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19 March 2026

Dear Convenor,

In my letter to the Committee of 2 May 2025 regarding publication of the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) Strategic Approach and Vessels & Ports Plan, I committed to keep the Committee updated on further progress on the ICP.

Understanding Connectivity Needs

Since my previous letter, the focus of ICP since then has been on applying the strategic policy to the more local level through a programme of Community Needs Assessments (CNA). Specifically:

- The CNA Methodology was published on the Transport Scotland ICP webpage on Thursday 24 September.
- Starting last summer, user survey and public engagement has informed assessments of the transport connectivity provided across the Sounds of Barra and Harris in order to inform the Outline Business Case for phase 2 of the Small Vessel Replacement Programme;
- Assessments covering 7 islands in the Oban area – Coll, Colonsay, Iona, Kerrera, Lismore, Mull and Tiree – are well underway with resident surveys completed and follow-up public engagement taking place between 16 and 25 March by Transport Scotland officials supported by Stantec;
- Assessments covering the Western Isles, Small Isles, Skye and Raasay are now underway with support from Turner & Townsend and Ramboll UK. The intention is to launch user surveys within the next week and undertake follow-up community and stakeholder engagement in early Summer.
- The remaining assessments will be undertaken through a combination of in-house and consultancy resource. Further updates will be available as those progress.

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Community Voice and Transparency

The non-statutory appointment of a new Chair of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferries Community Board to succeed Angus Campbell is underway, with the advert running from Friday 6 February to Friday 6 March 2026. Led by CalMac, as part of its current drafting of a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, work has also started on the design and establishment of a CHFS Senior Stakeholder Group. This is a requirement of the CHFS3 contract and primarily aimed at representatives of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, The Highland Council, Argyll & Bute Council and North Ayrshire Council whose populations are served by CalMac ferry services.

Accessibility

Development of the Ferries Accessibility Standard is underway with a range of activities completed, including engagement with disabled ferry users, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS), ferry operators and representatives of port authorities, plus also analysis of the existing legislative environment as well as emerging relevant policies across Scotland and the UK. Work is on track to achieve the commitment made in the ICP Strategic Approach to publish the Accessibility Standard in 2026.

Further updates will be available as work progresses and will also be available on [the Transport Scotland website](#).

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE

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