

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

2nd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday, 1
September 2021

PE1853: Introduce a lifeline ferry service from
Campbeltown to Ardrossan

Note by the Clerk

Petitioners	Councillor Donald Kelly & Councillor Douglas Philand
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide an all year round freight and passenger ferry service from Campbeltown and Ardrossan.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1853

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 17 March 2021.
2. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures and comments on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 2122 signatures and 302 comments have been received.
4. The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee agreed to seek advanced views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe B** of this paper.
5. A submission has also been received from the petitioners and this is included at **Annexe C**.

Scottish Government submission

6. The Scottish Government submission highlights that as part of the Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services contract, CalMac Ferries Limited on behalf of Transport Scotland delivers a seasonal ferry service between Campbeltown and the Ayrshire coast.
7. It notes that in response to Covid challenges and to the need to deal with significantly reduced capacity to Arran, a high demand route which shares the MV Isle of Arran vessel with the Campbeltown service, the the 2020 service was suspended.
8. This was a temporary measure in unprecedented circumstances, and the submission notes the service is expected to return in summer 2021. Members may wish to note that the SPICe briefing advises the service is due to return on 28 April.
9. The submission advises the request to extend the ferry service was discussed with elected members from the Argyll & Bute Council and other stakeholders at the Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group meeting 7 December 2020 and through subsequent correspondence.
10. The Scottish Government states it is not operationally possible to extend the current operating period of the Ardrossan – Campbeltown service as there are no available vessels. The vessel used to deliver the service, MV Isle of Arran, is needed to cover annual maintenance across the network.
11. The submission highlights the Scottish Government remains committed to securing two new ferries which are currently under construction, with the delivery of MV Glen Sannox expected in April-June 2022.
12. The [Ferries Plan 2013-22](#) highlights that the new vessel may provide the opportunity to consider a year round Campbeltown service, subject to a robust business case and funding. The wider connectivity issues around the A83 resilience will be taken into consideration in that process and the Scottish Government will engage with local stakeholders.

Petitioner submission

13. In their submission, the petitioners note that despite the various mitigation measures put in place over the past ten years or so, the situation at The Rest and be Thankful has continued to deteriorate culminating in approximately 280 days of disruption during 2020 – 2021.
14. They believe the only way to provide an alternative connection to the Scottish mainland is to consider providing a full time ferry service capable of taking passengers and freight with road equivalent tariff (RET) applied to it from Campbeltown to the Scottish mainland.

15. The petitioners have discussed the possibility of potential vessels with well-known ferry consultants who have advised that vessels are currently available out with the CalMac fleet which could potentially be procured to meet the requirements of providing a lifeline service.

Action

16. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: PE1853

Main Petitioner: Councillor Donald Kelly & Councillor Douglas Philand

Subject: Introduce a lifeline ferry service from Campbeltown to Ardrossan

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide an all year-round freight and passenger ferry service from Campbeltown and Ardrossan.

Background

The A83 trunk road at the Rest and be Thankful has been subject to [a series of lengthy closures](#) during 2020 and early 2021 due to land slips and concerns about further ground movement during periods of heavy rain. The “Old Military Road”, previously upgraded by Transport Scotland to provide a diversionary route in such situations has itself been subject to closures and limited operational hours for the same reasons. The alternative diversionary route via Tarbet and Inveraray along the A82, A85 and A819 adds 58.8 miles to any trip.

Scottish Ministers have committed to delivering a permanent engineering solution to the issue of land slips on the A83 at the Rest and be Thankful through the [Access to Argyll \(A83\) project](#). Given the challenging ground conditions and scale of the project, this will take several years to deliver. Work is currently ongoing to strengthen existing land slip mitigation measures and to improve the reliability and availability of the Old Military Road.

The petitioners have called for the introduction of a year-round ferry service between Campbeltown and Ardrossan, to increase resilience in travel to and from Argyll and provide an alternative to the lengthy diversionary road route when the A83 is closed.

CalMac Ferries, operating under contract to Scottish Ministers, already provide a limited, [summer-only service on the Campbeltown-Ardrossan route](#). This service was [suspended in summer 2020](#), in part due to issues affecting the Ardrossan-Brodick (Arran) ferry service, which shares a vessel with the Campbeltown service. The service is due to resume on 29 April 2021.

Any extension of the existing service would likely require an amendment to the contract between Scottish Ministers/Transport Scotland and CalMac

Ferries and additional financial support. It would also be dependent on a suitable vessel being available during the winter months and the agreement of Argyll and Bute Council, owners of Campbeltown harbour, and Clydeport (Peel Ports) which owns Ardrossan harbour.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not taken any substantive action to establish a year-round ferry service between Ardrossan and Campbeltown.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not taken any substantive action on this issue.

Key Organisations and relevant links

- **Transport Scotland:** Lets, manages and funds the Clyde and Hebrides ferry service on behalf of Scottish Ministers.
- **CalMac Ferries:** Operates Clyde and Hebrides ferry services, ultimately owned by Scottish Ministers.
- **Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL):** Owns the vessels used by CalMac Ferries to provide Clyde and Hebrides services, ultimately owned by Scottish Ministers.
- **Clydeport:** Owner of Ardrossan harbour.
- **Argyll and Bute Council:** Owner of Campbeltown harbour.

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Senior Researcher

March 2021

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PE1853/A

Scottish Government submission of 19 March 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute views to the Public Petitions Committee's consideration of PE1853.

As part of the Clyde & Hebrides Ferry Services contract, CalMac Ferries Limited on behalf of Transport Scotland delivers a seasonal ferry service between Campbeltown and the Ayrshire coast.

In response to the Covid challenges, following engagement with local stakeholders including Argyll & Bute Council and Councillor John Armour, the difficult decision was taken to suspend the 2020 service, due to the need to deal with significantly reduced capacity to Arran, a high demand route which shares the MV Isle of Arran vessel with the Campbeltown service.

Further considerations were the relatively low passenger numbers on the Campbeltown service, combined with the alternative routes to Campbeltown, including alternative ferries across Arran or the Cowal and Dunoon peninsula and by plane. However the Scottish Government absolutely recognises the importance of the Campbeltown ferry service to supporting the tourism sector on Kintyre, and remains committed to the future of service, and would stress that this was a temporary measure in unprecedented circumstances, in order to make most effective use of the vessels available for deployment. A return of the Campbeltown service, in line with government advice at the time, is expected in summer 2021.

Regarding requests to extend the operating period for the service, this matter was discussed with elected members from the Argyll & Bute Council and other stakeholders at the Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group meeting 7 December 2020 and through subsequent correspondence.

As stated through that engagement, it is not currently operationally possible to extend the current operating period of the Ardrossan – Campbeltown service as there are no available vessels. The vessel used to deliver the service, MV Isle of Arran, is needed to cover annual maintenance across the network.

The Scottish Government does however remain committed to securing the two new ferries currently under construction, with the delivery of MV Glen Sannox expected in April-June 2022. As noted in the Ferries Plan 2013-22, the new vessel may provide the opportunity to consider a year round Campbeltown service, subject to a robust business case and funding. The wider connectivity issues around the A83 resilience will be taken into consideration in that process and we will engage with local stakeholders.

Background

The Scottish Government is also committed to improving the resilience of the A83, as demonstrated by the £82m which has been invested in the maintenance of the A83 since 2007, over £13.6m has been invested in landslide mitigation works at the

Rest and Be Thankful, to help keep Argyll open for business by reducing the impact of landslides on the A83.

Since their construction from 2013, these landslide measures have already proven successful, helping to keep the A83 open for 48 days when it would otherwise have closed.

We have now announced the preferred corridor for a long term resilient improvement at the Rest and be Thankful. Identifying the preferred route corridor is a major step forward for this vital work and we are now pushing forward to look at five alternative options within that online corridor and starting the process shortly to appoint design consultants for this work.

As with other projects to improve the trunk road network, there will be a need to complete the necessary environmental assessments and statutory process to allow the project to be constructed. We recognise that the timescales for developing an alternative to the current route and finding a long-term solution to the challenges created by the Rest and Be Thankful section of the A83 are frustrating for the local community and we will look to expedite the programme where possible. However, we must ensure that we follow the correct statutory process to ensure a fair and transparent assessment of options and impacts on local communities and road users.

The safety of the travelling public and operating company staff remains a key priority, so we are committed to looking at further short and medium term measures to improve the resilience of the A83 in tandem with the work to identify a permanent solution.

We are now progressing substantial short term investment in the existing A83 including installing a debris cage and new culvert, construction of an additional catchpit, debris fencing and flood mitigation measures at the River Croe crossing.

We have also announced that we have appointed consultants to progress work to look at a medium term resilient route through Glen Croe including consideration of the Forestry Track, the Old Military Road and other options on land already owned by Scottish Ministers. Depending on the statutory consents required, this work will seek to develop finalised proposals within 18 months.

We hope this contribution is helpful and Transport Scotland officials are happy to continue to engage with stakeholders as these issues progress.

PE1853/B

Petitioner submission of 16 April 2021

Despite the various mitigation measures which have been put in place over the past ten years or so, the situation at The Rest and be Thankful has continued to deteriorate culminating in approximately 280 days of disruption during 2020 – 2021. Transport Scotland have recently indicated that there is currently at least over 100,000 tonnes of unstable material on the hillside which in the event it is displaced, could potentially seriously impact on the current fragile situation at The Rest and be Thankful. Such impact would seriously exacerbate the already challenging and tenuous condition of the main artery to and from Argyll, resulting in further distress and disruption to the local communities and businesses therein.

With the current projected unacceptable timescale for a permanent solution to be put in place, the only way to provide an alternative connection to the Scottish mainland for the long suffering communities of Argyll & Bute is to consider providing a full time ferry service capable of taking passengers and freight with road equivalent tariff (RET) applied to it from Campbeltown to the Scottish mainland. We have discussed the possibility of potential vessels with well-known and reputable ferry consultants who have reliably informed us that vessels are currently available out with the CalMac fleet which could potentially be procured to meet the requirements of providing a lifeline service.

Having submitted two previous petitions to the Committee requesting a permanent solution to The Rest and Be Thankful, we respectfully request that you consider this petition which has the full backing of Argyll & Bute Council, our MP and a number of MSPs across the political spectrum favourably.