



Date: 21 September 2026
Convener
Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP
By email: transport.committee@parliament.scot

21 September 2027

Dear Convener,

I am writing to you following recent media coverage of a gas venting incident on MV Glen Sannox in June 2025, and subsequent discussion of this at the most recent Transport Committee on 08 September 2026.

On 03 June 2025, MV Glen Sannox reported a malfunction in a vent valve on the LNG system. A valve had failed and defaulted to the open position, meaning the LNG fuel which should have gone to the engines was vented through.

This led to methane gas being vented, most of which was vented off the vessel but some of which was drawn back into the engine room's ventilation system. This triggered gas detection alarms in the engine room.

The use of the phrase 'critical failure' in our report refers to the failure of a component, and not any wider issue with the technical systems onboard. The alarms in the engine room went off as they should have. The safety systems onboard worked as they are designed to, and that is why we deemed the overall risk of the incident to crew and passengers to be low.

We immediately stopped operating the vessel on LNG and, as you know, have not operated her on LNG since. However, I must stress the vessel has been safe to operate on LNG since her annual overhaul concluded earlier this year. We chose not to re-gas as this process takes several days, and there were urgent service requirements she could fulfil quickly by operating on MGO. As she's been positioned in the Western Isles, there has been no urgent requirement to re-gas the vessel.

Our subsequent investigation identified that the solenoid (a tight coil of wire that acts as an electromagnet) controlling the port main engine (PME) gas manifold vent valve actuator failed, causing the valve to remain open during gas operation. This is why crew had to manually close the valve.

The failed solenoid was sent to the manufacturer for inspection, and they found excessive wear on it. Following this, our crew inspected all other solenoids onboard to ensure they were in suitable condition.

Our report identified several recommendations which involved working with partners across the build and certification process, with improvements being implemented on both MV Glen Sannox and MV Glen Rosa.

This includes improvements to ensure that in the event of a failure we can shut down the system immediately to prevent any release of gas. We're also repositioning the clean-air vent at MV Glen Sannox's next annual overhaul.

More broadly, I must stress that the continuous framing of MV Glen Sannox as an unreliable vessel is unfair and inaccurate. In her first year of service with CalMac, she missed 14 sailings out of 1644 with technical issues (0.85%).

Since returning from annual overhaul in early 2026, she has proven to be an invaluable member of our major vessel fleet, providing resilience to various routes on the network. Together with MV Isle of Arran, her availability has allowed us to protect over 70,000 customer journeys this summer which may have been disrupted without the availability of resilience vessels.

When a vessel is performing like this, it undermines islander and customer confidence to have her labelled unreliable.

The work in her upcoming overhaul, including on her propeller to address the reported vibration issue, will further benefit CalMac and the communities MV Glen Sannox will serve.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Mackison'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial 'D'.

Duncan Mackison

Chief Executive Officer, Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd