

**Submission from Jim Lees, Chairman Arran Council for Voluntary Service (ACVS) – 17
March 2008**

- **The two main criteria that any lifeline ferry service should have are affordability and reliability**

As far as the Arran ferry service is concerned the present service to the Island of Arran fails on both these points.

I understand that the Scottish Government are about to trial Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) on the Western Isles routes with the intention of rolling out RET throughout the network. If RET were to be introduced on the Arran services it would certainly improve the affordability of the services and greatly enhance the island's economy.

Present single fare Brodick -Ardrossan is £5.25 passenger and 31.00 (single saver) or £38.50 (full fare sailings) per car up to 5m

Single RET fare Brodick – Ardrossan would be £3.40 passenger and £13.40 per car up to 5m

These figures are taken from the core rate £2 per passenger and £5 per car + RET rate of 10p per Passenger mile and 60p per car mile. A distance of 14 miles between Brodick and Ardrossan was the figure I obtained from Cal Mac.

As the above figures show RET would lead to a considerable saving for both residents and visitors to the island. However I should point out that car pier dues which are included in the present fare are not included in RET fare. In any other Cal Mac Clyde route car pier dues either do not exist or are 79p. The Brodick –Arran route however incurs a car pier due of £3.92. This figure does seem disproportionate and perhaps your Committee can ascertain why.

Reliability of the Brodick –Ardrossan service in winter has been deteriorating over the last few years with a considerable number of days having no sailings whatsoever. As a long term resident of Arran, (36 years) I cannot remember a period with so many outright cancellations of sailings. I believe there are two reasons for this state of affairs.

The first is the apparent loss of an alternative storm port for the service. Up until 2005/2006 if Ardrossan harbour was inaccessible through inclement weather, the Ardrossan bound ferry was diverted to Gourock. While such disruptions did pose considerable problems for the service, it did ensure that at least one return journey to the mainland did take place. Over the last two winters outright cancellations rather than diversions have been the norm in inclement weather. Around 2005/2006 Cal Mac undertook alterations to Gourock pier which appears to have rendered it inaccessible for the Caledonian Isles during westerly gales.

Secondly a feature of the last two winters has been an increase in westerly gales over the norm. As most experts on climate change are predicting an increase in exceptional weather events in future, a rethink into how to supply a reliable Arran lifeline service is now critical for the island's future economy.

I believe that the answers to the above problems may lie in the answers to bullet points contained the Committee's information sheet "Inquiry into Ferry Services in Scotland"

- **Ferry routes – how useful are current ferry routes and what potential is there for new routes.**

The present routes to Arran are probably the ideal, provided the following points are addressed. **Brodick- Ardrossan** . Brodick has proved to be a safe port for our major service and has a fairly central island location. However the linkspan is coming to the end of its useful

life and will require major upgrading in the near future. Ardrossan harbour is ideally placed as the mainland gateway to Arran, with its road and rail links to the west of Scotland. However Ardrossan will need to overcome its accessibility problems if it is to be regarded as the long term port for the Arran service. How that can be achieved, I leave to the experts in that field. Perhaps the answer may lie in smaller ferries with more powerful bow and stern thrusters to aid docking.

The **Lochranza –Claonaig** service could be improved by promoting it to an all year service. The last few winters a greatly curtailed service to Argyll (Lochranza –Tarbert) has proved, not least through its excellent reliability record, that an all year full service would greatly benefit the island.

- **Frequency and timetabling of service.**

I believe there is a consensus on the island that the Brodick – Ardrossan route would be best serviced with two ferries. A glance at the Wemyss Bay – Rothesay timetable, where such a service exists, will show how much an improvement this development would make to the timetable. As already intimated two smaller ferries with less exposure to side winds may also be the answer to the accessibility problems of Ardrossan harbour.

- **Capacity**

Capacity problems again could be better met through a two ferry service. I should imagine that the introduction of RET would increase the passenger numbers and therefore the island's economy. RET is another good reason for two ferries rather than the one at present.

- **Integration with other transport modes**

This bullet point is one of the main reasons why Ardrossan should overcome its accessibility problems and be Arran's main gateway. It has direct rail links to Glasgow via Paisley (Glasgow Airport). The road links with the new three towns bypass also make Ardrossan the ideal place. There have been some problems this winter when the ferry has been late arriving in port or the ferry has had gangway problems leading to passengers arriving at Ardrossan Harbour rail station in time to see the train leaving the platform. There are quite a few bus services that come down to the bottom of Glasgow Street and go on to service much of Ayrshire (Irvine, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Crosshouse Hospital) . There is surely some way of adjusting some of these services to divert past the ferry terminal at ferry arrival times. This would save passengers a half mile walk to Glasgow Street and contribute to an integrated transport system.

- **Competition**

Despite rumours of hovercraft and hydrofoil services there has been no competition on the Arran routes. Therefore competition has had no effect on our services.