



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# **Analysis of responses to the public consultation for the next Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services Contract**

## **Analysis report**

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## Introduction

This report presents an analysis of responses to a public consultation on a new Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract (CHFS3).

## Background

Services delivered under the CHFS contract play a crucial role in Scotland's transport system, providing vital links for residents, businesses and tourists across the west coast. Scottish Ministers' preferred route for procurement of the new contract is a direct award to Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries Ltd (CalMac) via a Teckal exemption. This is an arrangement that, in certain circumstances, allows for the direct award of a contract to an in-house operator, without having to go through a competitive bidding process. This would be subject to a satisfactory due diligence exercise, with a final decision reached later in the year.

Early work on CHFS3 has included review of existing feedback from ferry-dependent communities, key stakeholders and reports conducted throughout the current contract. The feedback provided by these sources and further focused discussions with key stakeholders has aided the development of the consultation themes and questions.

The consultation exercise was launched on 15 December 2023 and ran until 8 March 2024. It asked 19 questions that provided an opportunity to contribute to the contract development process and to shaping the future of ferry services.

Where consent has been given to publish the response, it may be found at [Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services \(CHFS3\) - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#).

## Profile of responses

A total of 434 responses were available for analysis. There were a small number of duplicate responses removed before the analysis was undertaken. Most of these (395 responses) were submitted through the Scottish Government's Citizen Space consultation analysis platform. A further 24 responses were available that had been sent directly to the Transport Scotland policy team, with one further response that was an additional document to a submission already submitted through Citizen Space. Some of these followed the question structure set out in the consultation and a small number were statement style responses. The content of these latter responses has been analysed at the most appropriate consultation question.

In addition, Transport Scotland received a further 15 email messages which, as Respondent Information Forms were not available, these respondents have been included as individuals. These emails did not answer the closed questions set out in the consultation document, and as above, their content has been included within the analysis of further comments.

Respondents were asked to identify whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation. Group respondents were allocated to one of eleven groups by the analysis team. A breakdown of the number of responses received by respondent type is set out below, and a full list of group respondents appended to this report as Annex 1.

**Table 1 – Respondents by type**

Type of respondent	Number
Community Council or Development Trust	7
Farming or land management organisation	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	8
Haulage company or representative body	3
Local Authority or HSCP	4
Public Body	3
Tourism business	3
Trade Union	2
Transport Partnership	2
Voluntary sector organisation	2
Other business or representative body	4
<b>Organisations</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Individuals</b>	<b>393</b>
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>434</b>

In addition to undertaking the online consultation, Transport Scotland held a number of engagement events between November 2023 and February 2024. Further information on these events is set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 – Engagement events**

Network area	Location	Date	Number of attendees
Firth of Clyde	Brodick, Arran	20/11/2023	15 to 30
Firth of Clyde	Rothesay, Bute	29/01/2024	Fewer than 15

Network area	Location	Date	Number of attendees
Firth of Clyde	Millport, Cumbrae	14/02/2024	30 or more
Southern Hebrides	Port Ellen, Islay	22/11/2023	Fewer than 15
Southern Hebrides	Colonsay	20/02/2024	15 to 30
Inner Hebrides	Craignure, Mull	20/11/2023	Fewer than 15
Inner Hebrides	Tiree	14/02/2024	15 to 30
Skye, Raasay & Small Isles	Armadale, Skye	21/11/2023	15 to 30
Outer Hebrides	Stornoway, Isle of Lewis	22/11/2023	15 to 30
Outer Hebrides	Lochmaddy, North Uist	06/02/2024	Fewer than 15
Outer Hebrides	Lochboisdale, South Uist	06/02/2024	Fewer than 15

Transport Scotland recorded both verbal and written feedback from those attending the events, analysis of which has also been included within this report.

## Analysis and reporting

The report presents a question-by-question analysis of answers to the closed questions. The analysis uses variable bases i.e. includes only those who answered the closed question. Please note that percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Feedback from the events has been analysed across each of the eight themes covered by the consultation and a summary analysis of views expressed at the stakeholder events is presented in text boxes in some of the chapters.

Although the main analysis focuses on the specific questions asked, a number of respondents provided more general comments on the quality, and in particular reliability, of ferry services. Issues relating to both the strategic and operational management of ferry services were also raised. A summary analysis of these general themes is provided at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Finally, and as with any public consultation exercise, it should be noted that those responding generally have a particular interest in the subject area. Therefore, the views they express cannot necessarily be seen as representative of wider public opinion.

## Biographical information on respondents

The main consultation asked respondents six questions about themselves and their use of the CHFS network.

### Why do you mainly use CHFS network services?

Responses by individual or organisation are set out in Table 3 below. A full break down by organisation type is included at Annex 2.

**Table 3: Responses by type and purpose of use of CHFS network services**

Respondents	For Business	For Personal/Leisure	For Work/Education	All of the above	Other	Total
Organisations	9	1	0	13	2	25
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	14	171	18	159	13	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	23	172	18	172	15	400
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Respondents were most likely to say that they mainly use CHFS services for personal/leisure use or for all of the possible reasons given – 43% of those who answered the question in both cases. Unsurprisingly, the pattern was different for organisations, with 36% mainly using services for business and 52% for all of the reasons given.

### How frequently do you use CHFS services?

Responses by individual or organisation are set out in Table 4 below. A full break down by organisation type is included at Annex 2.



**Table 4: Frequency of use of CHFS network services**

Respondents	2-4 times a week	5-7 times a week	Once a week	Once every other week	Once a month	Occasionally	Seasonal (Summer period)	Other	Total
Organisations	0	6	0	1	5	1	0	10	23
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	35	9	40	74	103	60	12	42	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	35	15	40	75	108	61	12	52	398
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Respondents were most likely to say they use CHFS services once a month (27% of those who answered the question), followed by once every other week (19%).

Excepting the 'Other' option (selected by 43% of the organisations who answered the question), organisations were most likely to use services 5-7 times a week (26%) or once a month (22%). Half of the organisations selecting the 5-7 times a week option were Haulage companies (See Annex 2).

Among the organisations who selected the 'Other' option, and who went on to explain their choice, there were references to staff using multiple services in any one day, to using the ferry on an 'as needed' basis, and to being a group or organisation whose members will have their own pattern and frequency of ferry use.

**Please select your age bracket:**

Responses for individual respondents are set out in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Responses by age bracket**

Respondents	16 to 18	22 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 or over	Other	Total
Individuals	1	31	43	78	99	123	0	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Respondents were most likely to fall in the 65 or over age bracket, with 33% of those who answered the question falling in this age group. Overall, the proportion of

respondents decreased according to age bracket, and only one respondent was aged 16-18 years old.

### Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Responses for individual respondents are set out in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Responses by disability status**

Respondents	Yes	No	Total
Individuals	40	335	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Amongst individual respondents, 11% of those who answered the question said that they considered themselves to have a disability.

### Are you responding as a...?

**Table 7: Responses by residency status**

Respondents	CHFS network visitor or tourist	CHFS network business (Island and Scottish mainland)	CHFS network resident (Islands including Peninsulas)	CHFS network resident (Scottish Mainland)	Total
Organisations	0	5	15	3	23
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	28	8	275	35	346
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	28	13	290	38	369
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority – 79% of those who answered the question – identified themselves as CHFS network residents on islands and peninsulas.

If you are a CHFS network resident (Islands, Peninsulas, Scottish Mainland) please advise which CHFS community in which you are resident, and which local authority area you live in. If you are a visitor or tourist, please advise in which location you are resident.

**Tables 8: Responses by Local Authority and Community Area**

**North Ayrshire Council**

Community	n
Arran	73
Cumbrae	11
Total	84

**Argyll and Bute Council**

Community	n
Islay	32
Colonsay	4
Mull and Iona	19
Coll and Tiree	8
Kerrera	2
Luing	1
Bute	14
Dunoon/Cowal Peninsula	21
Rosneath Peninsula	3
Kintyre	1
Total	105

**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

Community	n
Lewis and Harris	32
Uists, Benbecula and Barra	23

Community	n
Outer Hebrides - unspecified	14
Total	69

### The Highland Council

Community	n
Skye	1
Raasay	9
Small Isles	1
Total	11

### Unknown

Community	n
Hebrides - unspecified	2
Total	2

### Scottish Mainland

Community	n
CHFS area – North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Argyll and Bute, Inverclyde	20
Other – East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highland (Inverness), Moray, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire, Stirling	19
Total	39

### Location outside Scotland

Community	n
Total	2

In terms of a single island or peninsula, the largest number of responses came from residents of the Isle of Arran, followed by Islay and then Lewis and Harris. With respect to local authority area, the largest number of respondents were resident in Argyll and Bute.

The consultation paper did not define the extent of the CHFS network area with respect to the Scottish mainland, and some respondents who would seem likely to be classed as residents described themselves as visitors, and *vice versa*. The table therefore shows the number of mainland respondents according to area indicated rather than the group selected.

## Reliability and Resilience

The consultation paper noted that previous feedback (including from ferry-dependent communities, key stakeholders and reports conducted throughout the CHFS2 contract period), has highlighted that resilience and reliability of ferry services need to be addressed as a priority due to the impact on business and communities when ferry services are disrupted.

### General themes

In addition to answering the specific consultation questions, many respondents raised general issues about the ferry services in the Clyde and Hebrides area. These issues were most likely to have been highlighted at Questions 1 or 2, but also recurred throughout, and tended to focus on levels of service, and the impact on individuals, businesses, and communities.

**Event feedback: The unreliability of ferry services was an issue frequently raised by attendees at all engagement events.**

**Attendees highlighted a lack of contingency measures available during unforeseen disruption events; this was sometimes connected to delays in repairs and the absence of relief vessels.**

**Vessel crew and port staff were often highly regarded. For example, they were described as resourceful, resilient, and responsive and everything the whole system needs to be.**

A consistent theme was the unreliability of recent and current services, with particular reference to timetable changes and reduced services, as well as short notice or last-minute delays or cancellations of scheduled sailings. These concerns were raised in relation to many routes and locations, with some referring to the service being at crisis point, as not-fit-for-purpose or as the worst they could ever remember. There were references to:

- The average age and design of the existing fleet and delays in getting new vessels into service.
- The lack of any reserve or replacement vessels able to stand in, and ensure a degree of continuity, when there are break-downs.
- Problems with the design and repair of existing port facilities, and failure to upgrade facilities to modern standards in a timely manner.

- An increasing number of services cancelled because of poor weather, with some suggestions that old and inappropriate vessels and port infrastructure are contributing to weather-related cancellations.
- Problems with the booking system introduced in 2023.

The types of problems referred to with the booking system included services coming up as unbookable online, respondents having to visit a port office to book travel, and ferries showing as being full, but spaces being available. There were also references to the booking system not being user friendly or easy to navigate.

Poor communication was also seen as an issue, with references to not knowing services had been cancelled until the last minute. In terms of the problems caused by poor and unreliable services, there were references to being unable to rely on ferries as a means of commuting, including not being able to access employment opportunities as a result.

**Event feedback: Event attendees spoke of losing faith in ferry services and of avoiding travelling, or using alternative routes, where possible. An attendee from Arran spoke of friends and family no longer visiting and an attendee from Mull advised the cancellation of evening ferries makes a nursing shift unmanageable if you can't get home at night. An attendee from Colonsay referred to being regularly stranded in Oban.**

**An attendee from Sleat on Skye said that constant changes to their service, including removal of services to support other links, means people are often required to travel 50 miles via the bridge.**

**There was reference to shops on Tiree running short of stock due to cancellations of winter sailings.**

Respondents also wrote of difficulties getting to medical or other important appointments and of it being difficult, if not impossible, to plan ahead. In addition to the impact on individual travellers, the problems created for businesses were highlighted, including in terms of the movement of goods (both acquiring necessary supplies and distributing products) and staff. In addition to general supply issues, the challenges connected to movement of perishable goods or livestock was highlighted. Negative impacts on the tourism economy were also suggested if potential visitors have lost confidence in ferry services.

Linked to these concerns were criticisms of both the day-to-day management and strategic planning of ferry services. CalMac, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government were most likely to be referenced.

## Performance measures

The consultation paper included a link to information on performance monitoring on CalMac's website, where monthly performance statistics are displayed under headings of reliability and punctuality. Reliability is reported in terms of: 'operated sailings'; 'additional sailings'; 'diverted sailings'; 'cancelled sailings'; and 'cancelled sailings after relief events'. Categories for reporting punctuality are: 'scheduled sailings'; 'on time'; 'level 1 lateness'; 'level 1 lateness after relief events'; 'level 2 lateness'; and 'level 2 lateness after relief events'.

Recent performance figures and further information on definitions of level 1 and level 2 lateness are available on the Information on [Performance Monitoring section of the CalMac website](#).

**Question 1. Do you think that the current performance measures of the ferry services are the right ones?**

**Please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 1 by respondent type are set out in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Responses to Question 1 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	0	6	6
Farming or land management organisation	0	3	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	1	5	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	1	2	3
Public Body	0	2	2
Tourism business	1	2	3
Trade Union	0	1	1
Transport Partnership	0	2	2
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	0	2	2



<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total organisations	5	27	32
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	87	276	363
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	92	303	395
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of all respondents – 77% of those who answered the question – did not think that the current performance measures are the right ones, while 23% thought that they are. Organisations were less likely than individuals to think the performance measures are the right ones (at 84% and 76% respectively).

Around 325 respondents made a comment at Question 1.

Most of those respondents who thought the current performance measures are the right ones made no further comment. Others noted that the current measures seem appropriate, although also that they could be improved upon, or that awareness of the problem is not the same as providing solutions.

Among respondents who did not think the current performance measures are the right ones, many highlighted the general themes outlined above. In addition to impacts on residents and existing businesses, there were concerns that growth opportunities may be affected, with reports that projects are being put on hold. A small number of respondents argued that the viability of some island communities is being put at risk, with one highlighting an associated threat to the viability of Gaelic as a community language.

One Local Authority respondent noted that unless performance measures are improved with a greater focus on user experience, they would not support a direct award of the CHFS3 contract to CalMac. However, there was also a view that CalMac staff and crews provide a good quality service, given the limitations of the vessels and port infrastructure that are available to them, and that Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) as owner of the vessels and ports, should be held accountable for failure to invest in future provision.

## Existing performance measures

A Transport Partnership and a Trade Union were among a small number of respondents who noted that the performance measures associated with the current CHFS contract are not explained in the consultation paper. There was an associated concern that this may reduce the scope for informed responses to this question.

There were also comments on the number of 'relief events' that do not incur financial penalties and are excluded from current performance statistics. These were reported to include: cancellation due to bad weather, in accordance with safety procedures; redeployment of a vessel to elsewhere on the network; and delays caused by restricted harbour facilities or by waiting for the arrival of other public transport connections. A Local Authority respondent noted that they are not clear how relief events are measured.

### Event feedback

**At the Islay event it was suggested that the Operator's reporting of performance reliability is neither understandable nor accurate. It was also suggested that a dedicated relief vessel could be available to provide disruption cover, and this could also be utilised across the network.**

**Attendees at the Brodick event also advised a more robust ports of refuge system than current should be in place.**

## Reliability

Reflecting the range of 'relief events' noted above, a frequent view among Individual respondents in particular was that the performance figures for reliability presented on CalMac's website do not reflect their own experience of the frequency of cancellations and disruption. Going forward, it was argued that performance data must be presented more clearly, with fewer or no exclusions and specifically that:

- Performance should be measured against the published, core timetable not an amended version. It was argued that, at present, timetables are altered to ensure that reliability and performance measures are met.
- Weather-related cancellations should be included in performance data.
- Data for individual routes should be reported on a regular basis, both to drive improvement and because monthly statistics are useful for tourism businesses. It was noted that no performance figures for individual routes have been published since the introduction of the new booking system in May

2023 and there was concern regarding development of CHFS3 performance measures without this information.

- Cancellation of longer or less frequent sailings should be weighted to reflect the greater impact of their loss relative to shorter, more numerous crossings.
- More detail on the effects of disruptions/cancellations on service users should be provided.

While agreeing that relief events should be reviewed, a Trade Union respondent argued that the Scottish Government should be realistic about what can be delivered with an ageing fleet.

## Punctuality

With respect to punctuality, comparisons were drawn with what were seen as more demanding performance measures set for other forms of public transport where, it was argued, published data on late running services more closely reflects passenger experience. It was suggested that the current CHFS standards should be revised, with a small number of organisations, including Local Authority, Transport Partnership and Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondents, making specific suggestions. Their proposals including that late running should be reported for:

- 2 minutes on crossings under 10 minutes;
- 5 minutes on crossings of under 1 hour;
- 5 minutes on crossings of under 2 hours;
- 10 minutes for crossings of 1 - 3 hours;
- 10 minutes for crossings of over 2 hours;
- 20 minutes for sailings of 3 - 6 hours.

Other suggestions with respect to punctuality included that:

- Late departures should be recorded even if time is made up during the crossing as passengers lose their bookings if not checked in 45 minutes before the scheduled departure time.
- Early departures should not be permitted, particularly for infrequent services where the ability to board a service shortly before sailing may be of great importance.

## Other performance measures in CHFS2

A Local Authority respondent noted that, in addition to reliability and punctuality, the CHFS2 contract includes further performance measures relating to Compliance, Customer Care and Accessibility Process, Services - Vehicle Accommodation and Call Centre but that it is not clear how these are reported to Transport Scotland.

Although only a relatively small number of other respondents addressed these issues, there were calls for reporting of performance in respect of telephone answering and other customer response times, with one suggestion that this should extend to local ports as well as the Gourock call centre. It was also suggested that statistics for passengers booking assistance (wheelchair, wheelchair and lift, lift) or presenting as turn up and go requiring assistance should be monitored and published.

**Question 2 - Are there any additional or alternative performance measures that you think could be introduced to improve resilience and reliability of ferry services?**

**Please give us your views.**

Responses to Question 2 by respondent type are set out in Table 10 below.

**Table 10: Responses to Question 2 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	6	0	6
Farming or land management organisation	3	0	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	6	0	6
Haulage company or representative body	2	0	2
Local Authority or HSCP	3	0	3
Public Body	1	1	2
Tourism business	2	1	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
Total organisations	30	2	32

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	278	74	352
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	308	76	384
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of all respondents – 80% of those who answered the question – thought that there are additional or alternative performance measures that could be introduced, while 20% did not think so. All but two of the organisations answering the question thought additional or alternative performance measures could be introduced.

Around 325 respondents made a comment at Question 2. Some issues raised, for example with respect to improving communication or the quality of timetables, are addressed in more detail at later questions and are referenced only briefly below.

## Improving resilience and reliability in the new contract

If resilience and reliability are to improve, it was suggested that the CHFS3 contract should include:

- A definition of ‘lifeline service’ that should set the standard against which performance is measured, with indicators including maintaining continuity of service for both scheduled and unscheduled non availability of vessels.
- A requirement to comply fully with EU Regulation 1177/2020 concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea, and with [related guidance](#) on the obligations of carriers and terminal operators in the event of interrupted travel. Specifically, it was argued that the CHFS3 contract should include the provision of suitable accommodation in such circumstances.
- Community involvement in framing performance measures and more formal island input into how ferry services are run. It was argued that island communities should be represented on relevant forums to evaluate performance and seek improvement or changes, via a formal mechanism for contract variation proposals or service changes to be made to Transport Scotland and/or the Operator.

- Performance indicators relating to community/customer satisfaction rates.
- Improved alignment of ferry timetables with other elements of the public transport system.
- Greater flexibility – for example to increase capacity at peak times or in response to special events, to run ‘catch up services’ after disruption, or to introduce additional freight services. This could extend to leasing additional vessels on a short-term basis.

It was suggested that the CHFS3 contract could have flexibility built in, for example, setting a requirement to operate a minimum number of sailings per day on a particular route rather than a fixed number as at present. However, a Trade Union respondent noted that flexibility around additional sailings would raise potential welfare and safety issues requiring consultation with ferry staff and their unions.

A number of respondents highlighted the need to reduce the average age of the fleet to improve the reliability of ferry services with one proposal that the Scottish Government should commit to a permanent standard for the maintenance of assets, including with respect to the average age of vessels, life-extending maintenance, and long-term investment in renewal. Some respondents simply called for newer ferries, ferries that can operate in adverse weather conditions, or for smaller vessels and more frequent services.

## Reporting reasons for all disruptions

As at Question 1, it was argued that there needs to be greater transparency in reporting of performance data, most frequently that there should be regular reporting of detailed reasons for *all* delays and cancellations with separate reporting of operational and weather-related issues, on a regular basis, against published timetables, and by individual routes.

## Operational issues

With respect to operational delays and cancellations it was suggested that reporting should include both details of the nature of the problem and the time it will take to resolve.

There were also calls for improvements to repair and maintenance programmes and for:

- Reporting of days that vessels are out of service for annual overhauls and other planned/unplanned maintenance, and whether these activities are taking longer than was previously the case.

- Setting performance indicators for contingency plans relating to the impact of overhauls and vessel non availability on lifeline routes.
- Making in-water surveys that can reduce drydock times a contractual undertaking identified as a performance indicator.
- Saving repair time by using locally based divers when divers are required to respond to technical problems.

## Weather related delays and cancellations

In the context of a perceived increase in the number of weather-related cancellations, it was suggested that performance data should include evidence-based information on the types and extremities of weather patterns, and how these directly link to increased disruption events. A Community Council respondent was among those expressing a view that some operational cancellations are being misreported as weather-related.

It was also argued, by respondents including a Ferry board, Committee or Group respondent, that factors such as the age or suitability of vessels, issues relating to port infrastructure and staff training may all influence weather-related cancellations and that these should be recorded and addressed. There was a suggestion that decisions to cancel made by different masters operating the same route with the same vessel should be compared, with some respondents voicing an opinion that there is now a more risk-averse culture than was previously the case, and that improved staff training could provide greater confidence to operate in severe weather.

**Event feedback: Weather-related cancellations were a key theme highlighted by event attendees in Stornoway and Cumbrae. Given changing weather patterns, it was suggested the Operator should focus on increasing operability under challenging weather conditions.**

## Quantifying the impact of amendments and cancellations

A number of suggestions for additional performance measures related to documenting the impacts of amended services, delays and cancellations on passengers, rather than simply reporting the frequency of such events. Proposals included reporting of:

- Transport volumes rather than the number of sailings, reflecting reduced capacity if routes are served by smaller vessels than planned.
- The number of individual bookings cancelled or rescheduled by CalMac.
- Knock-on impacts of previous cancellations or traffic volumes on island residents being unable to travel on a particular sailing.
- Impacts of winter maintenance schedules on islanders' access to mainland services.
- The number of days an island has been cut off or the number of passengers stranded when a service is full.
- Alterations in route that may cause added cost and inconvenience to customers.
- What assistance/alternative transport is provided to passengers in the event of delays/cancellations.
- Impacts on island supply chains and on transport of the Royal Mail.

## Assessing demand

There were also calls for assessment of unmet demand, although it was acknowledged that this may be challenging to record systematically. Suggestions included:

- Recording how often it is not possible to book on a particular sailing, with a suggestion that lack of capacity may have more impact on local residents who need to travel at short notice than tourists who are likely to book well in advance.
- Splitting unmet demand to show separate impacts on island residents, recreational visitors and commercial vehicles to help to inform both policy issues relating to priority booking and fares and overall capacity requirements.

It was also suggested that data on the purposes for a journey should be collected as part of the booking process to better understand customer needs.

## Improving the booking system

Respondents highlighted a number of issues associated with operation of the booking system introduced in May 2023, with calls for improvements in the ability to book online or to stop sailings showing as full online when there is space available when the vessel departs. On the latter point it was suggested that the system of block bookings by haulage companies should be reviewed as freight bookings may



be cancelled at short notice leaving unused deck space. It was suggested that management of block bookings could be a reportable statistic.

Points were also raised with respect to the publication of timetables which, it was suggested, should be available for booking six months before their commencement date, since late publication impacts business and particularly the tourism industry. Community involvement in the development of timetables is considered at Question 7.

## Improving communication

A requirement to improve communication with service users was highlighted with specific suggestions including reporting of:

- The time between an event causing a cancellation and the time at which passengers are notified.
- Telephone answering times both at the Gourock call centre and local ports.
- Times taken to respond to customer enquiries.

## Measuring customer satisfaction

The importance of a system to gather customer feedback and to record customer satisfaction was emphasised with a view that inclusion of customer service metrics as performance criteria will ensure that lived experience is properly recorded. How and when customer feedback might be sought is discussed further at Questions 18 and 19.

## Staff training

A Trade Union respondent highlighted recent problems caused by shortages of suitably trained staff, and suggested a performance measure relating to training, including delivery of Modern Apprenticeships, to increase supply of skilled workers across the business.

## Capacity and Demand

The consultation paper reported that previous feedback has highlighted the high demand for ferry services during summer. This means there is a requirement to consider the balance between capacity and demand to ensure car spaces are available to make essential or urgent travel. The consultation paper also noted that, while the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has reduced fares and made Scottish Islands more accessible, it is necessary to strike a balance between vessel capacity and passenger demand, and to find a better way to manage the number of users and the available space.

RET fares are calculated such that the price of a single journey is based on the cost of driving the same distance, plus an element to cover fixed costs such as maintaining vessels and harbour infrastructure.

**Question 3 - We know that vehicle space capacity is at a premium during peak time sailings. Do you have any suggestions that could be introduced to reduce vehicle space demand?**

**If yes, what are your suggestions?**

Responses to Question 3 by respondent type are set out in Table 11 below.

**Table 11: Responses to Question 3 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	5	0	5
Farming or land management organisation	3	0	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	5	0	5
Haulage company or representative body	2	0	2
Local Authority or HSCP	3	0	3
Public Body	2	0	2
Tourism business	2	0	2
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
Total organisations	29	0	29

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	301	61	362
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	330	61	391
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 84% of those who answered the question – said they had suggestions connected to reducing vehicle space demand.

Around 360 respondents made a comment at Question 3, including a small number who either said they did not have any suggestions or who did not answer the closed question.

## General observations about capacity and demand

A general point, and reflecting comments made at later questions, was that increased capacity, rather than managed, and by extension potentially reduced demand, needs to be the focus, with Community Council or Development Trust and Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondents amongst those raising this point. Also, reflecting a cross-cutting theme across the consultation, there were general references to more sailings (both regular, and especially at night and in response to seasonal pressures), increasing capacity on sailings, and replacement sailings to clear backlogs when there have been cancellations. One suggestion was that operators could be allowed to operate services out with the specified contract timetable, at their own cost, should they feel it is profitable to do so.

There was also a recognition that each community has different needs and an associated view that a one size fits all approach to, for example, managing vehicle space would not be advisable. Giving the Isle of Bute as an example, it was reported that while the impact of high demand on residents and supply chains can be considerable at peak tourism times, many local businesses depend on visitors to remain viable. Other examples included the commuting needs of Mull residents, and the distillery-specific business needs of Islay. Connected to these varying needs, there was a call for a balance to be struck to ensure that the needs of all ferry users are fully considered.

**Event feedback: Capacity was a key theme raised at all engagement events. At the Islay event, attendees advised that, if there was sufficient capacity available on ferry services, then any tensions between commercial and non-commercial types of traffic would not exist.**

**In terms of current challenges, attendees at the Brodick event, advised that during peak periods (summer, Easter, Christmas and New Year) there is often insufficient capacity available on vessels, resulting in last minute or essential travel not being possible, and, on occasions, important appointments missed. On Mull, attendees suggested that more boats and more frequent sailings would alleviate capacity issues.**

## Demand-based Pricing

The most frequently made point, and one most likely to have been made by individual respondents, was that some form of demand-based pricing is required, with a premium paid on higher demand services and/or for larger vehicles. It was suggested that this could help encourage users, and in particular visitors, to opt for lower demand services.

Further suggestions included:

- Reduced fares for off peak sailings and services running at unsocial hours.
- An advance vehicle booking discount.

However, a note of caution was also struck, with a Local Authority respondent commenting that changing of ticketing prioritisation, linked to measures such as peak demand fares, may be a way to manage demand but that potential negative impacts of this approach should be assessed. Examples included consideration of whether more expensive ticketing during commuting times might deter local residents from accessing work opportunities, and whether additional costs might deter visitors to islands that are in close competition with mainland coastal destinations. Transport Partnership respondents suggested that any consideration of surge or peak pricing should be taken forward in collaboration with local authorities, ferry committees, the Ferries Community Board, Ferry Stakeholder Groups and key stakeholders, and that a sailing should only be considered for seasonal peak tariff application on routes with multiple alternative journeys on the same day.

## Road Equivalent Tariff

It was noted that the introduction of RET pricing has seen significant success in growing demand for travel on the CHFS networks, but that delays with new vessels and issues with capacity have left a perception that this increased demand for travel on the network is a bad thing. The Transport Partnership respondent raising this issue went on to comment that, before any changes to policy are introduced, the impact of introducing six new major vessels into the CHFS fleet should be understood; in line with other comments about meeting rather than managing demand, they saw it as important that demand is not suppressed at a point that capacity is increased with a consequent economic cost to fragile island economies.

Nevertheless, a frequently made point, particularly among Individual respondents, was that the RET should be for residents only, and should be removed or reduced for tourists. In terms of some of the problems or challenges that have resulted from RET fares being available to visitors to islands there was reference to low fares encouraging visitors to travel to some destinations by car, equipped with all the provisions they need, rather than using public transport and spending locally.

Although many of those commenting focused on the impact of visitors being able to access RET fares, it was also noted that not all island communities have benefited. For example, a Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent reported that the Cumbrae RET fare is at the same level that people could already buy multi journey tickets.

Moving forward, in addition to the general suggestion that tourists should not be able to take advantage of RET fares, it was suggested that RET fares should be removed for:

- Mobile homes and campervans.
- Rental cars and non-UK vehicles.
- Tourist vehicles during the peak, summer holiday period.

However, it was also stressed that if RET fares were to be removed for some, islanders and regular travellers should not be penalised in any way as a result.

## Managing freight traffic

Although the potential to manage freight traffic at busy times was noted, the more frequently made point was that freight traffic is key to supporting the local economy and residents and needs to be given a degree of priority.

Nevertheless, in terms of possible approaches, and including those that could be considered in the short-term, suggestions included:

- Additional freight only services, possibly sailing overnight or early in the morning, could be an option. However, it was also suggested that while dedicated freight services may assist on some high-volume routes, they will not be a solution for all routes.
- Offering price incentives to use dedicated, freight only sailings or less popular sailings.
- Developing a baseline for each vessel against which the utilisation is measured and 'dead space' to allow for cargo shipping is quantified.
- Flexibility to introduce space and weight saving measures, such as drop trailers for HGV loads, to alleviate short-term pressures. Also, restricting high vehicles on some sailings to optimise the space offered by mezzanine floors.
- Considering consolidating deliveries of small freight.

## Managing tourism traffic

Respondents tended to make similar points relating to managing tourism traffic as they did regarding freight; the importance of tourism to the local economy of a number of island communities was noted, and again it was suggested that the primary focus needs to be on increased overall capacity, and, in particular, increased capacity during the busiest periods.

In terms of specific approaches, suggestions included:

- The addition of smaller, passenger only services.
- Encouraging more visitors to Park and Sail, potentially linked to the provision of additional sailings at peak times.
- An amended ticketing policy for campervans, for example by limiting the number on any one sailing or by allowing same day booking only. An associated point was that there should be flexibility to extend the campervan restrictions that are currently applied on some routes to others where required.

A Trade Union respondent suggested monitoring the volume of coaches, motorhomes, caravans and other non-freight private transport, especially during peak travel times; they noted that these types of vehicles take up more than the vehicle space allocated for an average car and that the economic benefit from tourist revenue is mitigated by socio-economic impacts locally, damage to harbour and road infrastructure and disproportionate environmental impact.

## Booking approaches and systems

Respondents also highlighted some issues related to booking approaches and systems that could be looked at. For example, there was reference to service data (individual service data captured by The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), in partnership with Outer Hebrides Tourism) showing that the ability to book in advance risked impeding travel to the islands served by CHFS. It was noted that when sailings were shown to be full when people were planning leisure or business travel, spaces often became available closer to sailing time; it was suggested that the next CHFS contract should see greater emphasis on reducing this issue.

Other booking system-related suggestions included introducing a more efficient and fair approach to block bookings.

## Improved and integrated public transport

Although encouraging and incentivising travellers, and especially visitors, to travel by public transport was generally seen as desirable, improved and integrated public transport services were often seen as a vital precursor (discussed further at Questions 4 and 14 in particular). Local Authority, Trade Union and Public Body respondents were amongst those highlighting this need. In terms of how to deliver wider improvements, suggestions included:

- Developing a regional/national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system that coordinates all forms of transport.
- The provision of funding for on-island transport improvements, including to island and ferry terminal cycling infrastructure.

With specific reference to reducing vehicle demand, especially for peak sailings, suggestions included:

- Improving the quality and availability of bus, coach and train connections at either end of the ferry service; co-ordinating/joining up the ferry timetables with those for connecting buses and trains.
- Building provision and responsibility into the contract for onward travel for foot passengers if there are delays.
- Improving Park and Sail facilities. It was noted, for example, that the long-term parking at the Oban Ferry Terminal is very limited.
- Providing information on public transport to and from the ports on the CalMac website.

- Increasing the availability of demand-responsive transport services on islands and introducing Car Clubs at ferry terminals.
- The introduction of a discounted ticket for a combined public transport and ferry travel to incentivise sustainable travel journeys, and seasonal or discounted tickets for foot passengers.

## Other suggestions

Other suggested ways to reduce vehicle space demand included:

- Waiving or reducing fares for passengers travelling without cars.
- Charging single occupancy car premiums.
- Providing a loading facility (in the form of free, lockable containers or luggage vans) on the car deck with an earlier check-in time so that people could stow whatever items they wanted to take with them ahead of the sailing.

**Question 4 - To reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times, would you be willing to travel to and from a port using public transport?**

**If no, please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 4 by respondent type are set out in Table 12 below.

**Table 12: Responses to Question 4 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	0	4	4
Farming or land management organisation	1	2	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	0	6	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	0	2	2
Public Body	0	1	1
Tourism business	1	2	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	1	0	1
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	0	2	2



Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Total organisations	6	21	27
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	120	245	365
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	126	266	392
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 68% of those who answered the question – said they would not be willing to travel to and from a port using public transport in order to reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times.

Around 340 respondents made a comment at Question 4, including some who said they would be willing to travel to and from a port using public transport or who did not answer the closed question. There were also comments, including from a number of organisations, about the barriers and opportunities around using public transport to get to and from ports.

## Reasons for not being willing to use public transport

Those who said they would not be willing or able to travel to and from a port using public transport were most likely to comment on either the practicalities preventing them from using public transport or on the suitability/adequacy of those services.

### Personal, practical barriers

A frequently made point amongst Individual respondents was that it would not be possible or practical to use public transport because of the type of journey they are making, both relating to purpose for travelling or the specifics of the journey itself.

On the former point, examples given included:

- Needing a vehicle to transport goods or equipment, including shopping or luggage. There were also references to transporting pets or livestock.
- Travelling in a work vehicle, including a vehicle that needed to be used for work purposes on the destination side of a crossing.

- Having a disability or mobility issue that makes use of public transport difficult and/or impossible. Also, potentially needing to take equipment or aids on that journey.
- Using a touring vehicle, with the whole purpose of a motorhome/ campervan being that it travels with you.

Very much reflecting the overall profile of respondents, these issues, including the final example, were raised by people who live in the CHFS area.

With regard to tourist traffic more generally, it was also observed that those travelling to island locations in particular are very likely to need their car once they reach their destination.

## Current public transport services

The other most frequently referenced barrier was the reach and reliability of existing public transport services. Associated comments included that current services are either not fit-for-purpose or simply do not exist; this latter point was raised with particular reference to some island locations, including by Community Council or Development Trust respondents who noted that there are no public transport services to their port.

In terms of what would be needed to make the use of public transport a more viable choice, respondents tended to raise similar points to those already highlighted at the previous question. In particular, there were calls for services to be more reliable and frequent, and for ferry and bus and train timetables to be coordinated. This included public transport services continuing to run after ferries have arrived; an example given was that on late sailings from Coll to Oban, the only public transport option can be to travel on to Glasgow and that those wanting to travel to any other destination are likely to require an overnight stay.

It was also suggested that any measures to increase demand for public transport services to and from ports need to be supported by increased capacity to meet that demand.

**Event feedback: At all events, attendees raised concerns about the lack of connectivity between different modes of transport. Specifically, connectivity issues frequently arise during temporary changes to ferry timetables.**

**Participants highlighted the generally inadequate public transport services, including the absence of buses on Sundays. As a result, there were calls for Transport Scotland to**

collaborate closely with ferry, train and bus operators to improve connectivity.

## Cost and time implications

Associated in part with concerns relating to the quality and coverage, respondents also highlighted resource-related barriers to using public transport to travel to and from ports. They included that it can be:

- Financially costly and, if not more expensive, is unlikely to be cheaper than travelling by car.
- Time consuming, especially on multi-stage journeys that require waits for connections etc.

On this latter issue, some respondents noted that they may live in, or be travelling to remote locations, and that such journeys will always be challenging when using public transport.

## Nature of the journey

Connected to the coverage of the public transport network, and the time taken, were comments about the nature of some of the journeys being undertaken. Respondents referred to living in remote locations and/or travelling to equivalently remote locations.

In terms of the journey from the port to the final destination, respondents noted that before needing to take their vehicle on the sailing, they would also need to use it to travel to the port. A Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent commented that, from an islanders' perspective, the availability or otherwise of public transport has little bearing on whether travellers will take their car on to the ferry. They went on to suggest that the decision take a car on to the ferry is entirely dependent on the nature of the mainland portion of the journey, and the availability / suitability of public transport for that portion. They also suggested that the question itself is mainland-centric and fails to recognise the lifeline nature of the service from an island perspective.

Another Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent reported that in their area the practicality of travelling to and from a port on public transport can be very route dependent. They cited the Colintraive-Rhubodach crossing as being almost totally impractical, with public transport links that are very limited on both sides of the crossing. However, they reported that on the Wemyss Bay-Rothesay service,

matters are significantly better, with direct rail connections and frequent bus services.

## Points made by those willing to use public transport

Those who said they would be willing to use public transport sometimes noted that they already did so. Otherwise, they were most likely to raise similar points relating to the quality and coverage of public transport services as those who would not be willing or able to use them. These included that services need to be (more) reliable and better planned to allow people to make connections between ferry, bus and train services. There were also references to it needing to be cost effective and more affordable. Specific suggestions often mirrored those already set out at the previous question.

Further issues relating to improving public transport services and increase their use are covered at later questions, including Questions 14 to 16.

**Question 5: To reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times, would you be willing to travel to and from a port using active travel modes (walking, wheeling, cycling)?**

**If no, please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 5 by respondent type are set out in Table 13 below.

**Table 13: Responses to Question 5 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	1	4	5
Farming or land management organisation	1	2	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	0	6	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	0	2	2
Public Body	0	1	1
Tourism business	1	2	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	0	0	0
Voluntary sector organisation	1	1	2

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Other business or representative body	0	2	2
Total organisations	5	22	27
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	72	299	371
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	77	321	398
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 81% of those who answered the question – said they would not be willing to travel to and from a port using active travel modes in order to reduce the number of cars on deck at peak times.

Around 315 respondents made a comment at Question 5, with a number of those comments raising similar issues as at the previous question.

The majority of comments addressed the various barriers, both personal and geographical, that would make active travel an impractical option for many people. In broad terms, these barriers were often similar to those which led people to conclude that public transport would not be an option. The most frequently made points were that:

- Active travel options can be impractical or impossible because of someone’s age or because they have mobility issues.
- People may need a vehicle to transport shopping, luggage, pets or livestock.
- Even if able to travel to the port by active travel, they may need a work vehicle at their destination. For example, a Farming or land management organisation respondent noted that they travel with business equipment and goods. They also noted that time pressures, including after a potentially long ferry journey, mean they need to move around as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Respondents also noted that the Scottish weather, and short hours of daylight, are likely to make active travel an unsafe, difficult or unappealing option at some times of year.

Reflecting some of the comments about viability of public transport options for remote locations, some respondents also noted the considerable distance they travel

to or from the port they generally use and noted that walking or cycling would simply not be an option.

In terms of changes that could possibly encourage or enable active travel when it might be viable, there were references to existing roads and pathways, and even tailored active travel routes, not being fit-for-purpose and there were calls for investment in the active travel infrastructure. An example given was the lack of a dedicated cycle route from the ferry to Cumbrae into the town of Millport; it was noted that cyclists currently share narrow roads with buses, cars and lorries.

In line with this challenge, a Transport Partnership respondent suggested that, to encourage active travel, a focus on improving the infrastructure on the journey for those walking or wheeling to / from every ferry terminal to the nearest population centre should be considered as a priority in the planning of investment. However, a Local Authority respondent reported that the challenging fiscal climate has placed considerable pressure on Local Authority budgets, and that this is making it increasingly difficult to invest in sustainable transport infrastructure projects.

As with public transport, there were calls for an integrated transport system that would make it possible/easier for people to include an active travel element where possible. It was also suggested that free passage for bikes, electric bikes and cyclists could be an incentive, particularly if targeted at essential users of the service.

**Question 6: Should Operators be required to hold dedicated vehicle deck spaces on busy routes for the use of island residents and key worker personnel required to travel at short notice?**

**If no, please explain your answer.**

*A 'key worker' is a critical or essential worker who is considered to provide an essential service.*

Responses to Question 6 by respondent type are set out in Table 14 below.

**Table 14: Responses to Question 6 by respondent type**

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Community Council or Development Trust	6	0	6
Farming or land management organisation	2	1	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	1	5	6
Haulage company or representative body	1	1	2
Local Authority or HSCP	2	0	2
Public Body	3	0	3
Tourism business	2	1	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	0	0	0
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
<b>Total organisations</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	333	39	372
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	355	47	402
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 88% of those who answered the question – thought Operators should be required to hold dedicated vehicle deck spaces on busy routes for the use of island residents and key worker personnel required to travel at short

notice. Individuals were more likely to support the idea than organisations, at 90% and 73% respectively.

Around 175 respondents made a comment at Question 6.

In addition to broad statements of support with the proposition, the most frequently made point was that island residents should be prioritised as the ferries represent a lifeline service for them including, for example, when needing to attend hospital appointments.

## Suggested conditions or parameters

Although the overall approach was generally thought to be the right one, respondents sometimes commented that certain conditions would need to be put in place. General suggestions included:

- A requirement to make advanced bookings on a bookable route.
- Places being held/available up until a certain set time before sailing; examples given included when check in opens or 24 hours before sailing. Any unused places should then be released as standbys.
- The approach could be applied to a pre-determined/designated number of spaces; an associated suggestion was that the existing reserve of six or so slots to cater for emergencies seems to be adequate on most occasions.

Suggestions relating to island residents specifically included:

- Priority should only apply if travelling for an important reason, such as attending medical appointments. There was also reference to health, education or employment appointments affording priority.
- It should not apply to second homeowners.

In relation to key workers, suggestions included that:

- A definition of key worker should be provided so as not to exclude certain professions. However, it was also suggested that who is considered a key worker will be service and area-specific and would depend on need.
- For people delivering medical care of any kind, there should be a guarantee that they will be carried on the sailing of their choice; enabling health service delivery is the very definition of 'lifeline service'. This should not negate the need to book, but if the sailing of their choice is not available, there should be a second-line response allowing them to board ahead of all un-booked traffic; and *in extremis* (which will be rare), ahead of booked traffic too.
- Key workers could be issued with passes to prove eligibility.



In addition to island residents and key worker personnel, a Public Body respondent suggested that consideration should also be given to unplanned commercial traffic, such as that relating to urgent maintenance and repair work. A Farming or land management organisation respondent suggested that key worker status should not be restricted to public sector employees and commented that business travel can also be essential. A Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent called for all island residents and frequent users (delivery vehicles, tradespeople) to be given preferential access to vehicle tickets.

There were also calls for any approach to be trialled before its full introduction to avoid any unintended consequences, and Ferry Board, Committee or Group and Transport Partnership respondents were amongst those calling for any introduction to be route-specific and at the request of, or in collaboration with, the community. An associated point was that any approach must be considered on a route-by-route basis and not predetermined in contract conditions. Rather, it was suggested that any approach should be data driven to recognise those individual sailings where capacity is likely to be constrained at short notice.

## Concerns about holding vehicle space

Although relatively few respondents disagreed and went on to explain why, points raised did include that it should simply be fair and equal for everyone, and that, as at Question 3, the focus should be on increasing the capacity of the network, rather than having to hold space which may or may not be used.

In terms of constrained capacity, there was a concern that holding back capacity in an already constrained environment risks having an impact on the wider economy if visitors who might have holidayed on islands visit mainland destinations instead. It was noted that the visitor economy is very important for the future sustainability of island communities and that it is important to remember the visitor season is short. There were concerns that keeping more tourist traffic in standby lanes until the last minute to ensure space was available for local / urgent use could result in considerable uncertainty, missed bookings with island businesses, and corresponding complaints from both disappointed visitors and businesses unable to secure income.

A specific suggestion was for a 10% reservation of space for residents as the fleet is transitioned to meet demand or to change the timetable to provide more services.

Other points made included that:

- Turn up and go routes have considerable advantages for users, including in terms of flexibility; this should not be diminished in any way.

- The definition of key workers could be challenging, especially on routes where a large number of vans cross to provide daily services.
- There could be difficulties of prioritisation on a turn up and go route. It was suggested that the learning from trials of prioritisation approaches could be of benefit here.

## Community Voice, Transparency and Accountability

The consultation paper noted that previous feedback suggests there could be more dialogue and consultation carried out across the network, giving local communities a better opportunity to provide feedback, which will aid decisions related to ferry services. It also highlighted a need for ferry services need to be appropriately timetabled to balance the needs of different users.

**Question 7: How could communities be provided with a stronger role in providing input on ferries related decisions?  
Please give us your views.**

Around 370 respondents answered Question 7.

### Current arrangements

General comments included that communities already have a strong role in providing input on ferries-related decisions, or that there are already a number of routes through which people can be involved, and that these mechanisms have been a positive development in terms of giving communities a stronger voice. There was reference to the role of Ferry Committees, the Ferries Community Board, Ferry Stakeholder Groups, Islander User Groups, and Community Councils in communicating ferry user requirements, experience and views to Operators, Transport Scotland and Scottish Government.

However, there were also some concerns, including that the current Ferry Committees appear to be having limited impact and/or are powerless. More generally, it was thought that community views are not given sufficient weight, and that previous engagement or consultation does not appear to have led to change or to have affected outcomes, with no genuine attempt to take account of service user views. Respondents referred to consultation fatigue and a wider loss of trust across island communities, and there was a concern that this could now be a barrier to efforts to give communities a stronger role in decision making.

The Operator's approach was described as not proactive enough, including not demonstrating a genuine commitment to giving communities a voice in their decision making. It was also reported that CHFS2 had required the Operator to appoint a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager, but that this role was removed during the contract period.

In terms of moving forward, it was suggested that current approaches, including the composition and functioning of existing Ferry Committees, should be reviewed, with a focus on how they can provide a strong basis for further developing the influence of the community voice in decision making.

However, the challenges associated with ensuring that communities have a greater input on ferry-related decisions were also noted, including that:

- If communities do not feel that their needs are being met, by extension they are unlikely to believe that their voice is being heard and their input valued.
- It may be difficult for specific communities to have a view of whole system planning and the wider picture/requirements relating to inter-island connectivity. The Trade Union respondent making this point went on to comment that community engagement needs to be more than a talking shop for localised demands.

## More effective engagement structures

A frequently made point was that the Operator and other key stakeholders need to both listen to the views of communities and also act on their suggestions. In particular, there was a view that there is room for significant improvement in how empowered island communities are in the delivery of ferry services.

In terms of the most constructive and productive approaches going forward, suggestions included:

- The Ferries Community Board, other Ferry Stakeholder Groups, Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships should have a key role in ensuring more effective engagement with communities.
- The new CHFS contract should include an explicit requirement and/or incentive for the Operator to work with, and be accountable to, communities. Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondents were amongst those making this suggestion.

Comments or suggestions about the type and role of organisations that represent communities included that:

- Each port or island should have a community-agreed organisation that interacts with the Operator. New committees should be created where none exist, potentially in partnership with other community bodies such as Community Councils.
- Ferry Committees should be given the status of statutory consultees to formalise the requirement for all relevant agencies to consult with them.

- Ferry Committee members could be elected by the local community.
- The Ferries Community Board should be appointed only by the Scottish Government (with no input from the Operator).

In terms of support and resourcing, it was suggested that the Ferries Community Board should be provided with a secretariat function by Transport Scotland. There were also calls for either Transport Scotland or the Operator to provide funding for administrative support for existing Ferry Committees and to support the creation of new committees where required.

In terms of raising the profile of the ferry-related organisations that represent local communities, it was suggested that details about the local Ferry Committee and any other relevant groups should be displayed on the vessels covering their routes.

Although many of the comments focused on how existing structures could be improved or supported, alternative approaches and/or new structures were also suggested. They included:

- Establishing a Ferry Regulator with an integrated joint board incorporating representatives from each community, the ferry operators, trade unions and businesses that use the ferries or rely on the ferries (such as tourism businesses).
- Communities being represented at regular meetings to discuss compliance with the contractual performance regime for CHFS3.
- Ensuring management boards include representation from communities and ferry users. This was linked to a concern that the lack of representation of island residents on the boards of CalMac, DML and CMAL has contributed to a sense of remoteness between these bodies and the communities they serve. Specific suggestions included that each board should include a nominated representative from each port, along with the Chairs of Transportation Committees for relevant local authorities.

## Direct engagement with communities

Other comments and suggestions focused on direct engagement with service users and included that the Scottish Government and/or Transport Scotland should ensure local communities and ferry users have a stronger voice in delivery of services. This was sometimes connected to a concern that current Ferry Committees do not necessarily reflect the views of their wider community.

Specific ideas for direct engagement with local communities included:

- Affected communities being able to vote on big decisions, with a suggestion that any vote should be binding.
- Running surveys, including online surveys, to help inform bigger decisions.
- Holding regular island-based consultation events or community meetings. This included the Operator's management and/or staff holding regular on-island meetings with ferry users.
- Establishing a community panel made up of individuals from each island/ community.

The importance of ensuring that approaches capture a diverse range of views was highlighted, including making sure that younger people are involved. It was noted that meeting the needs of children and young people is highlighted as a key issue in the National Islands Plan, with evidence indicating the importance of transport in enabling islands to retain their younger populations.

In terms of the issues of particular importance to communities, there was thought to be a need for a more coherent approach to ensuring timetabling decisions take account of community views. The current approach was described as too narrowly focused on listed committees and there were calls for as much engagement as possible across island communities to ensure that community and business needs are fully considered.

Finally, the importance of ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for meaningful consultation with communities was highlighted, including to ensure that feedback can influence the decision-making process.

**Event feedback: Concerns about how the Operator engages with communities was a frequently raised theme across all events.**

**It was highlighted that those who make decisions about ferries don't understand the islands, or the impact disruption and contingency measures have on communities.**

**It was reported that local voices are not listened to, that consultation is undertaken too late and that when it does happen the input from communities is not given sufficient consideration.**

## Transparency and improved communication

Associated with improved approaches was the need for greater transparency around decision making, including better communication with communities about those decisions. It was suggested that commercial confidentiality should not be used as an excuse to shield ferry-related decisions from public scrutiny, especially in relation to a publicly owned company.

In particular, there were calls for greater visibility of senior management from the Operator across island communities, including proposals for management of ferries and booking to be returned to local port offices. It was suggested that having more senior managers based across the islands would help to improve understanding of the difficulties faced by islanders, and ultimately to contribute to more coherent decision making.

Respondents also saw scope to improve direct communication with the members of the communities for whom ferry services are the most important; it was suggested that this might include:

- Direct email communications with island residents, including providing more information about key decisions.
- Sharing of information about ministerial decision-making.
- Producing and sharing quarterly and annual performance reports for each route, to provide a basis for engagement with communities and identification of improvement actions.

Finally, it was suggested that the current feedback and/or complaints systems do not work well, and that complaints handling by CalMac and the Scottish Government is often poor. An associated suggestion was for a regional or national escalation route for complaints and/or for the introduction of an Ombudsman for ferries.

**Event feedback: Across all engagement events, attendees advised ferry services decision makers should be based within island communities to improve locally focused decision-making.**

**Attendees at the Bute event highlighted the need for the Operator to provide clear, concise and accurate communications on disruption events.**

### Question 8: Are there ways in which Operator's engagement with local communities can be improved?

Please give us your views.

Around 335 respondents answered Question 8.

Most of those commenting did think there are ways in which Operator's engagement with local communities can be improved, albeit it was noted that there are structures in place, for example Ferry Committees. Although there were references to the current approach working well, there were also frustrations about the extent to which community views are taken on board. It was noted that this is not only in relation to CalMac but can also extend to CMAL, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government.

A number of the issues raised reflected those already set out at the previous question, such as the importance of acting on feedback from local communities and calls for the next CHFS contract to place specific obligations on the Operator around engagement.

## Communication style and quality

Concerns about the quality of communication with communities was one of the most frequently made points. Local Authority, Public Body and Individual respondents were amongst those suggesting that the Operator's communication style and approach can sometimes be extremely poor, and it was also suggested that this is a commonly held view across island communities.

There were calls for greater transparency, including through an improved communication style, along with a willingness to listen to, and make changes in response to, community concerns. It was hoped that demonstrating greater openness would improve relationships and support better engagement with communities. Specific suggestions included that the Operator could or should:

- Adopt a clearer style, including when sharing performance updates.
- Act earlier, especially around sharing decisions and notifications about changes to services and timetables.
- Communicate directly with communities, rather than residents having to rely on local or national press to access information. The use of local press and social media groups to reach a wider range of the community, along with the provision of on-board literature, were suggested.



- Provide routes for members of the communities and other ferry users to respond; suggestions included support or feedback lines being made available and the Operator's website directing interested parties to local community groups where they can share their views.
- Greater transparency and better information sharing should extend to communications with Ferry Committees, or other community stakeholder groups, and should explain why things are not happening.

## Genuine engagement

Reflecting some of the issues covered at Question 7, there were concerns about the extent to which the Operator is committed to and values community engagement. Ferry Board, Committee or Group and Transport partnership respondents were amongst those raising this question.

Moving forward, it was suggested that the Operator needs to see engagement with communities as a two-way process, and as central to their service delivery. Other points included that the Operator should:

- Develop a better understanding of the distinct communities it serves, including their specific needs and dynamics, and their experience of ferry services.
- Be more flexible and varied in the engagement approaches it employs. Specific methods referenced included web and postal survey-based engagement, email, use of social media and via MSP email newsletters. There were calls for the Operator to raise awareness of these engagement options through local advertising.
- Recognise the role of in-person engagement, including suggestions that the Operator should seek to engage with residents in the locations and venues that they use, such as cafes, village halls and sports or community groups. Using accessible venues, choosing accessible times and giving a longer notice period for meetings were also suggested.

Connected to this latter point about in-person engagement were calls for regular on-island meetings between the Operator and local communities. It was suggested that these could help improve relationships with local communities, and offer an opportunity to communicate plans, ask questions and resolve issues. The value of in-person engagement was highlighted in particular in relation to major decisions; for example, it was proposed that timetable decisions should be supported by larger-scale in-person engagement to ensure representation from across the community.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the Operator responding to feedback gathered through community engagement. It was suggested that they

should publish a response to each engagement exercise or meeting or provide regular updates on action taken in response to feedback.

### **Event feedback**

**Feedback provided by attendees at the Stornoway event included that their service is not designed to meet the needs of the community but is focused on providing services for tourists. It was suggested that there needs to be a complete change of emphasis with island voices at the centre of all ferry-related decisions.**

## **Visibility of ferry management**

As at Question 7, respondents discussed the visibility of ferry management specifically in the context of supporting better engagement with communities. The Operator's current approach was described as "remote" and "detached", and it was suggested that this was in part due to working with a central headquarters. There were also some concerns about staff continuity, and a suggestion that turnover of both management and other staff can disrupt efforts to build good working relationships.

Respondents suggested that Operator management being seen and heard on islands would demonstrate their commitment to engagement and would support a more positive working relationship with communities. In addition to being more visible in the community, respondents felt that being based on the islands would help management to better understand the needs of these communities, including because they would need to make more regular use of ferry services themselves. It was also proposed that the Operator should ensure that each community has a dedicated liaison officer, and that their role and contact details should be shared widely.

## **The Ferries Community Board**

The Ferries Community Board is a group formed of island community members, to be the voice of the communities and provide the community view to CalMac.

**Question 9: Is the Ferries Community Board representative of island populations?**

**If no, please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 9 by respondent type are set out in Table 15 below.

**Table 15: Responses to Question 9 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	3	2	5
Farming or land management organisation	2	0	2
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	4	2	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	1	2	3
Public Body	2	0	2
Tourism business	0	2	2
Trade Union	0	1	1
Transport Partnership	1	0	1
Voluntary sector organisation	0	2	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
<b>Total organisations</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	119	215	334
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	134	228	362
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 63% of those who answered the question – did not think the Ferries Community Board is representative of island populations. However, a small majority of organisations (54% of those who answered) thought it is representative.

Around 250 respondents made a comment at Question 9.

## Representativeness of the Board

Many of those commenting raised concerns about whether the Ferries Community Board is fully representative of island populations. This was raised in relation to the profile of membership and the extent to which Board members understand the views of island communities.

Although the challenges inherent in representing such a diverse range of communities and interests were recognised, there were nevertheless concerns that the geographical spread of communities represented is uneven. Some noted that the Board does not include representation from each island, and there was a suggestion that members can be too focused on their own island's needs and do not take adequate account of experience across others.

It was also noted that:

- There is often overlap with the membership of Ferry Committees and other similar bodies, raising concerns around the potential for conflicts of interest.
- Ferries Community Board members tend to be older and male and may be more representative of some business sectors and interest groups, such as transport businesses, than the wider community.

In terms of the extent to which the Ferries Community Board represents local community interests, there was concern that members may not consult with or seek the views of those communities. Respondents cited specific examples of where there have been issues, including that when there are consultation meetings or events, these are often poorly organised or held at short notice.

There was also a view that, since the Operator established and set the terms of reference for the Board, and appoints and covers the salary of its Chair, it is both undemocratic and operates with a conflict of interest. It was suggested that other bodies – for example Ferry User Groups, Regional Transport Partnerships and the Islands Transport Forum are more democratically accountable to their respective communities.

## **Influence and reach of the Board**

Although many of the comments focused on the membership of the Board, there were also references to its influence. These included that it appears to have a relatively limited influence, and it was suggested that this perception has led a number of communities to set up their own pressure groups to better represent their islands' interests.

In terms of public perception, a number of Individual respondents reported that they were not aware of the purpose or make-up of the Ferries Community Board, did not know whether their community was represented and/or the arrangements for selecting or electing members.

## Alternative perspective

Although most of those commenting raised concerns, others did think that the Ferries Community Board either is, or probably is, representative of island communities. These respondents suggested that, in the context of the broad geographic area covered, membership has a good level of representation across island communities. There was reference to specific examples of the Board representing key local groups and to regular meetings between Board members and local stakeholders as having proved useful.

Respondents also noted that the focus of the Board is on representing strategic issues affecting the whole network, rather than escalating island-specific issues. However, there was concern that this role is undermined by the lack of a structural relationship between the Board and Ferry Committees (which focus on local and operational issues).

## Proposals for change

Reflecting the range of issues and views noted above, respondents proposed a number of ways in which the Ferries Community Board could improve its representation of island communities. In terms of the makeup of the Ferries Community Board, suggestions included:

- Ensuring that when existing members reach the end of their term, they are replaced by a resident of an island not currently represented on the Board.
- Rebalancing the membership to better represent typical island residents who use travel services, alongside business interests.
- Recruiting members with specific expertise around the operation of ferries.
- Requiring the Board to always have a member who is aged 21 or younger.

In terms of structures and processes, suggestions included:

- Implementing a clear structural relationship between the Ferries Community Board (as the body dealing with strategic network-wide issues) and Ferry Committees (as the bodies focused on local and operational issues). An associated suggestion was that Ferry Committees should nominate member(s) to represent their area to the Ferries Community Board.
- Updating election processes, for example to include online polls and make elections more widely accessible.
- Providing adequate resourcing and appropriate administrative support to enhance the Ferries Community Board's representation.

- Considering the scheduling of meetings (and notice given to communities) to maximise participation.

In relation to the remit and focus, suggestions included ensuring the interests of islanders employed as ferry workers are considered by the Ferries Community Board. It was also suggested that improving other engagement mechanisms with specific economic sectors would enable the Board membership to focus more on representing island communities.

**Question 10: Does the Ferries Community Board reflect your interests for the next contract?  
If no, please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 10 by respondent type are set out in Table 16 below.

**Table 16: Responses to Question 10 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	2	2	4
Farming or land management organisation	2	1	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	4	2	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	2	1	3
Public Body	2	0	2
Tourism business	0	2	2
Trade Union	0	1	1
Transport Partnership	1	0	1
Voluntary sector organisation	0	2	2
Other business or representative body	0	2	2
Total organisations	13	15	28
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	92	226	318
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	105	241	346
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 70% of those who answered the question – did not think the Ferries Community Board reflects their interest for the next contract. Individuals were more likely to hold this view than organisations (at 71% and 54% respectively).

Around 260 respondents made a comment at Question 10, albeit that many of the comments referred to, or raised similar issues to, those at the previous question. For example, it was suggested that the Board does not adequately represent island communities and that members do not consult sufficiently with their local communities, including comments that respondents have not had any communication from the Board.

The Ferries Community Board was also seen as having limited influence on ferry services, while some simply noted that they did not know enough about the Board and its workings to make a judgement about whether it would reflect their interests.

Further points included some concerns around wider governance and handling of the next contract, and some suggestions, already covered at Question 9, about how the Ferries Community Board could be made more representative of island communities. An additional suggestion was the establishment dedicated sub-committees for specific interest groups.

**Question 11: Should communities have greater say in the development of timetables, so they suit the needs of ferry users?**

**Please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 11 by respondent type are set out in Table 17 below.

**Table 17: Responses to Question 11 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	6	0	6
Farming or land management organisation	3	0	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	6	0	6
Haulage company or representative body	1	0	1
Local Authority or HSCP	4	0	4
Public Body	3	0	3
Tourism business	2	0	2
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	2	0	2

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
Total organisations	32	0	32
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	334	31	365
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	366	31	397
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 92% of those who answered the question – thought communities should have greater say in the development of timetables, so they suit the needs of ferry users. All of the organisations that answered this question thought so.

Around 320 respondents made a comment at Question 11.

## The principle of communities having a greater say

There was a view that communities should clearly have a greater say on development of timetables. This included comments that communities are affected most directly by ferry services, and that residents and businesses have the best understanding of local needs. In this context, a stronger say for communities was seen as crucial to ensuring that timetables better meet the needs of residents and businesses, in addition to considering operational issues. It was noted that this is in line with the stated service objective: ‘we are the heart and soul of the places we sail to and the people we serve’.

Respondents also suggested that working together and maintaining an open dialogue would benefit both communities and Operator, ensuring that timetable development is more transparent. There was concern that the current timetable process is pre-conditioned by operational factors that communities may have no information on, and that community requests are considered by individuals with no experience or understanding of local community needs. It was suggested that a two-way discussion is required to ensure that timetables take proper account of community needs and inevitable constraints on operation. There were also calls for



the engagement approach to recognise that communities can understand and take account of financial, operational and other constraints on service provision.

## Having a greater say on the development of timetables

For many respondents, comments at Question 11 reflected a view that engagement to date on development of timetables has been too limited, and that timetables currently focus too much on the Operator's needs and cost of service provision, rather than impacts for residents and businesses. Respondents wished to ensure that the focus of timetable development is on meeting community needs, and highlighted potential for relatively small timetable changes to have a significant (positive or negative) impact for residents. Some were of the view that no ferry timetable should be implemented without proper engagement with local communities.

Respondents also saw a need for timetable development to consider a wider range of factors, and to balance the service cost of timetable changes against other potential benefits. There was reference to potential socio-economic benefits for local communities contribution to wider policy priorities such as National Performance Framework outcomes, benefits associated with any reduction in car use, and the potential cost to communities if changes are not made. In this context, it was noted that timetable changes are currently required to be 'cost neutral' and suggested that this prevents consideration of more significant changes that may help to address unmet need and generate additional revenue. There were calls for a more flexible approach to amending timetables, including reference to delays caused by the requirement for the Operator to apply for contract variations.

**Event feedback: Across the engagement events, attendees highlighted the importance of communities being able to influence decisions that affect their routes, especially during service disruption.**

## Issues to be addressed

Comments on the potential need for communities to have a greater say in timetable development included reference to a range of problems with current timetables where, it was suggested, more consideration of community views could help to improve services. These primarily related to ferry times and the number of sailings.

In relation to ferry times, it was argued that the priority should be ensuring that services are run at times that meet residents' needs with flexible timetables and more frequent sailings. Specific suggestions included that:

- Extended operating days with early and late ferry services would allow workers (including key workers) to commute. Benefits for business travel, daytrip tourism, and groups travelling for recreation or sport were also suggested.
- An early sailing from islands on Saturday and a late return on Sunday, would allow those in full-time employment to travel to the mainland at weekends.
- Getting to the port for early services is not practical for some residents – for example islanders from Harris who may be faced with a choice between leaving home at 3am or paying for overnight accommodation in Stornoway.

In relation to the number of sailings, there was thought to be a need for service adjustments to take account of increased demand such as an influx of visitors for a local event. It was noted that single vessel services in particular can be more restrictive for communities, and some saw a greater need for a strong community voice on timetabling of these services.

The reduction in frequency during the winter was also described as especially frustrating and it was suggested that winter timetables should not be changed without adequate explanation being provided to communities.

## **Approaches to enable a greater say for communities**

Respondents discussed a range of issues and potential approaches to give communities a greater say on timetabling. This included a view that broad participation across island populations will be vital to ensure that engagement reflects the full range of community requirements and views. Key groups identified as having specific timetabling needs included businesses, young people, those in need of regular medical treatment on the mainland, and those commuting to their place of employment.

Comments on potential approaches included a view that engagement must be at an early stage in timetable development, allowing sufficient time to gather feedback and, crucially, to make any adjustments to timetables. This was seen as a key factor in ensuring that engagement with communities is meaningful, with a genuine opportunity to influence timetables. It was also noted that some community and stakeholder groups do not meet very frequently, and it was suggested that the contract should build in sufficient time for meaningful engagement.

Other comments on community engagement included proposals for initial discussion with ferry groups and committees to inform the approach to wider engagement including, for example, formulation of timetable options to be presented. The importance of providing feedback after engagement is complete was also highlighted, including a clear explanation of any proposed changes that have not been made, to ensure that communities understand how their feedback has been considered and addressed.

More generally, Local Authority and Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondents were amongst those suggesting that engagement with communities in relation to timetables should form part of a coordinated approach to joint working across service providers. It was suggested that a wider approach will be necessary to ensure that timetable development considers the full range of relevant factors including community voice, local and regional strategic priorities (such as population retention/growth and economic development), and operational requirements or constraints. The relevance of connecting train and bus services for timetable development was also highlighted.

## **Other issues where communities should have a greater say**

In addition to timetable development, respondents identified a number of other issues about which they thought that communities should have a stronger voice, including:

- Feedback on general service quality and reliability, including consideration of performance information.
- Ensuring the Operator understands the personal and community impact of timetabling (and performance) that does not meet community needs. This included reference to accessing services, commuting and more generally ensuring that ferries are run for the convenience of service users.
- Aligning ferry services with other public transport modes. Respondents highlighted the importance of bus and rail timetables being better aligned with ferry services.

## **Concerns around communities having a greater say**

Although most of those commenting were looking for ways in which communities could have a greater say, there was also a view that they already have sufficient say on timetable development, with current engagement mechanisms working relatively

well. This included citing examples of community groups having an input into timetable development.

There was also reference to the need for community views to be balanced with operational considerations including the cost of delivery, regulations and maintenance factors. This appeared to reflect a view that communities can have unrealistic expectations due to a lack of understanding of constraints on services and timetabling.

## Carbon Reduction and Environmental Impact

The consultation paper suggested that, with low carbon ferry engine technology still being developed, consideration needs to be given to alternative ways to reduce the carbon footprint of ferry services and their impact on the environment.

**Question 12: In what ways can ferries reduce their carbon emissions in line with Net Zero targets?**

**Please give us your views.**

Around 340 respondents answered Question 12.

In addition to general support for the importance of reducing carbon emissions associated with ferry services, it was noted that the objective is consistent with national and local policy priorities around decarbonisation and sustainable economic growth. This included reference to relevant strategy and policy such as Transport Scotland's *Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Approach*, and the Carbon Neutral Islands programme.

Points made by respondents in relation to specific ways in which ferries can reduce their carbon emissions are summarised below.

### The prospect of reducing carbon emissions

Questions were raised about the extent to which carbon emissions associated with ferry services can be reduced sufficiently to meet Net Zero targets, and to meet these targets over the anticipated timescale. It was suggested that decarbonisation of ferry services will be challenging in the context of currently available technologies. Issues encountered in the ongoing construction of dual fuel vessels were described as illustrating the current state of technologies available to reduce carbon emissions and the potential scale of the challenge in decarbonising ferry services. While the Small Vessel Replacement Programme was seen as an important step in decarbonisation of CHFS services, it was suggested that decarbonising the whole CHFS fleet is likely to be significantly more difficult. For example, it was suggested that reducing emissions will be particularly difficult for essential lifeline services, and that low carbon technology 'isn't anywhere close' to being workable for larger vessels. There was also concern that alternative power sources are not currently capable of serving all CHFS vessels.

Ferry Board, Committee or Group, Public Body and Transport Partnership respondents were amongst those raising concerns that reducing carbon emissions associated with the ferry network should not be at the expense of service quality and

maintaining equality of access to travel. It was noted that the provision of a reliable ferry service (especially for lifeline services) is critical for island communities and economies. In this context, a Local Authority respondent proposed that the focus should be on use of tried and tested technologies in the short term to minimise risk to reliability of services. It was also suggested that ferry-related carbon emissions are unlikely to be significant for Scotland's overall Net Zero targets, that less reliable ferry services will result in island residents having to make lengthy carbon-emitting journeys by car, and that across some islands the impact of emissions is secondary to the need for travel. In contrast, others suggested that sea level rise is likely to have a major impact on island populations and that change is required to limit these impacts.

## Ferry design and fuel types

In terms of the ways in which ferry-related carbon emissions can be reduced, comments were most focused on ferry design and fuel use.

Comments around ferry design included that the current, 'ageing fleet' should be replaced to reduce carbon emissions, with delays in delivery of new vessels and in harbour improvement works seen as having contributed to increased carbon emissions; it was suggested that overcoming these delays would contribute towards Net Zero targets. Improving energy efficiency across CHFS ferries was also proposed to minimise emissions until renewable energy becomes feasible for the whole ferry fleet.

In terms of specific ferry design considerations, there were calls for:

- All new vessels to be capable of using genuinely renewable energy sources.
- Lighter vessels with more efficient hull forms, with catamarans seen as having a role to play.
- Larger vessels to reduce the need for multiple runs at peak times.

It was also noted that the new diesel-electric vessels currently being built for the Islay service will be more fuel efficient than the current fleet and will, in due course, use electric power when berthed.

Discussion of the potential role of fuel type and use in reducing carbon emissions included calls for the Operator to prioritise use of alternative fuels from sustainable sources wherever possible. Battery electric motors were highlighted as an option for smaller vessels and for journeys of up to 90 minutes. This included reference to Norway as a potential model, where battery power is used wherever feasible, and hybrid or hydrogen power is used for longer routes. Ongoing development of renewable energy generation on many islands was noted and it was suggested that

this provides an opportunity to further reduce the carbon impact of battery powered vessels.

In terms of other energy sources, points raised included that solar panels can have a role to play in carbon reduction with reference to energy storage and battery packs that help manage electricity demand. It was noted that some offshore vessels already have these facilities.

In relation to hybrid and alternative fuel sources, it was suggested that there is a role for liquified natural gas (LNG) and hydrogen, with these described as proven energy sources for the maritime industry. There was thought to be a need to coordinate with development of green hydrogen production. However, some respondents were sceptical around whether LNG can make a meaningful contribution to net zero, and it was noted that any reduction in direct carbon emissions would be offset by the cost of importing LNG fuel.

Conversion of ferries to other liquid fuels was also discussed with reference to ammonia or green methanol. These were seen as having potential to reduce carbon emissions for larger vessels, and it was noted that there is significant ongoing investment in development of green methanol-powered ships.

## Other measures to reduce environmental impact

In addition to ferry design and fuel use, respondents highlighted a range of other considerations to reduce the carbon and environmental impact of ferry services.

Other business or representative body and Individual respondents were amongst those commenting on the potential to maximise efficiency and use of available ferry capacity, as a means of reducing carbon impacts. This included suggestions that there are a significant number of unnecessary sailings across some routes, with very few passengers during winter months. There were calls for a review of demand across the network to minimise the number of ferries running with low cargo and passenger volumes. Potential changes to make best use of ferry capacity on sailings included more efficient use of deck space, by providing advance information on ferry capacity for prospective travellers, and greater automation and onboard control systems to maximise efficiency of operations. It was also noted that lower ferry speeds could reduce carbon emissions, although there were objections to this option on the basis that it would lead to a poorer service and would not eliminate use of fossil fuels.

Reducing car use and supporting more public transport use were referenced by a number of respondents as an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions associated

with ferry services. This was most commonly in relation to improving connections with public transport. Better links and coordinated timetabling were seen as having potential to encourage more people to reduce their car use, and it was suggested that alignment of ferry and bus/rail timetables should be mandatory. Other ways in which ferry services could contribute to a wider reduction in transport-related carbon emissions included:

- Use of flexible fares to support Net Zero targets and encourage use of lower carbon travel options. This included proposals for an additional carbon offset charge for non-islander fares, higher fares for larger/less fuel-efficient cars, and free travel for foot passengers and cyclists.
- Use of freight-only ferry services to divert road-based freight was seen as having potential to make a significant contribution to decarbonisation of travel.
- More reliable ferry services encouraging more people to reduce car usage.
- Support for increased linkage between ferries and cycle infrastructure such as more dedicated cycle lanes on islands.
- Enabling crew to live closer to ports to minimise travel to and from work.
- Connecting islands with tunnels or bridges to reduce the need for ferry services.

Respondents also proposed ways in which overall energy use and other environmental impacts associated with ferry services could be reduced. These included:

- Turning off ferry engines and generators overnight.
- Use of renewable energy shore power connections to meet any overnight energy needs.
- Use of low energy options where possible (e.g. for onboard lighting).
- Minimising waste through reduced plastics and packaging in goods sold or used on board and maximising recycling.
- Use of e-ticketing.

## Resourcing

Resourcing and the cost implications of Net Zero were seen by some respondents as a potential barrier to reducing the carbon impact of ferry services. It was suggested that significant investment will be required, particularly to replace the current fleet with cleaner ferries, and to deliver the necessary shoreside infrastructure to service these vessels. This included comments identifying



investment as the key factor in whether carbon emissions associated with ferry services can be reduced.

It was also suggested that investment in infrastructure will be required to secure sufficient supply of power for ferry services. There were calls for the Operator to engage with local authorities around plans for on-island development of renewables, and reference to a potential need for local LNG storage to avoid the need for shipping of LNG across the UK. There was also reference to the resources required for upskilling and preparing ferry crews as new vessel designs and alternative energy sources are introduced.

**Question 13: Would you consider reducing your car use when travelling by ferry? If no, please explain your answer.**

Responses to Question 13 by respondent type are set out in Table 18 below.

**Table 18: Responses to Question 13 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	0	5	5
Farming or land management organisation	1	2	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	1	5	6
Haulage company or representative body	0	2	2
Local Authority or HSCP	0	1	1
Public Body	1	1	2
Tourism business	1	1	2
Trade Union	0	0	0
Transport Partnership	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisation	1	1	2
Other business or representative body	0	2	2
Total organisations	7	20	27
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	131	233	364
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	138	253	391
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 65% of those who answered the question – would not consider reducing their car use when travelling by ferry. This rose to 74% of the organisations that answered the question.

Around 315 respondents made a comment at Question 13, with some respondents referring back to their comments at previous questions and to Questions 3-5 in particular. Reflecting the analysis at those questions, amongst those who would not consider reducing their car use when travelling by ferry, the most frequently made points were that:

- It would not be possible or practical to reduce car use, for example because of transporting shopping or luggage, travelling with pets or livestock, mobility issues or having a disability, or needing a vehicle for work.
- Public transport, particularly on the islands, is not fit-for-purpose and in some cases, there is none. Reduced car use would only be an option if reliable public transport, integrated with ferry timetables, was available.

Other comments included that people would be unlikely to pay to transport a vehicle unless they needed to take it with them for some good reason and, ultimately, it is an issue of personal choice. An associated point was that any move by Transport Scotland to disincentivise cars on ferries must be subject to a rigorous Island Impact Assessment process on each island community.

Those who would consider reducing their car use when travelling by ferry raised similar issues about the need for reliable public transport and an integrated transport system, including around timetabling. Other suggestions included that:

- An efficient integrated ticketing system would be essential.
- Through tickets for ferries, buses and trains could be discounted.

Other suggestions relating to how people could be encouraged to reduce their car use when travelling by ferry included:

- Offering discounts for group travel, for example for a sports team to travel by bus rather than in a number of individual vehicles.
- Looking at the practicalities of transporting luggage and bulky items, such as household fixtures and fittings.
- Making Car Hire or Car Club options available on either side of ferry crossings; it was suggested that the cost should be road-equivalent to incentivise travellers to use the service, otherwise they will simply use their own car.

## Onward and Connecting Travel

The consultation paper noted that looking at how onward and connecting travel can be promoted will enable the provision of opportunities for better connectivity and ferry user access via active travel, public transport, and other more sustainable transport modes.

**Question 14: What do you think could be introduced to improve public transport connectivity between ferries, rail and bus operators?**

**Please give us your views.**

Around 370 respondents answered Question 14.

### Improved connectivity

The most frequently made point, again reflecting issues raised at earlier questions, was the need for a joined-up, integrated transport system. There was also a call for a coordinated and subsidised public transport strategy led by the Scottish Government.

Further points included that there is a need for better co-ordination and linking up of the timetables for different modes of transport, and that CalMac should make public transport connections a far higher priority. Other comments relating to connectivity included that:

- On many islands, the majority of bus services are operated on behalf of, and funded by, public bodies, with many designed around connectivity with ferry services to/from the islands. However, there also must be consideration for on-island communities who will potentially be using buses for reasons other than onward travel by ferry.
- There is some evidence of greater flexibility being offered as regards connectivity at ports where long-distance bus services meet ferry routes, with Ullapool, Kennacraig and Uig cited as examples, and examination of this could be a template for greater connectivity elsewhere.
- Relaxation of rules surrounding punctuality could assist; for example, a train could be reasonably delayed in order to meet a ferry without penalties for late operation being imposed.

Associated with improved connectivity were calls for multi-mode tickets, such as 'Rail and Sail', with seamless ticket purchasing available. It was also suggested that Rail and Sail ticketing should be a condition of any contract award under CHFS3.

Although most comments focused on bus and rail travel, it was noted that air connectivity is also very important for Na h-Eileanan an Iar; the point in common was that timetabling could be improved to integrate with ferry services.

## Improved communication and joint-working

Another frequently made suggestion was that there is a need for improved communication and joint working between different transport organisations and companies. It was noted that the CHFS and the ScotRail Franchise are funded from the same source so it should potentially be feasible for the timetables on connecting rail to ferry services to be co-ordinated (as called for above). However, the Transport Partnership respondent raising this issue also noted the wider network demands across both their operational environments.

The setting up of an integrated transport group to discuss timetable changes, constraints and operational requirements was also suggested, as was involving Ferry User Groups.

In terms of the travelling public, it was suggested that when changes to timetables are unavoidable, clear and effective communication by operators is important to minimise disruption to connectivity. For example, a Voluntary sector organisation respondent reported that the rerouting of the Arran ferry to Troon in early 2024 was perceived to have resulted in chaos as there was poor information provided on what the changes meant for public transport connections, resulting in many people being stranded. A specific suggestion was that it should be a condition of the contract that the Operator provides timeous notification of its timetable and fares for inclusion in the national journey planner.

## Other suggestions for improvement

In addition to general calls to improve both bus and rail services, including in terms of capacity, frequency and reliability, other suggestions included:

- Participation in the Mobility as a Service platforms supported by Scottish Government should be a condition of any CHFS3 contract award.
- Introducing bus services, along the lines of airport services, that run from ports to train stations or the local town centre.

- The availability of bike and e-bike hire at ferry terminals would allow more active journeys to and from the ferry terminal.
- Car Club vehicles located at ferry terminals would encourage more people to travel without their car.

It was also noted that the use of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles may be a feature in transport systems before the end of the CHFS3 contract period.

There were also calls to look at the range of practical changes that could make public transport more accessible and appealing, such as placing bus stops as near to the ferry terminal as possible and creating connecting walkways between the access points for different modes of transport.

## Accessibility

The consultation paper set out that previous feedback showed that some equality groups face additional challenges when accessing and using ferry services.

**Question 15: Would you support a regular accessibility audit taking place with accessibility groups such as Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS), with the aim of improving accessibility at ports and onboard vessels?**

**What else you think could be done to improve accessibility on our ferry services?**

Responses to Question 15 by respondent type are set out in Table 19 below.

**Table 19: Responses to Question 15 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	6	0	6
Farming or land management organisation	3	0	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	6	0	6
Haulage company or representative body	1	1	2
Local Authority or HSCP	3	0	3
Public Body	2	0	2
Tourism business	2	1	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisation	1	0	1
Other business or representative body	2	0	2
Total organisations	29	2	31
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	314	39	353
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	343	41	384
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 89% of those who answered the question – would support a regular accessibility audit taking place with accessibility groups such as Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS), with the aim of improving accessibility at ports and onboard vessels.

Around 220 respondents made a comment at Question 15, including a Public Body respondent noting that they are committed to working with service providers to improve accessibility and support services for disabled passengers at ports and onboard vessels. They went on to suggest Disabled Access Panels, local to ferry terminals, should be involved in accessibility audits. They also gave examples of how this has worked to date, including the Oban Access Panel auditing cross modal connections from Oban bus and train stations to the ferry terminal and the Access Panel Orkney working with NorthLink. There were also calls for:

- MACS to be involved at an early stage as regards vessel design (access, egress and on-board) and port infrastructure (especially at ferry slip locations) to ensure that regulations and expectations are met.
- The accessibility needs of each ferry dependent community to be made evident through a rigorous Island Community Impact Assessment for that community.
- The new contract to include clauses to ensure that any accessibility issues should be addressed within an appropriate timescale.

Other respondents noted the importance of accessibility to delivering a lifeline service that meets the needs of the entire community, but also the potential of being seen as an accessible tourism option for older people. Most other comments were focused on what could be done to improve accessibility, with the most frequently made suggestions related to boarding arrangements and the design of ports.

**Event feedback: Attendees at all engagement events highlighted accessibility challenges.**

**At the Islay event attendees advised that some gangways are excessively steep and difficult to negotiate with luggage it was also highlighted that piers are not accessible or disability friendly even before you get to the gangway.**

**Attendees at the Bute event highlighted frequent issues with lifts and availability of accessible toilets.**

**Additionally, attendees in Mull advised the Operator's website should be user friendly.**

Boarding-related suggestions included:

- Considering the movement of luggage; suggestions included providing separate luggage transfer facilities, equivalent to the service provided to air passengers, on the larger vessels.
- Installing better gangways, ramps and lifts.
- Making foot passenger lifts mandatory at all ports and ensuring that lifts are well maintained and always operational.

There were also references to repairs to lifts being an urgent action and appropriate accessibility as a condition of service for vessels.

In relation to ports, there were calls for a focus on removing physical barriers to people with reduced mobility to enable walking or wheeling to ferry terminals, and a Transport Partnership respondent commented that Regional Transport Partnerships and Local Authorities would be well placed to support addressing this barrier. They suggested that an early action could be to undertake focused audits of access to ferry terminals following the methodology developed for the HITRANS Active Travel Masterplans.

Other port and vessel-related suggestions included:

- Ensuring the next generation of small ferries are fully accessible for wheelchair users.
- Improving toilet and waiting room facilities.
- Dedicated spaces on vessels, including providing facilities for people with a neurodiversity, such as quiet areas.

Other suggestions included improving approaches to identifying and supporting those who need assistance. One proposal was for dedicated training for nominated staff on every shift to increase the skilled provision of ferry transport services for passengers with mobility problems, including wheelchair users. Other ideas included:

- Offices opening early enough for accessibility issues to be resolved before departure.
- Staff assisting wheelchair users up and down ramps and slipways and offering assistance with carrying luggage if needed.
- Ensuring the appropriate support for lone travellers who have mobility issues.

There was also a call for the new booking system and information on travel alerts and notices to recognise that not everyone has access to, or can manage electronically relayed messages, particularly the elderly.



Finally, it was suggested that the value of smaller passenger ferries and workboats to improve accessibility needs to be recognised, but that small boat operators will find it too expensive, or impractical, to comply fully with one-size-fits-all regulations.

## Freight Services

The consultation paper noted that previous feedback provided by the community has highlighted that freight bookings can impact available vehicle spaces on vessels.

**Question 16: Are there ways to improve the Operator's collaboration with hauliers and businesses to better plan commercial traffic volumes?**

**Please give us your views.**

Around 300 respondents answered Question 16, with the most frequent suggestion being that freight only ferries should be considered. There were also calls for:

- nighttime/off peak freight services;
- offering an incentive for non-perishable freight (whisky, malt, machinery, etc) to be transported on lower demand sailings;
- and more affordable freight tariffs, including with commercial hauliers being eligible for RET.

These issues, along with other points made, are the focus of the analysis at the next question.

In relation to improving the Operator's collaboration with hauliers and businesses:

- An Other Business Representative Body respondent commented that in terms of communication and stakeholder engagement, there is scope for improvement.
- A Haulage Industry Representative Body noted that some of their members report good relationships with the Operator, particularly where there are service level agreements in place, but that others find that getting a response from the Operator can be slow.
- A Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent explained that they have consulted with local hauliers who have reported very minimal issues with the unbookable routes but significant problems with the bookable routes.

Reflecting a theme across a number of questions, the Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent went on to suggest that the solution is not related to planning or timetabling but is about increased numbers of sailings and reduced cancellations.

There were suggestions relating to improving day-to-day collaboration, including operators having a member of staff dedicated specifically to dealing with freight issues. Other suggestions included:

- Having a dedicated email address and contact number for dealing with freight issues could allow for better knowledge of the system and speedier resolutions to the freight sector's attempts to contact the Operator.
- Developing route-based relationships, so that the Operator has a much closer relationship with its end freight customers at a community/island group level.

Other comments focused specifically on booking arrangements, and in addition to calls for a radical overhaul of how block bookings are managed, there were calls for the Operator to be transparent and fair when allocating freight capacity. There was an associated suggestion that some hauliers are given preference. A Local Authority respondent also reported concerns that some of their teams do not receive the same treatment as other hauliers when being allocated space on the ferry, and that despite being a frequent and high-volume user of the services, the Council often finds itself disadvantaged when trying to take materials on and off the islands. Other booking system related comments included that:

- There also needs to be a duty on the Operator to effectively manage freight bookings, with penalties for non-compliance.
- Hauliers should be expected to share how much space they intended to use per sailing in advance.
- As above, having dedicated teams managing commercial bookings.

In relation to collaboration around service planning, suggestions included:

- A more formal approach to engaging freight-users should be introduced under the new contract. That forum should include appropriate representation by Transport Scotland and possibly CMAL in addition to CalMac, to enable improvements to be implemented.
- The commercial transport sector, as well as the haulage trade, could work in collaboration with the Operator to develop a framework as to how to best plan capacity availability; this would be particularly relevant for seasonal goods/freight demand. A Transport Partnership respondent reported that a building group in Shetland appears to have developed a successful approach to collaborating with NorthLink Ferries and consideration could be given to replicating this model in CHFS.
- Regular, planned, liaison meetings between the Operator and key logistics companies, commercial companies and commercial company trade association representatives. It was suggested that this dialogue needs to be

informed by regular transport capacity studies linked to estimates of future demand from industry and residents.

- Haulier representatives could attend or join Ferry Committees.
- All those who have made recent freight bookings could be invited to a virtual meeting ahead of the next timetable preparation.

In terms of those timetables, there were calls to recognise the importance of freight and making sure that freight ferry times align better with haulage firms' schedules.

**Question 17: Do you have any suggestions to better manage or reduce the demand on routes which experience high freight volumes?**

**Please give us your views.**

Around 305 respondents answered Question 17, with many of the issues raised similar to those at previous questions, and at Question 3 in particular.

The importance of providing the right and sufficient services for freight was highlighted, including recognition of the vital role freight traffic plays in supporting island economies. However, it was also suggested that services are not meeting need and demand; as an example, an Other business or representative body reported that ten distilleries on Islay and Jura rely on the Islay ferry but that the service is perceived to be operating in crisis mode and is struggling to meet the current demands of the whisky industry and the wider Islay and Jura communities.

**Event feedback: Attendees at the Islay and Lewis engagement events particularly highlighted the importance of freight services on their local economies and day-to-day life.**

**Both communities felt their freight requirements should be accommodated by freight only services, it was suggested these services would alleviate capacity constraints on daytime services.**

As at Question 3, it was suggested that the emphasis must be on meeting rather than reducing demand and there was reference to increased freight volumes usually being reflective of a thriving economy, with other comments including that:

- It is important to remember that freight traffic is two way and that there is a huge volume of often perishable or indeed alive produce going off islands which needs a degree of priority.

- The definition of freight should be broader and take account of the needs of island freight requirements. For example, more allocated space to support road improvements should be available.
- There are a number of major projects underway that will be transformative to the Highlands and Islands regional economy, including ScotWind. The Public Body respondent raising this issue also noted that there are also a number of significant projects in development, including the Western Isles Interconnector, EDF onshore wind farm, and the Stornoway Deep Water Port development, as well as further growth of the whisky industry on Islay. All of these will require ferry capacity and resilience to be improved.

In terms of meeting and managing demand, the most frequently made points were that:

- Additional overall capacity, with more sailings and/or larger vessels, is needed.
- Freight only services should be introduced. These could include nighttime or off-peak sailings, with differential fares. A Farming or land management organisation respondent commented that sailings would need to be at sensible times to allow hauliers to make use of them.

A Transport Partnership respondent highlighted that the implications for cost, capacity and potential uptake, as well as how additional sailings would meet the needs of freight hauliers and business, would all need to be considered. Another Transport Partnership suggested that, where freight volumes are high on an individual route basis it might be feasible to provide dedicated freight services outside the CHFS contract. They suggested that Islay and Stornoway would appear to offer the greatest potential for this on the CHFS service.

In relation to fares, comments and suggestions included that:

- Consideration might be given to offering reduced freight rates on quieter sailings to encourage movement from busier sailings on to quieter ones. This already happens for the Stornoway freight service, and it seems inequitable to offer this attraction to hauliers on that route alone.
- Commercial fares should be reconfigured, so that they are aligned with RET principles; if commercial fares were brought in line with private vehicles pro-rata, CalMac could be given latitude to encourage commercial traffic to use spare capacity on low-demand services by offering further discounts.
- Fares policy is a key element of the Islands Connectivity Plan (the consultation on the [Islands Connectivity Plan](#) ran from 1 February 2024 to 3 May 2024), and this will include consideration of freight fares. There were calls to consider the wider operating environment for regional businesses over the past couple

of years, including increased costs amid inflationary pressures, when developing that policy.

Finally, a Haulage industry representative body respondent suggested that working closely with the logistics sector, freight companies, industry associations, and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for managing demand on ferry routes could lead to more effective solutions that address the needs of all parties involved.

## Monitoring and Review

The consultation paper reported that previous feedback has highlighted that communities would like greater clarity and accuracy on performance reporting to be embedded within the next contract. It also indicates that the true passenger experience is not reflected in the way the Operator reports performance.

**Question 18: Would you like to be able to give feedback to improve services?  
If yes, how often should this happen and how should this be conducted?**

Responses to Question 18 by respondent type are set out in Table 20 below.

**Table 20: Responses to Question 18 by respondent type**

Organisations	Yes	No	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	5	1	6
Farming or land management organisation	3	0	3
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	6	0	6
Haulage company or representative body	2	0	2
Local Authority or HSCP	4	0	4
Public Body	2	0	2
Tourism business	3	0	3
Trade Union	1	0	1
Transport Partnership	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisation	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	3	0	3
Total organisations	33	1	34
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	308	46	354
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	341	47	388
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

A majority of respondents – 88% of those who answered the question – would like to be able to give feedback to improve services. This rose to 97% of the organisations who answered.

Around 325 respondents made a comment at Question 18.

## How often should feedback be given

Among respondents who would like to be able to give feedback to improve services, the most common suggestions as to how often this should happen, were annually/at least annually or quarterly, with these choices made at approximately equal frequencies. The next most frequent preferences in terms of a fixed period of time for feedback were six monthly and then monthly, with the latter sometimes associated with a view that CalMac should publish monthly performance statistics and then provide ferry users with the opportunity to discuss these. Others suggested regular or ongoing/continuous feedback, or feedback as and when required. It was also argued that feedback must be representative of the whole year, and not focus on the summer season.

Rather than at any particular time intervals, some respondents suggested that opportunities to provide feedback should be triggered by events, most frequently each booking or each journey. New timetables or fare changes were also suggested as possible opportunities to provide feedback.

## How and where should feedback be given

With respect to how feedback from individual customers should be collected, the most frequent suggestion was that this should be online via a website or using an app, with email, telephone, and paper-based options also proposed. Opportunities to leave feedback on board vessels or at ferry terminals were also suggested – potentially by completing a questionnaire, scanning a QR code, or using a simple touch screen indicator of the overall quality of the experience. Improved use of social media, and monitoring of third-party feedback sites were also suggested. However collected, it was suggested that feedback should be sought with respect to a particular route or island and not simply across the network as a whole.

The importance of providing opportunities to leave feedback in Gaelic was highlighted.

While some respondents suggested that feedback should be provided via locally recognised groups such as Community Councils or Ferry Committees there were also calls for public meetings in communities or for face-to-face engagement events



at ports. A Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent argued that the Operator's staff should be visible within the communities served, meeting stakeholders on a regular basis and championing improvement on behalf of the community.

Some organisational respondents indicated that they already provide feedback via Ferry Stakeholder Groups which, it was suggested, provide a useful forum but could meet more frequently or could provide more in-depth analysis. It was also suggested that greater weight should be given to information gathered through consultation with groups such as the Convention of the Highlands and Islands, the Highlands and the Islands Regional Economic Partnership and local ferry user groups.

## Designing surveys

Many respondents who referenced the format that should be used for collecting feedback talked about surveys or questionnaires. Comments included that current questionnaires should be improved, should avoid leading questions, or should better reflect the key issues that are important for service users. It was also argued that questionnaires should differentiate residents who are regular service users from occasional visitors such as tourists, giving more weight to the views of those who depend on lifeline services throughout the year. A Ferry Board, Committee or Group respondent reported frustration that local concerns may be discounted, on the grounds that general passenger surveys come to a different conclusion.

As well as suggesting responses on a five-or-six-point scale there were requests for a free-text opportunity to explain a problem or complaint.

## What should be done with the feedback

While a small number of Individual respondents noted that they already provide feedback, others were sceptical about the value of feedback exercises, expressing the view that they are a waste of time if no action is taken in response. Some suggested that any feedback should be submitted via an organisation independent of CalMac, should be made public, or should be subject to external scrutiny. A Local Authority respondent argued that the new contract should set out how feedback will be analysed and what/how improvements are made as a result.

It was also suggested that the SQUIRE mechanism (Service Quality Inspection Regime) already used by Transport Scotland to monitor the rail industry could be adapted for use with respect to ferry services.

## Other issues raised

One Trade Union respondent argued that, while the views of service users are a key part of monitoring and review, other metrics including staff satisfaction, environmental performance, and business confidence should also be evaluated. Another cautioned that a customer feedback mechanism with contractual implications for the Operator should not result in 'an open season on CalMac staff'.

**Question 19: Do you have any suggestions on how the Operator could provide a more accurate reflection of the passenger experience?**

**Please give us your views.**

Around 290 respondents answered Question 19, although some simply responded to note that they had no further suggestions or to refer back to answers at earlier questions.

Reflecting the issues raised at Question 18, many respondents highlighted the importance of:

- Engaging with communities and asking for feedback.
- Listening to what passengers have to report and using the feedback to drive improvements.
- Publishing the feedback gathered, whether positive or negative.
- Differentiating the views of different groups of passengers (particularly residents and tourists) who may want or need different things. In view of the subsidy from government for running a lifeline service, it was argued the views of islanders should take precedence.

There were also calls to relocate members of CalMac senior management to island communities so they can better understand the problems created by unreliable ferry services, and for greater representation of island communities on the board of CalMac.

A small number of respondents commented on the extent to which CalMac can be held responsible for issues that are beyond its control with one suggestion that it would be helpful to separate complaints in relation to procurement problems from those, such as the e-ticketing system, that are the direct responsibility of the Operator.

While many responses focused on the problems being experienced by service users, it was also suggested that attempts to reflect more positive aspects of passenger experience may be difficult to gauge, as elements of a journey that *do* meet expected standards – for example in relation to comfort or onboard facilities – may not attract comments.

Returning to issues raised at Questions 1 and 2 with respect to the difference between CalMac's published performance statistics and the lived experience of many who depend on ferry services there were calls for:

- Transparency around performance reporting, publishing details of all cancellations rather than presenting figures after relief events.
- Collecting and reporting data on a wider range of performance measures, for example with respect to availability, and the booking system
- Reporting impacts of cancellations or reduced capacity.
- Providing performance statistics by route and making customer satisfaction on individual routes a key metric.
- Improving communication around cancellations.

## Annex 1: Organisations responding to the consultation

### Community Council or Development Trust (n=7)

- Back Community Council
- Bornish Community Council
- Colintraive & Glendaruel Community Council
- Coll Community Council
- Colonsay Community Council/ Colonsay Lifeline transport Group
- Isle of Kerrera Development Trust
- North Uist Development Company

### Farming or land management organisation (n=3)

- Argyll Estates
- D & E Robertson
- NFUS

### Ferry Board, Committee or Group (n=8)

- Arran Ferry Committee
- Bute Ferry Committee
- Cumbrae Ferry Committee
- Dunoon Gourock Ferry Action Group
- Ferries Community Board
- Harris Transport Forum
- Mull and Iona Ferry Committee
- Western Isles Ferries Group

### Haulage company or representative body (n=3)

- B Mundell Ltd
- Gleaner Ltd
- Logistics UK

### Local Authority or HSCP (n=4)

- Argyll & Bute Integration HSCP
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

- North Ayrshire Council - Regeneration

## **Public Body (n=3)**

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise's (HIE)
- MACS

## **Tourism business (n=3)**

- Glenegedale House Islay
- Raasay House
- Stills and Hills

## **Trade Union (n=2)**

- Nautilus International
- RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers)

## **Transport Partnership (n=2)**

- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
- The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)

## **Voluntary sector organisation (n=2)**

- ClubSport Lewis & Harris (formally known as Lewis & Harris Sports Council)
- National Trust for Scotland

## **Other business or representative body (n=4)**

- Beam Suntory UK Ltd
- CNI Scotland
- Scottish Whisky Association
- SSEN

## Annex 2: Full biographical information - reason and frequency of use

### Why do you mainly use CHFS network services?

Organisations	For Business	For Personal/ Leisure	For Work/ Education	All of the above	Other	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	1	1	0	1	2	5
Farming or land management organisation	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	0	0	0	5	0	5
Haulage company or representative body	2	0	0	1	0	3
Local Authority or HSCP	1	0	0	1	0	2
Public Body	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tourism business	0	0	0	3	0	3
Trade Union	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transport Partnership	1	0	0	0	0	1
Voluntary sector organisation	0	0	0	2	0	2
Other business or representative body	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total organisations	9	1	0	13	2	25
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	14	171	18	159	13	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	23	172	18	172	15	400
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

**How frequently do you use CHFS services?**

Organisations	2-4 times a week	5-7 times a week	Once a week	Once every other week	Once a month	Occasionally	Seasonal (Summer Period)	Other	Total
Community Council or Development Trust	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4
Farming or land management organisation	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Ferry Board, Committee or Group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Haulage company or representative body	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Local Authority or HSCP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Public Body	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tourism business	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Trade Union	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transport Partnership	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Voluntary sector organisation	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Other business or representative body	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
<b>Total organisations</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>% of organisations</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Individuals	35	9	40	74	103	60	12	42	375
<b>% of individuals</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
All respondents	35	15	40	75	108	61	12	52	398
<b>% of all respondents</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>



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