

acknowledged that since this was drafted on 1 October there have been proposed enhancements to the Sunday service by the LOTI and this is welcome.

Despite many attempts, we were unable to secure any form of face-to-face meeting with representatives of the Company until 11th November, although we understand that CalMac Ferries Ltd, had by that date, consulted with every other community on the CHFS network that would be affected by the change in timetables. A senior CalMac executive has been quoted as saying 'that these are the most significant timetable changes in more than 30 years'. You will see from our Formal Response shown attached that the Sleaf Transport Forum called, and continues to do so, for the retention on the 'MV Coruisk' on the Mallaig-Armadale route, supplemented by the proposed capacity from four rotations by the 'MV Lord of the Isles'. The deployment of a small 22 car hybrid vessel untested in these exposed waters is totally inappropriate for the Mallaig route, as demonstrated in our comprehensive and prompt response to the consultation process in early October. An enhanced winter service with a dedicated vessel is a further key aspiration of this community.

The Forum has been passed a copy of your letter of 19th November (2015/0038071) to Councillor Allan Henderson (Independent Caol and Mallaig, The Highland Council) in which you outlined the rationale for the proposed changes to the network. You stated in the letter that the re-deployment of the 'Coruisk', (built specifically for the Mallaig-Armadale route) was to provide service on the Oban-Craignure route 'in order to meet the predicted significant increase in demand on that route as a result of RET'. That same significant increase in demand, because of the introduction of RET, applies equally to the Mallaig-Armadale service which has demonstrated substantial year-on-year growth over many years. The route is key to the economic success of the Sleaf peninsula, the Isle of Skye, and the wider communities of Lochaber and the Western Isles. More than 220,000 passengers, 50,000 cars and 3000 coaches used the service during the 2015 summer season alone, and in statistics quoted in the recently published 'Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan' (Para 48) expected 'Deck Capacity Utilisation' will rise from 68% in 2015 to 81% in 2016, the largest projected increase across the CHFS network. As we stated to the Company's representative the additional capacity to which you refer, actually represents a marginal increase of just 20 passenger car equivalent units (PCUs) per direction per day, even with an increase of 2 sailings per day above the 2015 schedule. We have to advise that the statement 'there may be occasional capacity constraints at peak times during the day', is not a reflection of what **will** result in Summer 2016.

The Sleaf Transport Forum issued a statement on 17th November following our meeting with CalMac and a copy of this is attached to this correspondence.

Whilst it is fully recognised that the constraints on capacity and infrastructure have made this review extremely challenging for Transport Scotland, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd and the operator, the Forum asserts that the deployment of the 'Coruisk' to Oban should not be at the expense of the Mallaig-Armadale route for the many reasons stated in our submissions.

We ask that you review this decision as soon as possible, exploring every opportunity available that will result in an enhancement of the Mallaig-Armadale service and not a substantial downgrade from that currently needed on this popular and economically critical route.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.