

Press Release-Sleat Transport Forum 5th January 2016

The Sleat Transport Forum is concerned at the continuing failure of CalMac Ferries Ltd to produce an acceptable timetable for the Mallaig-Armadale route for the summer 2016 service.

On 22nd September 2015 the Minister for Transport and Islands Derek Mackay announced a consultation exercise regarding changes to the summer 2016 timetable and following his statement the Company promised that 'listening to customers is central to the service which we provide'. Despite the Sleat Transport Forum having made detailed submissions explaining why the proposals were entirely unacceptable, these remain unacknowledged and it took nearly two months of requests before a company official met with the Forum. Personal approaches to company officials at the highest level have been ignored.

Roddy Murray, Chair of Sleat Transport Forum said 'businesses in Sleat dependent on tourism require a definitive schedule for the summer season but the lack of a suitable finalised timetable with sufficient capacity leaves them in limbo. The company's latest proposal to run three ferries with shoulder and peak period timetables will cause uncertainty, confusion and serious disruption at Mallaig and at Armadale. It is not considered a viable option.'

Mallaig-Armadale is a growing route and the introduction of RET will increase traffic even further. Latest figures show that more than 3000 coaches, 53,000 cars and 230,000 passengers used the service in 2015. According to the company's own figures 'Vehicle Deck Utilisation' is expected to rise from 67% in 2015 to 87% in 2020, the highest by far of any CalMac route. As one user commented 'current proposals will not provide enough capacity. The time on passage will increase and there are no catering facilities on the small vessels proposed for the service. A simple way for CalMac to destroy a successful and profitable route and reduce Sleat to a by-passed community.'

Mr Murray concluded 'Sleat Transport Forum is grateful for the sustained support of our MP, MSP's and local Councillors. We now ask the Minister to intervene personally and to provide the increased capacity necessary on this route to enable its continued growth and with it the economic prosperity of Skye, Lochaber and beyond to the Outer Isles'.

Ends:

Notes to Editors.

For further information: Rob Ware-Secretary Sleat Transport Forum

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