



# Caledonian MacBrayne

Hebridean & Clyde Ferries

WLS/JAS

15 December 2003

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Dear Mr Stewart

### Gourock-Dunoon Ferry Service - mv "Coruisk"

I am grateful to you for copying to me your letter of 10th December to Nicol Stephen MSP expressing the concern of the Chairman and Members of the Bute & Cowal Area Committee of Argyll & Bute Council about the performance of the mv "Coruisk" on the Gourock-Dunoon route.

Caledonian MacBrayne have been very disappointed by the performance of this new vessel on the route. We have, as Alan Lothian outlined in his memorandum of 28th November, taken extensive action to improve the performance. Despite this action, we regret that the performance continues to fall short of the service which the Company is committed to giving. The mv "Saturn" has now returned from overhaul and, as of 11th December, she has taken up the Gourock-Dunoon route. The Company has been looking again at the use of mv "Coruisk" on the Wemyss Bay-Rothesay route and it is our intention that with our recent trials of the vessel on this route and experience gained from the difficulties we have faced on the Gourock-Dunoon route, mv "Coruisk" can provide a satisfactory service, whilst the next staker is at overhaul in the New Year.

Finally, there is an important factor which I believe we should not lose sight of. MV "Coruisk" is the first of a new generation of vessels for use on the Upper Clyde. The vessels have been and will be designed to give at least 25 years of service in terms of standards of accommodation for passengers and access for both passengers and vehicles. To enable the new vessels to achieve their full potential there has to be parallel upgrading of the facilities for passenger and vehicle access, so that they also provide the standards now expected by all passengers by car or on foot, including the disabled. Unfortunately, we have had to introduce mv "Coruisk" before the landward part of the package was in place.

The Minister has given Argyll & Bute Council resources to build a breakwater and linkspan. Once the breakwater and linkspan have been built, Dunoon will have facilities which match those on the new vessels. It will be important to ensure that there is close cooperation between the Company and the Council on the design of the new facilities for passengers boarding the vessels.

**CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LIMITED**

Finally, the Company is pleased that the Minister has authorised investment on a new vessel for the Wemyss Bay-Rothesay route. Our plans are that this route should be operated by a fleet of new generation vessels and appropriate shore infrastructure. Until the second boat for this route has been authorised and new facilities built at Rothesay, there will be a transitional period when there will be a new vessel but the existing shore facilities and side ramp will need to be retained for the streakers. The Company will wish to work closely with the Council to ensure that, during this transitional period, everything is done to provide the best possible service for both passengers and vehicles.

Yours sincerely



W L Sinclair  
Managing Director

cc Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister  
Nicol Stephen MSP, Minister for Transport  
George Lyon MSP, Argyll & Bute