

Islands Transport Forum

Report to Meeting of 21 June 2017

Transport Integration

Purpose of Report

To facilitate a discussion at the Islands Transport Forum considering how well multi modal transport integration works at ferry terminals and steps that might be taken to improve this. This is set in context of an understanding that with limited resources (physically in terms of vessels / assets to be timetabled) and different needs from service users the majority of ferry passengers might at times be best served by a timetable that does not integrate with other modes and there is a resultant break in optimum integration between modes. This does not absolve operators from a duty to try hard to offer good integration where they can.

The paper picks out a small selection of services to consider the quality of the passenger interchange experience with the timetable comparison based on Summer 2016. In each case a quick review of Summer 2017 timetables have been checked to see if improvements have been made and lessons learned from one period to the next.

National Transport Strategy

The National Transport Strategy (NTS) sets the long term vision for our transport policies. It was first published in 2006 after the Scottish Government consulted the public, interested individuals and a wide range of organisations on their views for the future of transport in Scotland. The NTS was refreshed in 2015 and recommended a fuller, collaborative review of the NTS in the next Scottish Parliamentary term.

The NTS introduced three key strategic outcomes, which are:

- Improved journey times and connections between our cities and towns and our global markets to tackle congestion and lack of integration and connections in transport
- Reduced emissions to tackle climate change, air quality, health improvement
- Improved quality, accessibility and affordability of transport, to give choice of public transport, better quality services and value for money, or alternative to car

Good quality public transport systems that integrate well with one another ensuring seamless journeys with the minimum of barriers be that in relation to fares and smart ticketing; information to the traveller and the quality of infrastructure at interchanges all play a role in optimising the journey experience and it takes a bit of everything to make a journey truly integrated. However, this utopia can fall down where real world challenges are factored in not least where integration needs to balance the very different and often competing interests of different service users.

Integration of Ferries with other Modes

Ferry service operators have a particular challenge in balancing the needs of their

diverse customer base. They often have to balance the needs of sectors with very different priorities in terms of sailing time for example freight customers will prioritise access to market of the goods they carry – often favouring early departures that other sectors such as tourism would consider anti social / unattractive for that market. Local service users will want the first departure to be from the island side while tourism might favour a first departure from the mainland side.

The easiest way of serving all markets segments very well is by offering high frequency that ensures relatively seamless connections with other travel modes as this will also serve those customers with their own onward travel means. In the event that integration works well due to frequency the other tools needed to make transport truly integrated come in to play to add further value including a good interchange experience and the ability to travel on Oyster style smart ticketing. The size of the market, length of routes and in some cases sharing of vessels between more than one route means that the option of increasing frequency of sailings or onward connections is not always available.

If frequency of service can offer a way of serving all user needs and improve integration the counter is that where service frequency is limited on a route, for example a single daily service, greater emphasis must be paid to the integration needs of the non motorised user.

ROUTES

The following sections of the report are an appraisal of past timetables (based on Summer 2016 timetables) to understand how well services integrate. Integration is not limited to timetables as the key driver and in the case of connections at Aberdeen for Shetland the main focus is narrative in the case studies listed below.

Ardrossan to Brodick

A good example of providers working together to improve integration was the response of ScotRail to requests made through the Clyde Ferry User Group for more Glasgow – Ardrossan trains to extend to Ardrossan Harbour rather than the previous practice of terminating at Ardrossan Town. This obvious solution was duly delivered offering a much improved journey for foot passengers travelling to and from Arran.

The Ardrossan – Brodick Summer timetable offers as many as nine daily return connections between Arran and Glasgow Central Station. This recognises the very high volume of foot passengers on the route and the continued popularity of Arran as a day trip / short stay option from the central belt.

Lochboisdale to Mallaig

The Lochboisdale to Mallaig service was introduced as a new Summer route in 2016 after a long hiatus as a Summer service. The service operates as a single daily rotation with the base for the MV Lord of the Isles being Lochboisdale. The timetable is more focussed on the needs of the Uists than the previous service that operated 2 days per week in the evening / late night until Summer 2000.

The Summer service follows a long campaign from the South Uist community for a link

to Mallaig and the earlier introduction of a Winter pilot service in 2014/15. The Summer 2016 timetable was shared with the Ferry User Group Membership in November 2015 and one of the key points highlighted in the subsequent consultation exercise that HITRANS facilitated was that there would be no connection with the available rail connections to/from Glasgow. A timetable adjustment of an earlier departure from Lochboisdale (Mon to Sun) by 30 minutes to 0630 and from Mallaig by 25 minutes to 1755 (Mon – Sat) would have allowed a rail connection to be achieved. The only connection achieved in the current timetable is from the 1334 train arriving in Mallaig to catch the 1500 Sunday only sailing to Lochboisdale. The Ferry User Group consultation asked that the connection issue be reconsidered and this was endorsed by the local Councillors for both Mallaig and Lochboisdale at the subsequent round of ferry user group meetings. While no response was provided to the Ferry User Group consultation from the operator or Transport Scotland it is our understanding that concerns around the length of operating day available to MV Lord of the Isles prevented both train connections to be achieved although an argument could be made that connecting at either end of the day with trains either to or from Glasgow would be better than not at all and this could be achieved within the same daily overall hours of work.

The Summer 2016 timetable with the missed rail connections is recreated below:

Lochboisdale			07:00	
Mallaig			10:30	
Mallaig dep	06:03	10:10	16:05	18:15
Fort William	07:25	11:32	17:28	19:37
GLQ arr	11:40	15:40	21:40	00:14
GLQ dep		08:21	12:19	18:21
Fort William	08:30	12:08	16:09	22:06
Mallaig arr	09:53	1334	17:43	2335
		Sun	Mon-Sat	
Mallaig		1500	17:30	
Lochboisdale		1830	21:00	

Verdict for Summer 2017 – No change in timetable so poor connectivity continues.

Oban to Colonsay

Rail and coach links to Oban from Glasgow have been subject to significant enhancement in recent years. This now sees Oban served by 6 trains in both directions each day. The Colonsay timetable including where rail connections exist is reproduced below:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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GLQ	12:19	05:23	10:22	12:19	12:19	12:19	12:12
Oban	15:28	08:35	13:43	15:28	15:28	15:28	15:27
Oban	16:30	09:00	15:30	16:30	16:30	16:30	16:30
Colonsay	18:45	11:25	18:00	18:45	18:45	18:45	18:45
Colonsay	19:00	11:40		19:00	19:00	13:40	19:00
Oban	21:15	14:05		21:15	21:15	16:10	21:15
Oban		14:41				18:11	
GLQ		18:10				21:40	

While connections are not achieved with all services the main constraint is the late arrival in Oban at 2115 hrs and this is a consequence of there not being a dedicated vessel for Colonsay. The Scottish Ferries Plan does include an aspiration for Colonsay to have a dedicated vessel and should this be achieved there will be considerable scope to improve integration. With the limitations imposed on the operator it is difficult to see how this service could be more integrated with other modes than it is today.

Verdict for Summer 2017 – No significant change in timetable so no change in integration.

Dunoon to Glasgow (Integrated solutions from Western Ferries and Argyll Ferries)

McGills service 907 offers a seamless journey option from Dunoon to Glasgow with the coach travelling on Western Ferries service between Hunter's Quay and McInroy's Point. With up to 8 return journeys a day the service is strongly promoted by McGills with marketing materials and information prominent on their website. Information on the Clyde Flyer service is available at <http://www.mcgillsbuses.co.uk/mcgills-bus-timetables/907-dunoon-to-glasgow-.aspx> The service being a McGills route is not promoted strongly on the Western Ferries website but does appear within the useful links information on Western Ferries site. Through ticketing is achieved by the passenger only having to purchase their bus ticket with ferry travel taken care of separately by agreement between McGills and Western Ferries. This makes for a very straightforward transaction for the passenger.

Argyll Ferries operate the town centre to town centre passenger service between Dunoon and Gourock. Again frequency on the route is such that it would be impractical to reproduce the timetable in full. Argyll Ferries operates 60 services each day with connections to / from Glasgow (Monday to Saturday) and 30 sailings on Sunday. This affords passengers a first departure from Dunoon of 0645 and a last departure from Glasgow of 2250 (Monday to Thursday) and 2350 (Friday and Saturday). Combined rail and ferry tickets are available for this route.

Verdict for Summer 2017 – No change in timetable and excellent public transport integration continues.

Lerwick / Kirkwall to Aberdeen

At Aberdeen the ferry terminal is approximately a 10-minute walk from the bus and rail station. This affords passengers to Lerwick and Kirkwall the opportunity of frequent connections to and from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness. A walking route through Union Square shopping centre helps limit foot passengers' exposure to the elements on the walk to the ferry terminal.

The Northlink website carries information in a Travel Connections section. There could be value in including the best travel connections in the timetable section of the website too as a means of encouraging sustainable travel.

For travel onwards from Lerwick Ferry Terminal there is a bus link from the Ferry Terminal (which is located 2 miles from the town Centre, on Holmsgarth Road) that goes into the town and to the Bus Station, for onward travel around Shetland.

Verdict for Summer 2017 – No change in timetable and the excellent range of onward connections from Aberdeen means a good range of ferry – rail connections is available.

CASE STUDY – CAITHNESS

Case Study: Integration - Caithness

The public transport network in Caithness illustrates some of the barriers and opportunities to providing more integrated services.

Local Buses: A significant element of local bus network is based around contracted services provided by The Highland Council. Often their primary function is to transport school pupils which can limit opportunities to provide other peak time bus services.

Long distance bus and coach services: Services between Caithness and Inverness are operated commercially but face competing demands. On the one hand they serve passengers travelling to and from Orkney – via two ports Scrabster and Gills Bay and on the other they serve the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross markets which have different demands. It would not be possible to commercially serve all these markets.

Ferry: The service from Scrabster to Stromness is operated by Northlink under contract to Transport Scotland while the service between Gills Bay and St Margarets Hope is operated commercially by Pentland Ferries. A passenger only service also operates between John O' Groats and Burwick on Orkney in the summer.

Rail: Services are provided by Abellio under the ScotRail franchise managed by Transport Scotland. For those wishing to travel to and from Orkney by rail, the two miles between Scrabster and Thurso rail station present both a physical barrier to integration but also a timetabling challenge to provide an integrated journey. For those holding Rail and Sail through tickets, a free taxi is provided.

The above network presents several challenges to integration. HITRANS works with both Councils and all the operators to try and address some of the current barriers through a number of initiatives such as stakeholder groups that enable co-ordinating of

timetable changes and also live service information to help passengers make informed decisions. However, some of the challenges can only really be addressed through increased funding in public transport with improvements, such as increased frequencies, reducing the pressure of making the next – often only – connecting service. In the case of passengers looking to travel from the North Isles in Orkney to the central belt by ferry an overnight stay is necessitated as a result of the withdrawal of the middle of the day Northlink service from Stromness which is having a real impact on those passengers in terms of cost and accessibility of travel.

HITRANS' updated Delivery Plan also identifies a solution through including the provision of connecting coach services in future rail and ferry franchises so as to prevent the situation where supporting an integrated service falls on the neighbouring local authority.

CONCLUSIONS

To many, the relative ease by which one is able to travel around the Highlands and Islands may come as a pleasant surprise. The ferry network is relatively well-connected with other forms of public transport but there is room for improvement. Some enhancements will require funding e.g. additional buses, but others e.g. slightly rescheduling some services to create robust connections, should not.

Better provision of accurate timetable publicity is needed. Ferry terminals and the ships themselves should always have details of the connecting buses and trains and vice versa. Services must not run in isolation; it would be helpful if staff on all modes of transport were aware of connections e.g. details to be shown on bus drivers 'running boards'.

Finally, 'to wait or not to wait!' Publicising 'guaranteed connections' together with a note of arrangements should something go awry would go a long way to allaying the 'what if ...' fears of potential passengers."

There is work to do on Ferry Connections and this must be seen as an ongoing and constant process as small changes as timetables alter can see existing connections severed unless there is a focus from partners and stakeholders. In October 2014 HITRANS hosted a Transport Integration Forum in partnership with Calmac Ferries Limited, ScotRail and bus operators. This was a very successful event and identified a number of opportunities for partners to take action to improve the quality of the interchange experience for passengers. There is scope to build on this event. HITRANS would be happy to support a biennial event with a main focus on integration with ferry services.

ScotRail through the franchise are implementing Regional Transport Integration Groups in each mainland Regional Transport Partnership (RTP). The second RTIG meeting in the HITRANS area took place on 9 March 2017. Actions from the 2016 RTIG meeting included identifying a number of areas where HITRANS and ScotRail could partner on the delivery of improved signage (both electronic and wayfinding) at key interchanges in our area. There are clear opportunities for similar partnership building in the future and Calmac have identified a £6M fund for improving the customer experience at their ferry terminals.

Consideration should be given to establishing a process that ensures multimodal integration must be considered in all aspects of timetable planning. Those services operated under contract awarded by Transport Scotland and local authorities should be considered a starting point where control can be exercised to ensure positive action towards this objective. The regional transport partnerships offer a mechanism that is well placed to support this process in partnership with Councils, Transport Scotland and operators.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to note the report

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