

The Sleat Transport Forum  
c/o Tigh a Chiobair  
Ord  
Sleat  
Isle of Skye  
IV44 8RN

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015

Mr Derek Mackay MSP  
Minister for Transport and Islands  
The Scottish Government  
5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU

### **Timetable Changes-Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services 2016**

Dear Mr Mackay

As Minister for Transport and Islands you will be acutely aware of the vital importance of the ferry service network across west coast and island communities, for residents, businesses, organisations and visitors. This comprehensive and challenging network provides the economic engine for rural, island and coastal areas and continues a long history of ensuring our communities are served with reliable, punctual and safe ferry services.

The Sleat Transport Forum welcomed the Ministerial Statement on 22<sup>nd</sup> September outlining draft proposals to amend a number of schedules on the CHFS network with the aim of improving capacity, making better use of available resources and to better tailor services to suit the needs of the communities served. You further added that a period of community consultation would immediately follow in order to finalise the changes ready for timetable publication in December. The Forum was dismayed when presented with the proposals for the Mallaig-Armadale route for 2016, the gateway service to Skye and the West Coast and Western Isles and made a Formal Response to CalMac Ferries Ltd on 1<sup>st</sup> October. An extract of that submission is shown below.

*The Sleat Transport Forum representing a range of bodies on Sleat has expressed dismay at the proposals from CalMac Ferries Ltd (CFL) for significant amendments to ferry services on the Mallaig-Armadale route with effect from March 2016. The Forum convened on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the new schedule and considered representations from ferry users and community interests. It is calling for an urgent meeting with CalMac management to review and revise the proposals. Given the expected dramatic rise in vehicle and passenger traffic, including coaches, due to the introduction of the 'Road Equivalent Tariff' on the route, the CalMac proposals fall far short of what is required. The proposed deployment of a two vessel service with significant differences in capacity, customer facilities, journey times and reliability is viewed as a backward step for the communities of Sleat, Skye, Mallaig and Lochaber. Among the concerns voiced in Sleat are the withdrawal of the Coruisk, the vessel built specifically for the Armadale-Mallaig service, its replacement by a much smaller, slower vessel and a drastic reduction in capacity on the service on Sunday. It is*