



Update on Gourock – Kilcreggan Ferry service

Committee Operations

Date of meeting 23 August 2019

Date of report 15 August 2019

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To provide the Committee with an update on the possible transfer of responsibility for the Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry service to Transport Scotland.

2. Background

This report affects the Argyll & Bute and Inverclyde council areas.

SPT subsidises the ferry service between Gourock and Kilcreggan in order to maintain socially necessary transport links in the area. Aside from local residents, the principal users of the service are those travelling to and from HMNB Faslane and RNAD Coulport, along with commuters who travel to Gourock to connect with the train service to Glasgow.

In 2016 following a campaign by local communities, the then Minister for Transport and the Islands agreed in principle that Transport Scotland should assume responsibility for the service, although no firm date for the transfer was given at that stage. Since that time, there has been regular engagement between SPT and Transport Scotland as part of a process of information sharing on matters such as operating costs, fares revenue and passenger travel patterns.

Given the Scottish Government's agreement in principle to a transfer, the existing contractual arrangements have been tailored to take account of that. The current contract commenced in May 2018 for an initial period until 13 July 2019, beyond which date it could be extended further as necessary. This arrangement retained the existing service but also allowed the flexibility to enable a transfer of the service to Transport Scotland.

Discussions between SPT and Transport Scotland have continued in the background and have been productive, with both sides keen to reach an agreement on the long-term future of the service. Following recent talks, the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands directed that Transport Scotland should begin work with SPT to agree arrangements for a transfer of the service at an early date.

3. Current position

To allow time for the discussions between SPT, Transport Scotland and other parties to be concluded, SPT secured the agreement of Clyde Marine for an extension of the current contract until 30 September 2019, with provision for a further extension should it prove necessary. The aim of both parties remains to agree terms for an early and seamless transfer of responsibility for the service.

4. Committee action

The Committee is requested to note recent developments in the Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry service and the possibility of its transfer to Transport Scotland. A further report will be submitted upon the conclusion of negotiations between SPT and Transport Scotland.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with Regional Transport Strategy.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None within this report.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None within this report.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None within this report.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None within this report.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None within this report.</i>

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