance (see **Appendix B**).
- 5.1.2 Kenny Hurst provided a brief update on the Far North Line:
- PPM for the last 4 weeks is at 88.6% - this is up 8% on the previous year
 - On-time Arrival for the last 4 weeks is at 73.3% - this is up 15.8% on the previous year
 - The planned RETB split on 2 December should see a positive impact in terms of reliability
 - Autumn preparation works have gone well
 - Subsea 7 pipe traffic on the line is up to two shipments per week
 - A potential trial of token-driven points is planned, but this will take a couple of years to come through
- 5.1.3 Trudy Morris noted that the next Far North Line Review Team meeting was scheduled for Friday 7 September 2018

5.2 Direct Rail Services

- 5.2.1 A written update was provided by Direct Rail Services (see Appendix G)
- 5.2.2 Kenny Hurst noted regarding the freight trial that he was sure a path could be made available for this. Regarding the Kingussie incident, he noted that the investigation into this was ongoing.

5.3 Berriedale Braes

- 5.3.1 Marco Bardelli provided a brief update on behalf of Major Transport Infrastructure Projects:
- The tender award is expected to be in December 2018
 - Possible start date of the works in early 2019
 - The duration of works is unknown at this point – as the contract is design and build, this will depend on the plans of the winning bidder
- 5.3.2 Mike Lunan asked if a rough estimate of the length of disruption could be made – Marco noted that it was hard to say at this time but that he would expect the works to take around 18 months to complete. He noted that much of this could be completed “offline” and that disruption would be minimised wherever possible.

- 5.3.3 Trudy noted that there is a feeling locally that this process has been delayed and asked if Marco could update on the reasons for this – Marco noted that he was unsure but that it would be for good reasons.
- 5.3.4 Trudy noted that a commitment had been made to start works this financial year. Marco noted that a lot is happening concurrently with the competitive dialogue e.g. applying for relevant environmental licenses.

5.4 Highland Council

- 5.4.1 No attendee was present and no update was provided.

5.5 BEAR Scotland

5.5.1 Marco Bardelli provided a brief update on seven resurfacing schemes currently planned to take place over the coming months:

- 9-13 September – Portgower schoolhouse. Overnight closures 7pm-6am with 2 hour amnesty
- 17-19 September – Trentham Hotel. Convoy during day
- 20-21 September – Doll South. Convoy during day
- 24-25 September – Berriedale North Brae. Convoy during day
- 26 September-5 October – Newport. Convoy during day
- 8-10 October – North of Bruan. Convoy during day
- 11-12 October – Clyth Mains Farm. Convoy during day

5.5.2 Trudy raised the recent landslip near Berriedale and asked for an update on this. Marco noted that BEAR have had a geotechnical report and are in the process of designing a repair scheme. He noted that there seems to have been an issue with water passing under the road, but that the road itself has not been affected and that the works will be to reinstate the embankment.

5.5.2 Trudy queried whether any further update on the A9 at Scrabster was available. Marco noted that a geotechnical investigation was under way to see whether any preventative measures could be taken. The timetable for any works is not yet known as this will depend on the result of the investigation.

5.5.3 Sandy Mackie asked for clarification on the amnesty period during works at Portgower. Marco explained that during the closure, works would be stopped every 2 hours to allow queued vehicles to pass.

5.5.4 Sandy noted that Scrabster has regular overnight cargo from the Faroes which is taken south on the A9 during the proposed closure hours, and asked how the hauliers could be made aware of this. It was agreed that Marco would send relevant contact details to Sandy to follow this up.

CTF(2018)M003/A003 – *Marco Bardelli to provide BEAR Scotland contact details to Sandy Mackie*

- 5.5.5 Bill Mowat noted that some ferry passengers preferred overnight travel and queried how this would be taken into account. Marco noted that they could look at scheduled ferry services as part of planning for these works.
- 5.5.6 David Swanson noted that he used to be on the distribution list for consultation letters on road improvement schemes, but that he had not recently been receiving these. Marco agreed to follow this up

CTF(2018)M003/A004 – *Marco Bardelli to ensure David Swanson added to mailing list for consultation on road improvement schemes*

- 5.5.7 With regards to road closures during works, Marco noted that the reason for this is due to the width of the carriageway and the need to ensure safety of the workforce.
- 5.5.8 Marco continued his update, noting that other than Berriedale, no major works are currently in the pipeline for the A9 North of Inverness. He noted that road safety is always kept under review and that this has led to a reduction in serious incidents and fatalities.
- 5.5.9 Trudy Morris queried whether any work is being done to review the road in light of increased traffic due to the North Coast 500. Marco noted that no specific piece of work is being done, but that Transport Scotland do sit on the North Coast 500 working group.
- 5.5.10 Trudy further queried whether increase in road usage gave a road a higher priority when looking at planned works. Marco noted that this is one of the factors considered. He noted that the A9 North is a relatively low-traffic road, averaging around 3000-4000 vehicles per day – by comparison, major roads in the Central Belt can see around 180,000 vehicles per day.
- 5.5.11 Bill Mowat noted that while he was delighted to see an increase in traffic due to the North Coast 500, it was hard to measure the impact of this as no baseline is available. Marco noted that this is not the case and that Transport Scotland has good historical data for the road and is working to make this more publicly available.

5.6 Stagecoach North Scotland

- 5.6.1 No attendee was present and no update provided.
- 5.6.2 There was some discussion of the issue of buses not connecting with the Scrabster-Stromness ferry. Kris Bevan noted that they are aware of this issue. It was agreed that David Swanson and Kris Bevan would liaise on this matter.

CTF(2018)M003/A005 – *David Swanson and Kris Bevan to liaise on bus-ferry connectivity*

- 5.6.3 Trudy Morris noted the importance of integrated transport connectivity to the area.

5.7 Scrabster Harbour

5.7.1 Sandy Mackie provided an update to the Forum. In brief:

- Vessel arrivals are up 7% on the previous year
- Vessel tonnage is up 2% on the previous year
- August 2018 saw total tonnage of over 1 million
- Ferry passengers and vehicles are up 6% on the previous year
- Landings of fish are up 20% on the previous year
- Oil and gas traffic remains essentially static, but they are hopeful for future work supporting the West of Shetland fields
- Some work was done recently to support the removal for repair of tidal turbines from the MeyGen array
- Cargo from Faroe Islands is down on the previous year
- 12 cruise vessels docked during this year's season, with 15 bookings in place for next year – improvements to "meet and greet" procedures have led to good feedback and they are hoping to build on this
- As a trust port, surplus is reinvested and plans are proceeding for the St Ola Pier redevelopment. This could lead to around 40-50 full-time equivalent jobs in the area, and a funding package is being put together

5.7.2 Trudy Morris noted that it is always good to hear positive news from Scrabster

5.7.3 Mike Lunan queried where the cruise vessels are from – Sandy noted that these are mostly round-Britain vessels, with some from Germany. Passengers are approximately 50% British, 50% European, with some from the USA.

5.7.4 Trudy noted the success of the voluntary "meet and greet" and town ambassadors who have been welcoming cruise passengers, and that good feedback has been received from local retailers.

5.8 Wick Harbour Authority

5.8.1 No attendee was present and no update received. Trudy noted that the Chamber will continue efforts to secure representation from Wick Harbour.

5.8.2 Bill Mowat noted that he had visited the harbour recently and that significant numbers are travelling from the harbour to work on the Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm

5.9 Gills Harbour

5.9.1 Bill Mowat provided an update on behalf of Gills Harbour (see **Appendix C**). A short update was also provided by Pentland Ferries subsequent to the meeting (see **Appendix D**).

5.9.2 Further to the report, Bill noted that the harbour has been extremely busy. He also noted that Pentland Ferries are expecting delivery of their new ROPAX vessel in December 2018, and that this will have a capacity of 450 passengers / 100 cars. Trials of the vessel are expected to commence in early 2019.

- 5.9.3 Bill noted that Gills Harbour have extended an invite to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity to visit the area to discuss Road Equivalent Tariff. Trudy noted that the Forum has also extended an invite to the Cabinet Secretary.
- 5.9.4 Bill noted that works on the breakwater are continuing and that promotional work for the economic zone is due to start shortly. He noted that they have some concerns around Brexit and the vulnerability of their shellfish exports.
- 5.9.5 There was some brief discussion of Brexit and potential effects. Mike Lunan queried whether there would be any change to State Aid rules – it was clarified that State Aid rules would remain as-is even under a “no deal” Brexit
- 5.9.6 Mike queried as to the timescale for introduction of RET – Trudy noted that this would be covered by Transport Scotland under the Serco NorthLink Ferries update.

5.10 Serco NorthLink Ferries / Transport Scotland

5.10.1 Kris Bevan delivered an update on behalf of Serco NorthLink Ferries, noting 5 July 2018 marked the 6th anniversary of Serco’s running of the NorthLink service. During that period:

- Passenger numbers have increased by 10%
- Non-commercial vehicle traffic has increased by 28%
- Just under 3 million commercial lane meters of freight traffic have been transported
- 99% of those surveyed rate their onboard experience as positive, with 80% rating the food & drink offering as good or excellent
- Local employment has increased by 25%
- 80% of food & drink onboard vessels is now procured locally

5.10.2 Kris also provided a brief update on contract years 5-6:

- Passenger numbers have increased by 7.5%
- Non-commercial vehicle traffic has increased by 9.8%
- Commercial freight has remained static
- A contract extension to 31 October 2019 has been signed
- Dry-docking of the *MV Hamnavoe* is now an annual requirement – where no other vessel is available, the *MV Helliar* will continue to cover the route during dry-dock periods
- They continue to work with local organisations on their marketing efforts, and have just finished a successful campaign at Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Queen Street stations
- They have been awarded Living Wage and Investors in Young People Silver status

5.10.3 Trudy Morris noted that it was positive to hear of the success of the service and welcomed the efforts that have been made to work with Caithness over the period since Serco secured the contract.

5.10.4 Trudy noted that there are concerns over the dry-dock of the *Hamnavoe*. She noted her feeling that maintenance periods are scheduled well in advance and that efforts should be made to secure a suitable replacement vessel during these.

5.10.5 Paul Linhart-MacAskill noted that Transport Scotland understand there are strong views on the provision of a suitable replacement vessel during scheduled maintenance. He noted that

there is a scarcity of tonnage in the market and that there have been technical issues on the West Coast ferries, which will have knock-on effects on vessel availability. He further noted that they understand the feeling that freight vessels are not viewed as suitable replacements for the MV Hamnavoe and that endeavours will be made by the operator to secure a replacement ro-pax vessel if available.

- 5.10.6 Trudy noted that she was pleased to hear that freight vessels are not seen as the default replacement vessel and queried whether the dry-dock would take place at the same time every year. Kris noted that the dates are not set in stone but that it is likely to be around the same time every year as they try to schedule for minimum disruption.
- 5.10.7 Mike Lunan queried whether, given the lack of suitable tonnage in the open market, Transport Scotland could build their own replacement vessel and make this available for commercial opportunities during times of the year where it is not required. Paul noted that there would be value-for-money issues with this and that large-scale projects are difficult during the current fiscal climate. Kris further noted that many vessels are bespoke to particular routes.
- 5.10.8 Trudy noted the Forum's frustrations at the failure to introduce RET on the Northern Isles Ferry Services.
- 5.10.9 Brian Gordon updated on this, noting that the correspondence from Nicole Currie set out the Transport Scotland position, that it was disappointing for all involved that an agreement could not be reached at this stage, and that they remain committed to the rollout of RET. He noted that Transport Scotland had worked well with the commercial operators in the lead-up to the planned introduction of RET, but that they could not proceed without an agreement. They are in discussion with the European Commission, and the European Commission has the final say with regards to State Aid matters.
- 5.10.10 Trudy Morris queried whether steps had been made to engage with the UK Government regarding the transfer of State Aid responsibilities following Brexit. Brian noted that the Scottish Government is engaged with UK Government on Brexit and they will keep an eye on any potential changes to State Aid legislation.
- 5.10.11 Bill Mowat noted that it was positive to hear Transport Scotland's commitment to RET rollout. He noted that Pentland Ferries had not been offered the same deal as Serco NorthLink Ferries and that their primary concern was liability for any clawback of subsidy.
- 5.10.12 Brian noted that he could not speak to commercial confidential matters, but that they are unable to extend "true RET" to commercial operators due to rules around market distortion. With regards to clawback provisions, he noted that if a scheme was put in place and for any reason was later found to be illegal State Aid, it would be the company in receipt of the aid which was liable for repayment.
- 5.10.13 Trudy noted her feeling that concerns around State Aid should have been raised as a risk earlier in the process. Brian noted that the Minister only confirmed the plans to introduce RET on Northern Isles Ferry Services routes and also involve commercial operators in August 2017. Following that, the scheme for commercial operators had to be devised and there was close engagement with commercial operators throughout the process.
- 5.10.14 There was some further discussion of this matter and it was queried what the timescale for resolution would be. Brian noted that if this meant notifying the scheme to the European

Commission to seek their approval it could be a lengthy process, but the way forward and timescales would hopefully become clearer over the next few months. It was agreed that Brian would feed back to the Forum when more information was available.

CTF(2018)M003/A006 – *Brian Gordon to feed back to Forum on RET rollout when more information available*

5.10.15 There was some discussion of the upcoming contract renewal – it was noted that the Forum is pleased this is being tendered rather than awarded in-house. Paul noted that a number of meetings have been held regarding the specification of the new contract and that they are keen to see local view fed in

5.10.16 Sandy Mackie noted that the last he had seen on the new contract was a report from Peter Brett Associates. He asked whether any materials distributed at events in Shetland and Orkney could be shared with stakeholders in Caithness. It was agreed that Paul would circulate these.

CTF(2018)M003/A007 – *Paul Linhart-MacAskill to provide Northern Isles Ferry Services contract consultation materials for circulation to Forum*

5.10.17 Trudy thanked Brian and Paul for engaging with the Forum and noted her hopes that they would continue to engage with the Forum in future. It was agreed that David Swanson would liaise with Paul on potential dates for future meetings to enable this.

5.11 Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL

5.11.1 William Sutherland provided a brief update. Of note:

- Passenger numbers are down 4.4% on the previous year
- Ferry flights are up 3% - Far North Aviation have had a good year
- Wiking Helicopters are now in place at the airport to support the Beatrice project

5.11.2 William noted that the drop in passenger numbers is largely a result of Loganair pulling their Tuesday flight, and that the ongoing issues with scheduling and reliability remain.

5.11.3 Trudy Morris updated the Forum that the Chamber is currently doing work on a potential Public Service Obligation (PSO) route from the airport.

5.11.4 Trudy noted that this would be William Sutherland’s final meeting and that the Forum would be sad to see him go. She thanked him for his years of service to the airport, commitment to the area and engagement with the Forum. This was echoed by all present.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 No other business was raised.

7. Press Communications

- 7.1 There was some discussion as to whether a press release highlighting positive news should be issued. It was agreed that David Swanson would liaise with relevant parties on this and put together a release.

CTF(2018)M001/A008 – *David Swanson to liaise with Forum members on press release*

8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting will take place in March 2019, details to be confirmed.

9. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

CTF(2018)M001/A002 - *Frank Roach to provide further information on economic benefit of Midnight Train to Georgemas project once available.* **ONGOING**

CTF(2018)M001/A005 - *Frank Roach to provide details of station analysis once carried out.* **ONGOING**

CTF(2018)M001/A009 - *Jonathan Gunn to provide details of Highland Council programme of works for next financial year.* **ONGOING**

CTF(2018)M001/A010 - *Jonathan Gunn to feed back on what impact winter overspend will have on rest of Highland Council road programme.* **ONGOING**

CTF(2018)M002/A001 – *David Swanson to follow up with Frank Roach at HITRANS on progress of timber transport by rail* **ONGOING**

CTF(2018)M002/A006 – *David Swanson to speak with Highland Council to make a contact to discuss the issue of signage and access to historic monuments* **ONGOING**

10. Actions arising from this meeting

CTF(2018)M001/A001 – *Marco Bardelli to follow up with BEAR Scotland on A99 south of Hempriggs House*

CTF(2018)M003/A002 – *David Swanson to raise lack of Gills Bay on 77 timetable with Stagecoach*

CTF(2018)M003/A003 – *Marco Bardelli to provide BEAR Scotland contact details to Sandy Mackie*

CTF(2018)M003/A004 – *Marco Bardelli to ensure David Swanson added to mailing list for consultation on road improvement schemes*

CTF(2018)M003/A005 – *David Swanson and Kris Bevan to liaise on bus-ferry connectivity*

CTF(2018)M003/A006 – *Brian Gordon to feed back to Forum on RET rollout when more information available*

CTF(2018)M003/A007 – *Paul Linhart-MacAskill to provide Northern Isles Ferry Services contract consultation materials for circulation to Forum*

CTF(2018)M001/A008 – *David Swanson to liaise with Forum members on press release*

DRAFT

Appendix A – Direct Rail Services

DRS Update - Caithness Transport Forum

September 2018

DRS continue to support the NDA with their mission to deliver 'safe and sustainable solutions to the challenge of nuclear clean-up and waste management of the UK's nuclear legacy'. Work in relation to the Exotics Programme continues and DRS are also working with MOD to commence Fuel Movements between MoD Vulcan and Sellafield.

Georgemas Trial

Although we are not at the stage to be able to share a date with you for the trial, great progress has indeed been made. We have secured some funding for the move and now have both customer and supplier support to make it all come together. The next stage is to secure a path with Network Rail and a date for the lifting facility to be demonstrated. We are very much looking forward to sharing the date with you and inviting some of you along, so we will certainly be in touch soon.

Kingussie incident

On Friday evening (July 13th), a Direct Rail Services train, passed a 'stop signal' at low speed then quickly came to a halt a few metres past the signal in the Kingussie area. It stopped well within the safety area provided for incidents of this nature. At no time were there any risks of radioactive contamination, collision or derailment of the train.

Investigations have resulted in the event being reclassified as an Operational Irregularity rather than a SPAD (Signal Passed at Danger). The reclassification of this event is based upon a review of the operation of the infrastructure signalling system on this area of the network. DRS will support Network Rail with any further investigation.

Kind regards,

Rachael Storey

Communications & Marketing Manager

Appendix B – ScotRail

Please see the information below relating to ScotRail performance issues on the Far North Line July – Sept 2018.

- Technical incident's on Train which resulted in delays – **10**
- Delay minutes – **292**

The type of issues vary from Door issues to Fluid leaks. We are continuing to monitor all incidents across our fleet with continued improvements being sought in all areas.

All Inverness units are continuing to go through a heavy maintenance program. This programme will introduce an improved Hydro system and this should in turn reduce leaks from this area. The Class 158 fleet is also having an improved/uprated Engine water pump due to an increased number of failures seen across the fleet. There are 7 of 50 vehicles outstanding.

This along with the introduction of Electronic fan control and a new coolant radiator has seen an increased level of reliability of all units. We have seen no issues with units overheating and engines returning to idle over the warm summer period, which shows just how efficient the cooling system now is and that the improvements we have implemented have been of benefit.

Appendix C – Gills Harbour

REPORT FROM GILLS HARBOUR Ltd, KW1 4YB, FOR CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 05.09.2018.

1) Most crossings of *Pentalina* have been operating at or near capacity throughout the 2018 Summer season, with 'wait-lists' often in operation, underlining that 'pre-booking is essential'. There was frequently no space for casual would-be users, even on the mid-day crossings that have historically had some 'slack' capacity.

2) The above has amply justified the early 2017 decision by Pentland Ferries Ltd's MD Mr Andrew Banks OBE to order a brand-new larger ROPAX vessel from Strategic Marine Ltd. The UK-designed ship's 85 metre long catamaran hull is complete and her superstructure is now adjoined. 'Fitting out' works are proceeding at the company's Viet Nam ship-yard, which Mr Banks visited in late August. The vessel, that has been funded entirely by the private family-owned company, can take a load of 450 passengers with 100 cars (or alternatively 12 articulated trucks + 54 cars). She is being fitted with four engines, three generators and four sideways thrusters, all aimed at enhancing reliability. She will be handed-over in December, with 'short sea-route' trials in the early 2019 New Year preceding her commencement in service.

3) Gills Harbour Ltd, (GHL) the Canisbay community company that owns the harbour and leases part of its land-holding to the ferry firm but operates its Inner Basin exclusively, is in the second stage of an application for EU FLAG funding for a small-works project aimed at improving quay/sea access there.

4) Road Equivalent Tariff, (RET) aimed at reducing passengers' fares on all scheduled Pentland Firth crossings, was not introduced on June 30th, 2018, despite previous Scottish Government

statements. Pentland Ferries Ltd (PFL) issued a press-release stating that it was 'frustrated by the delay in implementing the Scottish Government's passenger subsidy'. Mr Banks revealed that his family firm had not been offered RET, but another type of subsidy that has not been tested for compliance with EU 'state-aid' rules. This was later confirmed by a senior Transport Scotland official who agreed that, if it did not comply with the above, PFL could be liable for refunds running into seven figures.

5) Mr Michael Matheson MSP was appointed as Scotland's new Transport Minister in June, 2018, and both PFL and GHL have separately invited him to visit the Far North at an early date, the former to discuss a fare-reduction scheme and the latter on wider port-related issues.

6) Works by PFL's small Gills-based 'direct labour squad' on completing its 200 metre-long main breakwater/berths and providing the necessary sea-defences, as requested by Marine Scotland, continue apace. This project, like the new vessel, receives no taxpayers' capital nor revenue support.

7) Gills Harbour is expected to be officially confirmed as 'The Gills Bay Economic Development Zone' during Autumn, 2018, as part of the Highland Council's CaSPlan, compiled by it in conjunction with other relevant public agencies and endorsed by the Scottish Government's 'Local Planning Reporters Unit'.

8) With this new status, Gills Harbour will commence active promotion of the 2018 Mackay Consultants 'Gills Harbour Report' that proposes three primary uses for its Inner Basin, this via trade media, public bodies and local journalism.

9) Those include its use as a work-boat base for tidal-stream electricity projects in the Pentland Firth. SIMEC Atlantis Energy (SAE), that operates the 'world-leading' MeyGen site less than 1.5

miles from Gills, states that its managers are well-pleased with progress, despite having to temporarily remove two 'under warranty' turbines to Nigg Energy Park for adjustments. The UK Government is advancing its 'Contracts for Difference' (CfD) bids to spring 2019 and SAE remains hopeful that it will be successful for its 80 MW MeyGen Phase 1C with an anticipated 2020/21 construction start.

10) GHJ directors share anxieties about future vivier-truck transport of live shellfish to the Continent in the event of a 'no-deal' Brexit with some fishermen-users & merchants. Gills is a major Caithness/Orkney assembly/collection-point for this trade, with an average of six Europe-bound loads leaving per week.

Appendix D – Pentland Ferries

RET

Unfortunately we are unable to give any further update on this other than talks have been on hold for the summer recess. We are hopeful to hear from Transport Scotland soon and begin discussions again.

Stagecoach Bus Retention

After the public consultation we are pleased to have retained a twice daily connection with the X97/99 bus service to and from Inverness ensuring we maintain a link with the Highlands capital city. We are also looking forward to a partnership with Stagecoach in the near future incorporating a day trip for foot passengers from Wick to Orkney and possible through ticketing from Inverness to Orkney.

New Vessel

Works in the Vietnamese ship yard have picked up and we are still hopeful to have the ship home and in service early 2019.