

REPORT OF THE TRANSPORT USERS CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE FOR SCOTLAND ON THE PROPOSAL BY
THE SCOTTISH TRANSPORT GROUP TO WITHDRAW
THE FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN GOUROCK AND
DUNOON

TRANSPORT ACT 1962 - SECTION 56(4)
AS AMENDED BY
TRANSPORT ACT 1968 - SECTION 55(2)

TRANSPORT USERS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR SCOTLAND

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman : Colonel W.A. Dalziel, C.B.E., T.D., D.L., J.P., F.B.I.M.

Deputy
Chairman : Mr. J.G. Watson, J.P.

Members : Mr. P. Brown

Mr. L. Dall, B.Sc.

Mrs. A. S. Douglas, J.P.

Miss V.A. Friel, M.A., M.Ed.

Mr. C.J.F. Hope, S.B.St.J., B.A., F.C.I.I., F.C.I.S., F.C.I.T.

Mr. M. Macleod, J.P.

Mr. F. McMahon, M.A., A.C.I.S.

Mr. D.A. Roser, M.Inst.M.

Mrs. E.M. Sillars, M.B.E., J.P., M.A.

Secretary : Mr. S. Mulcock

THE PROPOSAL

1. The proposal considered in this case was the discontinuance of the ferry service operated by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. - a subsidiary of the Scottish Transport Group - between Gourock and Dunoon.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ROUTE AND SERVICE

2. The route provides a link for passengers, vehicles, parcels and mails between Gourock and Dunoon. The service operates on a basic hourly pattern in each direction from 06 45 until 20 35 on weekdays and from 08 45 until 20 15 on Sundays.

NUMBER OF PASSENGERS AND VEHICLES USING THE ROUTE

3. Particulars of the number of passengers, private cars and commercial vehicles using the route during 1980 and the first 6 months of 1981 are shown on page 5 of the Principal Points of Information.

WEIGHT OF PARCELS TRAFFIC CONVEYED ON THE ROUTE

4. A record of the parcels traffic conveyed on the route between mid-June and mid-July 1981 is given in Appendix 'A' to this report.

5. In addition to this traffic, mail bags are conveyed between the two points 4 or 5 times per day and the number of mail bags can range between 5 and 20 per trip.

6. A security cage is provided for the conveyance of lockfast goods.

ALTERNATIVE SERVICES AVAILABLE

7. A ferry service will be operated by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd., between Gourock and Dunoon for passengers only. This service will run daily Mondays to Saturdays on a basic hourly pattern in each direction from 07 00 to 19 00 during the winter months and from 07 00 to 21 00 in summer. On Sundays the service will be 09 30 to 18 00 in winter and 09 00 to 21 00 in summer.

8. The vessel to be used on this service, the Highland Seabird, is a catamaran and has two waterproof lockers each capable of taking 2.5 cubic meters of luggage.

9. A ferry service will be operated by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. between McInroy's Point on the Gourock side of the river to Hunter's Quay on the Dunoon side. This service will operate on a basic half-hourly pattern daily including Sundays from 07 00 in the morning until 22 30. Slightly later services will operate on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. All services between these two points can convey both passengers and vehicular traffic.

COMPARISON OF COSTS

10. Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd.
Fares between Gourock and Dunoon:--

<u>Summer</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>½ Day Return</u>	<u>10 Journey</u>
Passenger	£1.20	£2.06	£6.95
Motor Car	£3.10	-	£20.10
<u>Winter</u>			
Passenger	£1.05	£1.80*	£6.95
Motor Car	£2.75	-	£20.10

* April and May only

11. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd.
Fares between Gourock and Dunoon
and between McInroy's Point and Hunter's Quay

<u>Summer</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>10 Journey</u>
Passenger	£1.15	£6.95
Motor Car	£3.00	£27.00*
<u>Winter</u>		
Passenger	£1.00	£6.95
Motor Car	£2.70	£27.00*

*includes both driver and car

COMPARISON OF JOURNEY TIMES

12. Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd.
service between Gourock and
Dunoon for passengers and cars - 20 minutes
13. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd.
service between Gourock and
Dunoon for passengers only - 12 minutes

14. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd.
service between McInroy's Point and
Hunter's Quay for passengers and cars - 20 minutes

OBJECTIONS

15. Three hundred and seventy six written objections and a petition signed by 3601 people were received to this proposal. In addition, 48 objections were received too late for inclusion in the official list of objectors.

PUBLIC HEARING

16. Prior to the public hearing held in McColl's Hotel, Dunoon on 2nd September 1981 when over 400 people attended, the Committee travelled by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. ferry "Juno" between Dunoon and Gourock and by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. car ferry "Sound of Shuna" between Hunter's Quay and McInroy's Point. During the trips the opportunity was taken to inspect all terminals and facilities. An examination of the approach roads to the terminals was also made.

17. These trips were followed by a cruise in the catamaran "Highland Seabird" from Dunoon to Gourock.

18. The sea journeys took place in ideal conditions, on a beautiful sunny day with no breeze and at high water during a particularly high spring tide. The Committee took note of these factors when assessing various points as the Clyde is seldom in this condition. A photograph of the Clyde taken on another day is attached as appendix 'B'.

19. At the hearing the Committee were addressed by Mr. Norman Buchan, M.P., Mrs. Winnie Ewing, Euro M.P. and various group objectors. Mr. G. Penrose, Q.C., appeared on behalf of Strathclyde Regional Council and led evidence from officials of the Regional Council. Mr. M. Campbell, Q.C. appeared for Argyll & Bute District Council and led evidence from the Chairman of that Council. A number of individual objectors also took the opportunity to address the Committee.

OBJECTORS' CASE

20. The evidence presented by the objectors, both written and oral, related to the serious hardship, inconvenience and difficulty which would be caused to the various communities if Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. ferry service between Gourock and Dunoon was withdrawn. It was contended that the alternative ferry services operated by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. were totally inadequate and would in no way compensate for the cessation of Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. ferry service.

Car Ferries

22. The present Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. ferries "Juno" and "Jupiter" were custom built in 1974 for the Gourock to Dunoon service and can each carry 40 cars and over 600 passengers. They are equipped with special propellers at both bow and stern to overcome the difficulties associated with docking at Dunoon Pier in bad weather and their proved reliability is a 99% performance. They travel direct from the railhead at Gourock to Dunoon Pier in 20 minutes and have every facility for both cars, commercial vehicles and foot passengers.

23. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. operate 3 small car ferries from McInroy's Point - $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Gourock station - to Hunter's Quay - 2 miles from Dunoon. Their vessels are second hand boats and were built in 1938, 1960 and 1962 respectively. They can carry between 16 and 25 cars and have a passenger capacity of between 161 and 200. Their passenger accommodation is very limited indeed and is usually reached by climbing or descending a narrow spiral staircase. They have no refreshment facilities and their toilets are very basic.

24. When cars are being transported on Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. craft they are packed so tightly together that it is impossible to leave your car. Many objectors considered this at best inconvenient and at worst dangerous.

25. During bad weather cars are subject to spray from the sea and on occasions the sea has entered the car deck. This is harmful to the paintwork on cars.

26. Some commercial vehicles cannot be carried on the McInroy's Point-Hunter's Quay service as there is limited height on the car ferries.

27. Disabled passengers are unable to use the passenger accommodation because of the steep spiral staircases.

Terminals

28. Both Gourock Pier and Dunoon Pier are fully equipped with waiting rooms, toilet and refreshment facilities. Sufficient car parking and marshalling areas are provided for cars.

29. Separate access/egress for passengers and cars is provided and this makes for a safe and easy embarkation/disembarkation.

30. At both McInroy's Point and Hunter's Quay there are no toilet facilities, no refreshment facilities or waiting rooms. Car parking and marshalling areas are provided at both places, but it was contended that if all car traffic used this crossing it would be insufficient and overspill car parking would find its way on to the main roads.

31. There is no segregation of passengers and cars when joining and alighting from vessels at McInroy's Point or Hunter's Quay and this was considered dangerous. Additional car traffic plus commercial vehicles on this service would only make matters worse.

32. It was contended that the link span at both Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. terminals appeared to require structural repairs.

Road System

33. Both McInroy's Point and Hunter's Quay are situated on bends in the road which makes for possible hazards. The turnout at McInroy's Point is just within the recognised visibility road standard whilst Hunter's Quay turnout is below standard and additional traffic using these turnouts could lead to accidents.

34. At both places there was a 30 m.p.h. speed restriction and a "no parking" restriction on the main roads and there was no room at either place to improve matters.

Highland Seabird Passenger Service

35. The proposed passenger only service between Gourock Pier and Dunoon Pier would be operated by a catamaran called "Highland Seabird". The vessel has a passenger capacity of 160. It was contended that this capacity was insufficient as on some runs every day more than 160 people presented themselves for the journey.

36. This vessel is built of aluminium and is very light to make her fast and this causes her to range badly if there is any swell at all. The vessel is uncomfortable on passage and has difficulty in tying up at Dunoon Pier.

37. Access to the Highland Seabird is via a narrow gangway from the pier to a loading platform on the top of the vessel. From this loading platform a narrow catwalk runs towards the rear of the ship with a number of steps to negotiate. At the end of the catwalk is another small platform and from there it is necessary to make a complete U turn and descend a flight of steep stairs to the passenger accommodation which resembles that in an aircraft. Disabled people, elderly and people with luggage or small children would be unable to use the catamaran service. During low water the gangway from the pier at Dunoon on to the loading platform would drop in the region of 4 ft.

38. The Highland Seabird was on the Clyde in 1976 when she had to be withdrawn owing to damage being caused to her propellers by flotsam in the river and the difficulties associated with boarding and alighting at Dunoon Pier. Her light nature means that she would be unable to sail in

force 5 or above winds and these occur regularly throughout the year on the Clyde. Many people commute from Dunoon daily to Glasgow and Greenock and a reliable service is essential. The proposed back-up services to the Highland Seabird which have been given by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. are totally unsuitable.

- (a) Switching the Sound of Sanda from the Hunter's Quay-McInroy's Point service. This boat is a 43 year old car ferry and could not maintain the schedule. She has very basic facilities and it would only deplete the car ferry service if she was used.
- (b) Bussing passengers via Hunter's Quay-McInroy's Point. This would lengthen the journey and buses could not be obtained quickly in cases of unforeseen breakdown.
- (c) Chartering a vessel such as the "Waverley". The Waverley is a paddle steamer and is used during the summer for cruises. She is not readily available in summer and if she was required when not normally in use it takes 48 hours to raise steam on her.

39. The subsidy to run the Highland Seabird is for one year only and it is a fairly widespread assumption that she would be withdrawn at the end of that time.

Freight, Perishables, Mails and Newspapers

40. This traffic is conveyed by the Caledonian MacBrayne services and includes amongst other important traffics, drugs for the chemists in Dunoon and the Cowal peninsula. The Highland Seabird has only two 2.5 cubic metre lockers for the conveyance of freight etc. traffic in addition to passengers' accompanied luggage. She could not possibly accommodate all this traffic.

41. There are parcel offices with lock up facilities at both Gourock and Dunoon Piers at which consignments can be handed in and after conveyance held until called for. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. have no such offices or facilities.

Tourism

42. Dunoon relies on tourism for its livelihood and it is essential that a good, easy and reliable ferry service is operated to the town. Many visitors who come to Dunoon for their holidays are senior citizens and they would have difficulty in using the Highland Seabird. Day trippers also make frequent use of the ferry service from the railhead at Gourock direct to Dunoon.

Unemployment

43. As stated above, Dunoon relies principally on tourism for its well-being and many people are employed as a result of tourism. Any falling

44. Many people in Dunoon commute daily to their work on the other side of the river and an unreliable ferry service would affect their employment.

45. If Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. withdraw from the route 60 people employed by the firm would be made redundant.

Environmental Effects

46. Dunoon Pier is the focal point of the town and if car ferries no longer call there many car users would not travel through Dunoon and it would become a ghost town. People coming over on the McInroy's Point-Hunter's Quay service with their cars usually turn right after leaving the ferry and do not come into Dunoon. Many businesses in the town who rely on passing trade would suffer serious hardship.

47. Dunoon Pier would lose about 60% of its revenue if no car ferries called and the pier would deteriorate.

48. On the Gourock side cars going to Gourock Pier miss the town, but cars going to McInroy's Point have to pass through the town and along Kempock Street - a narrow residential and shopping street. The shops have to be serviced from the street. If all cars and commercial vehicles go this way it would create serious congestion and a possible traffic hazard.

Others

49. The following other relevant factors were mentioned by objectors:-

50. The link-span facilities at Dunoon and Gourock Piers had been built with public money to accommodate the "Juno" and "Jupiter" and it did not make sense to throw away these facilities.

51. The Highland Seabird would require additional public money to be spent on Dunoon Pier to allow her to tie up properly.

52. The "Jupiter" is the back-up vessel for the Arran and Rothesay services and these services would suffer if she was sold. Gourock Pier is the only all weather pier on the Clyde and her link-span facilities were required for the Arran and Rothesay services in bad weather.

53. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. accounts for 1979 which were published mid-1980 showed a substantial loss. Their 1980 accounts have not yet been published although it is now September 1981 and objectors were of the opinion that the delay was ominous.

SUMMARY OF OBJECTORS' EVIDENCE

54. Mr. Penrose, Q.C., in summing up for Strathclyde Regional Council argued that Western Ferries in their evidence had not made an effective attack on the Regional Council's case.

55. He was under no doubt that the withdrawal of the ferry service operated by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. between Gourock and Dunoon would lead to real hardship and urged the Committee to recommend to the Secretary of State that the proposals be not implemented.

56. Mr. Campbell, Q.C., summing up for the Argyll and Bute District Council referred to the wide range of matters which could be considered by the Committee in shipping closure proposals compared to the narrow remit of hardship in rail closure cases. Nevertheless he argued that hardship should be regarded as an important element in the Committee's considerations and he was in no doubt that hardship would follow if the closure proposals were implemented.

57. He referred to the analytical evidence led by Mr. Penrose and to the evidence given by the Chairman of the Argyll and Bute District Council together with the wealth of evidence given by other objectors.

58. He considered that the long term future of this ferry service probably required an inquiry of a different form conducted in an atmosphere rather less than of an adversary nature. Certain of the remarks made at the hearing had been less than constructive. Long term solutions would require an even wider range of information than that heard at the public hearing, but the whole burden of the evidence both as to its quality and as to its nature had been compellingly against the proposed withdrawal.

59. Mr. Campbell suggested that the Committee should recommend to the Secretary of State in the strongest possible terms and language that the proposal be not put into effect.

CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE LTD. OBSERVATIONS

60. Mr. Loudon, Solicitor to the Scottish Transport Group appeared on behalf of Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. and led evidence from Mr. N.J.D. Whittle, Deputy Chairman of the Company. He stated that the reason for the closure proposal was the withdrawal of the subsidy paid to the company for the running of the service. Without a subsidy they could not possibly continue.

61. In answer to questions put to him by the Committee, Mr. Whittle agreed that the total cost of this service could not be saved by withdrawing from the route. Certain administration costs were shared by other routes and would continue to be paid. In addition, the "Jupiter"

62. On the question of subsidy the Committee learned that £500,000 was the present figure, but this included money for urgent repairs to Gourock Pier which would last more than one year. Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. had managed to keep the amount of subsidy the same for five years and this had been done not by constantly increasing fares but by increased productivity. Their unit costs had been reduced by 10% since 1975. Looking to the future they anticipated they would require less of a subsidy in real terms if they continued to operate the route. However, the Government was on record as saying that they proposed to work towards a system of road equivalent tariff and if this happened they would require to put additional funds into Scottish ferry services in order to fulfil this political decision.

63. When asked to comment on the suggestion that car ferry and foot passenger traffic should be operated by different vessels, as proposed by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd., Mr. Whittle stated that it made more economic, commercial and social sense to have a comprehensive service than to put your resources into two services. In this way you only had one captain, mate, etc., to pay and only one set of running costs.

64. He indicated that the number of crew members on their vessels was laid down by the Board of Trade, but in conjunction with the Unions they were examining their crew numbers in the light of the new safe manning certificate arrangements and hoped to effect a slight reduction on this and their other ferry routes.

WESTERN FERRIES (ARGYLL) LTD. OBSERVATIONS

65. Mr. A.G. Wilson, Director of Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. assisted by Captain McLundie and Mr. Bradley appeared for Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. They stated that their car ferry vessels were second hand, but unlike human beings the age of a ship did not matter as parts could be renewed. In this way it was possible to keep a vessel working for a long time provided it was well maintained. Their car ferries obtained a high degree of reliability.

66. It was contended that the existing car ferries were more than adequate to accommodate all the car and commercial vehicular traffic, but it was intended to purchase a 36 car second hand ferry which would be remodelled to fit into Western Ferries service. An option on a suitable vessel is held by the company.

67. On the question of the conveyance of commercial vehicles, Mr Wilson informed the Committee that the headroom on the Sound of Shuna was to be raised in order to accommodate high vehicles. He stated that only about 2 commercial vehicles per hour were at present carried by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. and Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. would have no difficulty in accommodating these.

68. Vehicles are stowed on the car decks in accordance with Department of Trade instructions and access to the deck can be obtained by car drivers in an emergency.

69. When large numbers of foot passengers are carried on their car ferries it is normal practice to allow them to embark/disembark before vehicles. Small numbers move off more quickly than cars and clear the link span before the cars leave the ferry. In this way no danger to passengers exists.

70. Toilets on their car ferries are kept clean and they hoped to improve them in the future. Toilets are provided at Hunter's Quay. Waiting rooms and refreshment rooms are not necessary at their terminals as most people prefer to wait in their cars.

71. They did not consider the question of salt water spraying on to cars to be a critical factor when selecting a ferry crossing and the problem is to some degree self-correcting since bad weather means less traffic and hence the ability to park cars where they get less spray.

72. The link span structure at both McInroy's Point and Hunter's Quay was examined regularly and the reports from their engineers were up to date.

73. They did not agree that extra car parking spaces were necessary at McInroy's Point or Hunter's Quay as they estimate they had about 80 spaces at each point. However, Western Ferries were not in the car parking business and their aim was to get cars on to the ferry and away as soon as possible. In bad weather when delays could occur traffic was usually at its lightest.

74. No accidents have occurred at the turnouts from their terminals and the turnouts were of course considered when planning permission was given for the terminals. The terminals handled safely about 73% of all private car traffic during 1981.

75. Turning to the proposed passenger only service to be operated by Highland Seabird it was stated that they had every confidence in the vessel's reliability. Similar vessels were used in Norway as water buses. The 1976 experience of this vessel was not really relative as in those days she had no upper access platform. It was true that in 1976 the Highland Seabird suffered propeller damage due to flotsam in the river, but this was on the Upper Clyde. She did not carry large numbers in 1976 as she had no real rail connections at Gourock and was really being used as a cruise service. Mr. Wilson indicated that Dunoon Pier would require some alterations to tie up the Highland Seabird and the cost was estimated at £10,000.

76. They admitted that the passenger capacity of 160 would mean that on occasions they would not be able to accommodate all intending passengers, but with the high speed of the vessel she could return and do extra trips to clear the backlog. They were of the opinion that disabled, elderly and passengers with luggage could use the Highland Seabird and the crew were there to assist. It was estimated that only about one passenger

77. Sea sickness is more likely at high speed, but this is offset by the shorter crossing time.

78. When questioned on the back-up facilities available if the Highland Seabird was out of action it was stated that the "Sound of Sanda" had adequate speed to maintain the schedule. On only 30 out of the 380 scheduled trips per week would more than one bus be required if this alternative was used and the bus operators would co-operate in providing buses. The "Glen Sannox" is often taken off her cruise programme to cover emergencies and the operators of the "Waverley" would be happy to co-operate in emergencies.

79. Two lockers were provided on the Highland Seabird and parcels and passengers' luggage could be accommodated in these. It was hoped that a carrier would arrange a parcels service from Gourock to Dunoon via their car ferry service. The question of conveyance of drugs for chemists in Cowal was known and would be looked into.

80. It was considered that the lack of refreshments on board the ship would make the shore facilities busier and therefore more economic.

81. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. would be happy to report to the S.T.U.C.C. in the same way as Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. does and they could not see it conceivable that the Highland Seabird could be withdrawn without consulting the S.T.U.C.C. In these circumstances there was no point in speculating on long term alternatives to the Highland Seabird.

82. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. appreciate that Dunoon Pier is the centre of attraction in Dunoon and that a lot of money has been spent on it. The distance from McInroy's Point to Dunoon is almost the same as McInroy's Point to Hunter's Quay and if suitable arrangements could be worked out, both technical and financial, the roll on/off service could be operated between McInroy's Point and Dunoon Pier. The success of such a venture would depend very much on Strathclyde Regional Council who own Dunoon Pier.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS

83. The Committee carefully considered and evaluated all the written and oral objections and the statements made by the operators.

84. The Committee considered that Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. car ferries although basic, were suitable for car traffic, but did not encourage foot passengers to use the service. The addition of their larger boat on which they have taken an option would not alter this as the boat in question is the 34 year old retired Humber Ferry "Farringford". This vessel requires extensive repairs and alterations and will be similar to the 43 year old "Sound of Sanda".

85. Western Ferries terminals have few facilities and can in no way compare with the facilities available at Dunoon and Gourock Piers. Mention was made by objectors about the structural condition of the link-span facilities at Hunter's Quay and McInroy's Point. Two days after the public hearing Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. were handing out leaflets to users stating that their service was being withdrawn for two days to allow maintenance to be carried out. The Committee considers that Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. were less than frank in not revealing this at the public hearing when being questioned on their terminals. The Committee also noticed on studying the Clyde River Steamer Club Review for 1980 that the link-span was damaged and out of action in June and again in December.

86. The turnouts at both Hunter's Quay and McInroy's Point are situated on bends of main roads and it is considered that additional road traffic particularly commercial vehicles and coaches could only lead to traffic hazards.

87. The proposed passenger service between Dunoon and Gourock by the Highland Seabird is considered to be totally unacceptable. Its passenger capacity of only 160 is too small and an analysis of the passengers carried by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. between April 1981 and July 1981 shows that on 136 occasions more than 160 passengers presented themselves for the ferry. The number of passengers who would have been left behind on these occasions was 13,412. A similar analysis was done for the month of August 1981 and this shows that on 74 occasions more than 160 passengers presented themselves. The number of passengers in this case who would have been left behind was 8,014. On both of these analyses some passengers would have had to wait not for the next ferry but for the one after that. Whilst it is appreciated that the speed of the Highland Seabird would enable her to do extra runs to assist, many passengers would miss connections, appointments and arrive late for employment or at educational establishments. We consider this to be a serious hardship to the people concerned.

88. The Committee were not satisfied that the Highland Seabird could maintain a regular and reliable service in all weathers. Records show that on approximately five days in each month winds of force 5 or over are experienced on the Clyde and we consider on these days the vessel would have difficulties at Dunoon Pier.

89. The timber and other flotsam which is discharged into the Upper Clyde finds its way down the estuary to the sea and this fact was acknowledged in 1976 by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. when they withdrew the Highland Seabird because of propeller damage. Conditions on the Clyde have not improved since 1976.

90. We consider that disabled people, the elderly and people with children or luggage would have extreme difficulty in boarding and alighting from the vessel in any sort of slight swell and these people would undoubtedly suffer hardship. Many tourists to Dunoon are elderly and do carry luggage and the figure of only one in ten passengers carrying luggage given by Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. is not accepted by the

91. No proper provisions have been made to handle parcels, perishables, mails and newspapers and the two small lockers on the Highland Seabird which measure 2.5 cubic meters each are totally inadequate to convey all this traffic. The Committee found that approximately five times per day mails were conveyed on the present Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. services and these consignments numbered between 5 and 20 mail bags per trip.

92. Many businesses in Dunoon would suffer hardship if the car ferry services did not call at Dunoon Pier as many tourists use Dunoon Pier as a gateway to the Cowal Peninsula and businesses in Dunoon rely on passing trade for their livelihood.

93. Traffic from the Glasgow area going to McInroy's Point would have to pass along Kempock Street in Gourock and this would cause congestion in the town. At present they do not pass through the town on their way to Gourock Pier.

94. The Committee found that the various figures quoted for the percentage of traffic at present using Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. services were often exaggerated. The Committee's own observations put the present carryings close to the following:-

Private Cars	:	65%
Commercial Vehicles	:	30%
Foot Passengers	:	Very few
Parcels, mails and newspapers	:	Nil

95. The public support for Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. service was very evident and users obviously wanted to retain the long term ability and efficiency of this operator's service.

96. Since attending the public hearing the Committee have received a letter from the Civilian Management Services Department at Faslane informing them that the contract for the conveyance of their workers has again been awarded to Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. None of the other operators who had tendered for the contract which included Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. and the Highland Seabird operation could provide services to the standards of quality and reliability that they needed and have enjoyed in the past from Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. - Letter Appendix 'C'.

97. Not without good cause was concern expressed about present and future transport patterns in the ferry services, especially in areas where transport is a necessary social service. The Committee welcomed the suggestion by Mr. Campbell, Q.C., of an in-depth study into this ferry (and indeed all Scottish ferry services) in a less highly charged atmosphere.

COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS

98. The Committee concluded that the number of objections received to this proposal was significant and particularly the high number of objections received from organisations and businesses. The number of people - over 400 - who took the trouble to attend the public hearing also indicated the concern felt about the proposals. It must be stressed, however, it was not the significant number who attended but the quality of the evidence led by some that influenced the Committee.

99. The Committee were of the opinion that Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. failed to make a case to be the sole operator on the route. It is doubted whether there were the necessary back-up facilities to have an on-going operation.

100. Their service was considered to be a weather stretched one and bore no comparison in quality to the present Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. service.

101. The Highland Seabird is not the correct vessel for the proposed passenger service which is further endorsed by the views of such a competent body as the Civilian Management Services Department, Faslane.

102. A roll on/off service is required for Dunoon and Cowal and it is illogical to separate the passenger service from the cars and commercial vehicles.

103. Serious hardship, inconvenience and difficulty would be experienced by foot passengers if the service was withdrawn. The disabled, elderly, tourists and people commuting to work or for educational purposes would all suffer this hardship and inconvenience. Businesses in Dunoon and Cowal would be deprived of some of their livelihood and this must also be considered a severe hardship.

104. Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. should not be classed as the villains in this case, any more than Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. should be classed as angels. During the Committee's investigations they had noticed that many people considered Western Ferries (Argyll) Ltd. to be a helpful and caring operator and useful lessons can be learned in this respect by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. who should seek ways to better marketing, adopt a more friendly and caring approach to their customers, and provide greater accountability.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

105. Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. should in no circumstances be permitted to withdraw from this route in view of the serious hardship, inconvenience, difficulty and the knock-on effect that would be caused to the users of the service. This view is the unanimous view of the Committee.

W.A. Dalziel
Chairman

S. Mulcock
Secretary