

## Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee



### **Request for 5-Journey Tickets to be sold on Largs – Cumbrae Ferry Route**

**Date of meeting** 18 March 2016

**Date of report** 23 February 2016

#### **Report by Treasurer/Secretary**

#### **1. Object of report**

1.1 The object of this report is to:

- 1.1.1 Provide an update to the Committee on purchasing concession tickets on Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme (SCTS) ferry routes, in response to a request by the Cumbrae Ferry Users Group requesting the introduction of 5-journey tickets on the Largs - Cumbrae ferry route; and,
- 1.1.2 Inform the Committee of issues concerning potential for National Entitlement Card (NEC) misuse and the revenue protection procedures put in place to prevent this.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Largs - Cumbrae ferry route, which operates within the North Ayrshire Council area, is a busy route with upwards of 700,000 passengers per year (2014) being carried, with this figure expected to grow following the introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) in October 2015. It is a route which sees seasonal variations in passenger numbers, with a significant increase in number in journeys being made during summer months.
- 2.2 This ferry route is relatively unique insofar as only return tickets can be bought, and that tickets can only be purchased at the Largs end of the journey; no ferry tickets are sold on the island of Cumbrae itself.
- 2.3 Island residents who are eligible for SCTS fares have expressed concerns, via the Cumbrae Ferry Users Committee, that any increased use of the ferry will necessitate even greater queuing delays on top of those which already exist at Largs, and have sought the introduction of a 5-journey (returns) concession ticket, which they believe will go some way in alleviating this issue.

#### **3. Misuse of Tickets**

- 3.1 Members are reminded that purchasing SCTS tickets is only permitted on the day of travel. Under ticketing rules, advanced multi-journey tickets are not sold. This rule applies to all ferry routes operating within the SCTS area.

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- 3.2 Furthermore, SCTS tickets can only be purchased on production of a valid National Entitlement Card accompanied with valid Ferry Travel Card; both cards must be presented to ferry staff at time of purchase. Concession passengers are further required to present tickets alongside ferry travel cards to staff when boarding vessels. Members are reminded that these rules exist in order to ensure robust revenue protection procedures are in place.
- 3.3 SPT's past experience of the issuing of multi-journey tickets has found evidence of ticket misuse through tickets being passed to non-eligible users. To check this issue, a small survey was undertaken in summer 2015 which did reveal card misuse of this nature. Further recent surveys observed that on a number of other ferry routes, proper card inspections were not being carried out at point of boarding vessels.
- 3.4 SPT officers understand that on a number of busier ferry routes (like Largs-Cumbrae), where there are short turnaround times for vessels, combined with high passenger demand, robust ticket inspections by ferry staff are not always possible.
- 3.5 The situation at Largs often means that upward of 400 passengers are required to embark/disembark the ferry within the space of approximately 6 minutes. This is further exacerbated by the fact that passengers and cars cannot embark/disembark simultaneously meaning that the actual time for passengers boarding the ferry is actually much less than the 6 minute turnaround time. This effectively precludes any meaningful checking of concession cards and eligible tickets at the point of boarding.
- 3.6 SPT have checked with the operator, CalMac, who have indicated that they are aware that there is an issue on the Largs - Cumbrae route as regards robust ticket inspection measures, but say they are constrained in many ways by the number of users, time pressures and staff availability.
- 3.7 Rules detailed in sections 3.1 and 3.2 above exist in order to help reduce such opportunities for card misuse.

## 4. Options

- 4.1 As regards a potential solution, other than the undertaking of longer ticket checking on the slipway at Largs, which is operationally unattractive for CalMac, options are currently limited.
- 4.2 SPT officers have given consideration to the request for the introduction of 5-journey (return) tickets on this route. However, we do not believe that the current ticket inspection procedures on the Largs - Cumbrae ferry route are sufficient to ensure the required revenue protection standards.
- 4.3 SPT officers have also given consideration to the introduction of a more clearly distinguishable, coloured concession ticket. Whilst we believe that this option would at least make ferry staff more aware, we are still not satisfied that ferry staff on this route can carry out robust ticket inspections, purely as a result of high passenger volumes and time pressures.

## 5. Development of Smartcard

- 5.1 A potential solution could be the introduction of a smartcard ticket. This type of ticket would allow for an "electronic purse" arrangement where the card effectively becomes the ticket and could be checked and validated using hand-held portable devices as passengers board.

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- 5.2 Under a smartcard solution, the potential for card misuse is significantly reduced as people are less likely to pass on cards and increase the risk of getting caught. Were it to prove successful, it could be rolled out more widely across the SCTS area.
- 5.3 A smartcard solution, such as the Bramble smartcard by Nevis Technologies currently used on the SPT Subway, would allow for journeys to be purchased on a journey-by-journey basis, the purchase of multiple journeys over a designated timeframe, faster boarding, allow value to be added onto cards, introduce a greater level of revenue protection and auditing capabilities, and make the overall journey experience more seamless and attractive for passengers.
- 5.4 The new Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services (CHFS) franchise, which is due to be awarded in May 2016 for the provision of services from October 2016, has smartcard as a key priority, and Nevis Technologies (the Joint Venture company between SPT and ECEBS) has not only delivered the Bramble smartcard system on the Subway, but has also entered into an agreement with ScotRail for rail smartcard, is in discussions with the bus industry, and has had dialogue with CHFS contract bidders. SPT officers will continue to engage with all relevant partners to promote the adoption of smartcard technology for the SCTS as soon as is practically and operationally possible.

## 6. Committee action

The Committee are recommended to:

- (i) Note the contents of this report;
- (ii) Note the current identified issues around ticket inspections and opportunities for card misuse on ferry services; and,
- (iii) Note that SPT officers will continue to seek, promote and secure smartcard ticketing solutions for the SCTS and improvements to ticket inspection procedures that ensure robust revenue protection, but that until these are delivered, the existing ticketing arrangements as specified in the SCTS guidance will remain in place.

## 7. Consequences

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Policy consequences     | <i>The Scheme continues to meet the RTS Objective "Access for All".</i> |
| Legal consequences      | <i>None</i>   |
| Financial consequences  | <i>None</i>   |
| Personnel consequences  | <i>None</i>   |
| Equalities consequences | <i>None</i>   |
| Risk consequences       | <i>None</i>   |

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**Name** Valerie Davidson  
**Title** Treasurer / Secretary

For further information, please contact Martin Breen, Planning & Projects Officer on 0141 333 3741