



Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry service: update

Committee Operations

Date of meeting 04 November 2016

Date of report 27 October 2016

Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Operations)

1. Object of report

To provide the Committee with an update on recent developments in relation to the future of the Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry service.

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

2. Background

SPT has for many years provided subsidy to the Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry route on a socially necessary service basis. The principal users of the service are workers travelling to and from HMNB Faslane and RNAD Coulport, along with commuters who elect to travel to Gourock to connect with the train service to Glasgow. There is lighter passenger traffic outwith these peak-time demands.

There are aspirations within communities on both sides of the river for management of the service to be transferred to the Scottish Government via its agency, Transport Scotland, and various local campaigns have sought to take this forward.

SPT has always been clear that subject to availability of funding, it is happy to continue to arrange this socially necessary service, but is equally willing to agree transfer of responsibility to Transport Scotland.

Transport Scotland had previously indicated that any transfer would largely depend upon whether a case could be put forward by interested parties to establish that the service should be regarded as being 'lifeline', a status normally only accorded island services in this context. SPT's position has always been that any such case must be made by the local communities and / or councils.

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3. Current position

More recently, and after consultation with the Transport Minister, Transport Scotland has confirmed to SPT and other parties that it is now willing to assume responsibility for the service and has indicated that, the most appropriate way forward is to incorporate the Kilcreggan service into the new Gourock – Dunoon ferry contract, which is due to commence in July 2017 and has published a formal procurement notice to that effect.

As part of an initial process, Transport Scotland has commenced an information-gathering exercise designed to provide it with more detailed data on the Kilcreggan service, including passenger numbers, travel patterns, costs and community requirements. This work is being carried out in conjunction with Argyll & Bute Council, Inverclyde Council and SPT. SPT has supplied all requested information and analysis to Transport Scotland.

Since the current contract for the Gourock – Kilcreggan service expires at the end of March 2017 and the Gourock – Dunoon contract does not commence until July 2017, a procurement exercise is required in order to ensure continuation of the Gourock – Kilcreggan service until such time as transfer is arranged and a timescale finalised for its incorporation into the Dunoon contract.

Recognising that Transport Scotland may have a number of matters to conclude with the successful tenderer of the Dunoon service in this regard, it is proposed that tenders be invited for a short-term contract for Gourock – Kilcreggan which would permit time for this to happen, with provision for its extension should it prove necessary to secure the future of the service and ensure that passengers will have continued transport.

The results of the tendering exercise will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

4. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the updated position in relation to the Gourock – Kilcreggan ferry service and that a tendering exercise is being carried out for its continuation, thereby protecting passengers from any service disruption during the transfer.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences: *In line with Regional Transport Strategy.*

Legal consequences: *None.*

Financial consequences: *No financial consequences.*

Personnel consequences: *None.*

Equalities consequences: *Seeks to reduce the incidence of social exclusion by supporting socially necessary services.*

Risk consequences: *None.*

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for further information, please contact Alex Scott, Bus Services Manager on ext 3388

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Chief Executive