

DESTINATION DUNOON AND COWAL
STEERING GROUP

REPORT ON

PROPOSED COWAL BRIDGE

JUNE 2009

INTRODUCTION

The marine access and transport group of the Destination Dunoon and Cowal steering group, as part of their remit to investigate all marine and transport matters, chose to investigate the access to Dunoon from a fresh perspective.

In considering the history of Dunoon and why there is so much dependence on the ferry connection goes back to the early 20th Century when the main mode of transport was the railways. The main competing railway companies had stations at Craigendoran, Greenock, Gourock and Largs. Ferry services were provided as an extension to the rail heads to Dunoon, Rothesay, Millport and Lamlash on Arran. When roads were constructed the above rail heads were provided with roads including Dunoon. Rothesay, Millport and Lamlash being on an island could not benefit from a road connection and had to rely on the ferry connection even up to the present. Dunoon and Cowal being attached to the main land has a road connection but at 82 miles via the Erskine Bridge and 78 miles using the A82 Great Western Road into Glasgow is quite arduous and therefore places Dunoon and Cowal at a disadvantage.

The group considered the introduction of a new faster ferry service but no matter how modern in design and concept it would still leave Dunoon and Cowal at a considerable disadvantage to other towns serviced by road and rail infrastructure.

As transportation modes changed from public transport to private car transport this was satisfactory to the other rail head towns but not very satisfactory for Dunoon and Cowal. Up to the present the reliance on the ferry connection to Dunoon is a distinct disadvantage compared to other competing towns on the Clyde such as Helesburgh, Balloch, Gourock, Largs and Ayr as well as other towns like Falkirk, Stirling, Perth and Edinburgh.

The ferry system at present comprises

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Western Ferries | 2 x 40 cars | 80 cars |
| | 2 x 32 cars | <u>64 cars</u> |
| | | 144 cars |
| Calmac Ferry | 1 x 40 cars | <u>40 cars</u> |
| | TOTAL | 184 cars |

Therefore the maximum capacity of cars entering Dunoon and Cowal by ferry is 184 cars per hour.

This peak only occurs on a Friday afternoon and Saturday morning during the summer. On bank holiday Mondays the service is only 3 Western Ferries and One Calmac giving a total capacity of 152 cars per hour.

Whilst there is the road connection to Dunoon and Cowal at 80 miles from Glasgow it is likely the road would be used by tourists for a “drive” rather than an afternoon visit to Dunoon for a couple of hours.

Consider a warm sunny bank holiday Monday weekend, daily visitors from Glasgow and surrounding area deciding to visit the Clyde Coast. Compare a typical outing to Dunoon with a visit to Largs for example.

Most people prepare to leave their home between 10.30 and 12.00. The ferry terminals at Gourock start to get busy at 11.30 and by 13.30 the ferry terminals are full and the wait for the ferry to Hunters Quay is for the second or third ferry, a wait of between 40 mins and 1 hour. Over this 2 hour period the maximum number of cars would be $2 \times 152,304$. If we remove the cars of residents, business or visitors to residents in other words those not normally spending money on a day visit to say 10% of total. This leaves around 270 car day visitors looking to spend money for meals etc. Meanwhile entry to Largs is busy and traffic queues form due to Largs being full by 14.00 with no more parking spaces available. By this time Largs had the potential of having over 10,000 cars parked or passed through if the full potential of road design was utilised. Some of these cars possibly being intended visitors to Dunoon and Cowal giving up in frustration at the wait for the ferry.

A one mile queue represents 350 cars nose to tail. It is common on a good day at the weekend in the summer to have a mile queue on the approach to Largs on the coast road from Gourock and on the Hayley Brae. This means 700 cars queuing to enter Largs, which is already full with no spare parking available, probably with over 1000 cars already in Largs. A total of say 1700 cars waiting to get into or already in Largs built up over a short period of around 2 hours. If a similar number of cars were to attempt the ferry crossing to Dunoon this would take 10 hours with all 5 ferries working or 21 ferries for the same 2 hour period to transport the same number of cars as visits Largs.

Largs full and overflowing, Dunoon restricted in numbers due to a ferry system unable to cope with a steep build up of traffic over a short period. Similarly in the late afternoon when day visitors mix with weekend visitors leaving their caravan or lodge together with any residents visitors, the queue of traffic fills the ferry terminal and spills into the public road.

As shown later in this report most of the other competing towns have a motorway or dual carriageway serving them which will at least double the number of vehicles as compared to heading for Largs. Also later in the report Ayr is shown to have a slightly higher mileage compared to Dunoon.

Consideration was therefore given to Dunoon and Cowal in terms of distance and times in comparison to other competing towns.

As a comparison the distance to Oban is 92 miles.

Other competing Clyde Coast towns are from Glasgow:-

| | ROAD | RAIL ACCESS | ROAD TYPE |
|---------|----------|-------------|--------------------|
| AYR | 36 Miles | YES | Motorway |
| LARGS | 29 Miles | YES | Single carriageway |
| GOUROCK | 29 Miles | YES | Single carriageway |

Other tourist destinations

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|----------|
| FALKIRK (Wheel) | 20 | YES | Motorway |
| EDINBURGH | 44 | YES | Motorway |
| STIRLING | 20 | YES | Motorway |

THE TASK THEREFORE WOULD BE TO REDUCE THE ROAD MILES TO AROUND 50 MILES AND INTRODUCE A RAIL SERVICE.

The present route to work from Dunoon is by ferry to Gourock and then by road or rail transport to Glasgow. There is also at present a direct bus service from Dunoon, but this also uses the ferry to cross to Gourock.

The obvious route for consideration would be to follow the present popular route by ferry to Gourock. The distance from centre of Dunoon to Glasgow is 33 Miles via Gourock. This would involve either a tunnel or bridge from Dunoon to Cloch light house.

The distance shore to shore is 1.55 miles. The air draft (height from sea level to the underside of a bridge) to allow large commercial ships under a bridge would be around 80 metres.

This would be similar to the proposed second forth bridge and whilst the Dunoon bridge would probably only be of single carriageway the cost would be considerable and difficult to justify. A rail link would also be difficult to justify.

Similarly a tunnel across the Clyde would require to be at a depth of more than 20 metres to allow the present larger commercial ships to continue to use the Clyde. A tunnel would be even more expensive than the bridge option and therefore a direct link across the Clyde from Dunoon to the east bank or Gourock side whilst demonstrating considerable saving in miles was thought to be too expensive but worthy of further cost comparisons.

Also the bridge or tunnel would be more beneficial to Dunoon and less so to Cowal as a whole. For example Strachur would have almost no benefit from a connection from Dunoon to Cloch and Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle would continue to use their present route to Glasgow.

Other route options therefore would have to be on the north side of the Clyde but at a much reduced distance than the present road via the Rest and Be thankful to be of any benefit.

An overall view of the area from Glasgow to Dunoon and Cowal was undertaken.

Considering our objective of a shorter road and possible rail link the closest point to Cowal was noted at Garelochhead.

The height of the road on the north bank of Loch Long at the Garelochhead roundabout to Coulport would suggest a bridge. On the opposite bank the nib section between Ardenntiny and Carrick Castle was identified as the most likely crossing point for a bridge and this was very close to what could be identified as the centre of Cowal. There is already a power transmission line spanning Loch Long at this location supported on high mast pylons.

The road distance from Glasgow via a bridge at Garelochhead to Dunoon is 51 miles a saving in road miles of almost 32 miles. This would make Dunoon and Cowal very competitive in road miles to other competing towns. There is also a railway station at Garelochhead.

THE COWAL BRIDGE

A viability study would have to be undertaken to demonstrate the cost savings per visit of private cars and delivery goods vehicles via the Rest & Be Thankful and the Gourock route plus ferry costs.

The Cowal Bridge would require an air draft of around 80 to 100 metres to allow passage of oil tankers up to 150,000 tonne access to Finnart. In addition the MOD would require a similar air draft for their vessels accessing the supply pier at Glen Mallon.

The steep sides of Loch Long would suggest a suspension type bridge with cable anchors in the hillside on either side. A feasibility study would be required to determine the best bridge design and costs.

On the Garelochhead side access to the Cowal Bridge would be from the existing roundabout on the A814 onto the MOD road to Coulport. The Cowal Bridge would be approximately 1 mile from the Garelochhead roundabout. The span of the Bridge would be approximately 1 Kilometre or 0.625 mile. On the Cowal side a new road would be required to connect to the A815 on Loch Eck side between the Whistlefield and the Coylet Hotel. The distance from Glasgow to A815 between the Whistlefield and the Coylet hotel is 76 miles via the Rest and be thankful and via the Cowal Bridge is 44 miles and from Dunoon to this proposed junction is 7 miles giving a total mileage Dunoon to Glasgow of 51 miles a saving of 32 miles.

Travel time at present to Glasgow via the ferry and Gourock is approx 90 mins from Dunoon including ferry time, via the Cowal Bridge from Dunoon is likely to be 70 mins

This would therefore give Dunoon a much improved total cost of travel compared to other competing towns and a greater vehicle capacity than the ferry system.

Further spur roads from the proposed Cowal Bridge connecting Carrick Castle and Ardentinny would further greatly improve distances to Glasgow from both these Cowal towns.

| | PRESENT | PROPOSED |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Ardentinny | 85 | 44 |
| Carrick Castle | 55 | 40 |
| Lochgoilhead | 51 | 44 |

Access to these 2 latter towns to Dunoon would also be greatly improved.

| | PRESENT | PROPOSED |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|
| Dunoon to Carrick Castle | 35 | 15 |

RAIL CONNECTION

A rail link could also be provided in the new Cowal Bridge. This would give Cowal and Dunoon a direct rail link via a junction at Garelohead onto the West Highland Line into Glasgow Queen Street. A change at Clydebank onto the Glasgow North Electric would give access to SECC and either Queen Street low level and onto Airdrie or to Glasgow Central low level and onward to South Lanarkshire.

Present time from Dunoon by ferry and by rail to Glasgow is 85 mins. Travelling time from Dunoon to Glasgow Queen Street with proposed Cowal Bridge would be approx 70 mins, a saving of 15 mins.

If the rail link is difficult to justify possibly a negotiating tactic may be to demonstrate that on the south bank, Greenock and Gourock at present are serviced by 2 lines. After Port Glasgow the line to Gourock Pier divides before Branchton where one line goes to Wemyss Bay and the other to Gourock Pier. If the Wemyss Bay line stations were upgraded to allow car parking through Greenock and Gourock and possibly increasing the frequency by 1 line in place of 2 lines, this saving maybe able to transfer to the proposed Dunoon line.

Choosing Glasgow as the closest major conurbation gives an overall view of distance. However Greater Glasgow is spread relatively thinly either side of the River Clyde. Comparing the smaller towns on the North West of Glasgow say Bearsden, Milngavie, Clydebank for example, distances to Ayr and Dunoon comparisons are

Bearsden, Milngavie, Clydebank

| | | |
|--------|----------------|------------------------------|
| To Ayr | Dunoon present | Dunoon with new Cowal Bridge |
| 44 | 74 | 42 |

If the new Cowal Bridge were provided, greater employment opportunities would be available. Faslane would only be 18miles and Coulport 19miles both requiring quality civilian staff. Beyond the towns of Dumbarton at 39 Miles, present 71, Clydebank at 43 miles, present 75.

Paisley as a further comparison would be from Dunoon

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------|
| PRESENT | PRESENT | WITH NEW BRIDGE |
| Via Ferry and M8 | by road Rest and Be thankful | |
| 25minutes by ferry | | |
| Plus 24miles by road | 77 Mile | 45Miles |
| Total 1hour plus waiting time 1.5 hours | | 1 hour |
| At ferry | | |

Hospital travelling distances and times

| HOSPITAL | PRESENT MILES | TIME MINS | NEW BRIDGE MILES | TIME MINS |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| INVERCLYDE by ferry | 3 | 35 | 70 | 85 |
| via Rest and be Thankfull | 101 | 140 | | |
| VALE OF LEVEN | 70 | 85 | 38 | 50 |
| By ferry | 26 | 70 | | |
| CLYDEBANK | 75 | 95 | 43 | 60 |
| By ferry | 26 | 70 | | |
| RAI PAISLEY By ferry | 26 | 70 | 47 | 70 |
| via Rest & be Thankfull | 77 | 95 | | |
| SOUTHERN GENERAL by ferry | 27 | 75 | 50 | 75 |
| via Rest & Be Thankfull | 79 | 100 | | |

Note with the Cowal Bridge the distance and time are available 24/7 and not subject to waiting time for a ferry. If the ferry schedule were to be reduced as is likely with a new bridge to say hourly the travelling time to Inverclyde could vary from the present 35mins to 90mins.

Emergency services, Police, Fire and Ambulance would all benefit considerably when existing resources are being used and additional back up resources or specialist equipment is required.

Travel to Glasgow Airport will also be improved and available 24hrs and not dependant upon ferry connections.

EXISTING FERRY OPERATIONS

In most cases where a bridge or tunnel is proposed it would normally be close to or almost certainly at the same locations as a ferry, in which case the ferry would cease operation on the opening of the bridge or tunnel.

In this case the proposed Cowal Bridge is not on the same route as the existing ferries unless a direct crossing to Gourock was justified. It is anticipated the Cowal Bridge would have a very significant impact on the existing ferry services but the existing major route to work by ferry to Gourock would continue, but would be significantly reduced. It is very likely with a significant reduction in income the ferry schedule would be reduced which may lead to an increase in fares. Those working or requiring access to the Inverclyde Area together with those travelling south to Largs and beyond will probably still seek the ferry crossing.

TOURISM

Dunoon at present is a by passed location. The Tourist route from the South is through Glasgow on the M8 Motorway over the Erskine Bridge onto the A82 and onward to either Oban or Fort William. Similarly by rail on the West Highland Line to Fort William or Oban, Dunoon is missed. The ferry route Via Gourock is not clearly marked for Dunoon as a tourist attraction and the 30 miles from Cairndow at the A83 to Dunoon is likely to be perceived as an unnecessary diversion particularly having to travel the 30 miles back along the same road back to Cairndow.

The Cowal Bridge would open up a completely new and very attractive route coming within 7miles of Dunoon for those travelling North via Inveraray. The views from the bridge both North and South will be stunning, with the Bridges raised elevation close to the junction with Lochgoil and North towards Arrochar, in addition looking South as Loch Long widens towards Ardentinny and the Clyde Estuary with Hunters Quay in the distance.

The road as it passes through the Ardentenny to Whistlefield valley still at its elevated height as it curves round the hillside will open up into a magnificent view of Loch Eck with the steep hillside opposite.

These two locations will be the first spectacular views the tourist will see as they begin their holiday Northwards or the last stunning reminders of Scotland's scenery as they travel south at the end of their holidays.

It is highly likely that these views will qualify for the advertising for the Scenery in Scotland.

Tourists travelling by rail would also see Dunoon and Cowal as a close stopping off destination on their planned journey either North or South. The rail connection at Garelochhead is off the West Highland Line and with the inclusion of Dunoon and Cowal in the rail advertising is also likely to be of a great additional benefit for the area.

The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park would have a much improved access to the Southern part of the National Park, giving easier access to the walkways and cycle paths in this part of the National Park.

The Benmore Botanical Gardens as one of the highly acclaimed attractions would also greatly benefit from the Cowal Bridge providing improved access from the Central Belt of Scotland.

The following groups were identified as being affected the greatest by the Cowal Bridge

1. Commuters both into and out of Cowal daily
2. Less frequent travellers including residents in Cowal
3. Tourists
4. Business's
5. Deliveries reflecting the cost of goods

Commuters, the main route to work is by ferry from Dunoon to Gourock and from Gourock to Dunoon, for those working in Dunoon and Cowal. Anyone working in Inverclyde or North Ayrshire will most likely gain little with the Cowal Bridge. Equally those living in Inverclyde and North Ayrshire working in Dunoon would have little or no gain with the Cowal Bridge.

Using the following parameters – ferry frequency 20 mins or 30 mins

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Time from home by car to ferry | 10 mins |
| Waiting time at ferry terminal | 10 mins |
| Ferry duration | 25mins |
| Time to work in Inverclyde varies say | <u>20 Mins</u> |
| | <u>65 mins</u> |

Using Cowal Bridge 70 Miles say 85 Mins.

If however the Cowal Bridge resulted in a significant reduction in ferry traffic the frequency of the ferry may be reduced to say hourly and if the place of work start times of the commuter did not favourably coincide with the ferry schedule time, the commuter journey time could be increased from 0 to 55mins. Therefore journey time by ferry could be from 65 mins to 120 mins.

Those commuting beyond Inverclyde towards Glasgow are likely to save 20 minutes compared to present ferry times. If the ferry schedule is reduced the saving could range from 20 to 70 minutes.

2/ LESS FREQUENT TRAVELLERS INCLUDING RESIDENTS IN COWAL

Similar to the commuters above there would be little direct gain in the Cowal Bridge for travellers to Inverclyde. However if the travel were outside the ferry times for example early or late travel to Glasgow Airport, or evening entertainment at the SECC or theatre in Glasgow, the Cowal Bridge would give greater flexibility without the pressure of catching a ferry and or without the long drive via the Rest and Be thankful at present, particularly if the ferry schedule were reduced.

The time saving using the Cowal Bridge compared to the existing ferry schedule to Glasgow would be 20 minutes. If the ferry schedule were reduced this saving could range from 20 to 70 minutes.

The time saved using the Cowal Bridge compared to the existing route via the Rest and Be thankful would be 45 minutes.

3/ TOURISTS

There is potentially a great benefit to be gained by Dunoon and Cowal from day visit tourists from Glasgow and holiday tourists from the south of Britain and abroad. The bank holiday weekends, with the Cowal Bridge, show Dunoon and Cowal to be of equal or slightly less mileage from the North West and South West of Glasgow to Ayr for example and without the additional ferry costs. With the correct advertising in the appropriate Glasgow news papers and possible TV advertising similar to that which Largs has on the STV network should greatly increase visitors. With the Cowal Bridge the closeness of Dunoon and Cowal to the main tourist route of the A82 together with the West Highland rail link again provides a much more attractive and easier access to Dunoon and Cowal and will greatly encourage tourists to visit.

4/ BUSINESS'S

Whilst it is argued that the McGill's bus service to Glasgow and the ferry service take more residents away from Dunoon and Cowal for shopping, the Cowal Bridge will make this easier. However the main and probably greater argument would be the increase in daily visitors particularly at Bank Holiday weekends together with holiday tourists coming into Dunoon and Cowal. The easier access to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park with its footpath walks will also give Dunoon and Cowal additional visitors.

5/ DELIVERIES REFLECTING THE COSTS OF GOODS.

Due to the high ferry costs for commercial delivery vehicles very few delivery vehicles use the ferries and opt for the drive via the Rest and be thankful. With a saving of 32 miles to Dunoon this should reduce delivery costs significantly and should also improve delivery times as the present drive via the Rest and be thankful has a psychological image which often results in a guaranteed 24 hour delivery taking 2 days. The Cowal Bridge would provide a greater benefit to businesses in reduced delivery costs.

SUMMARY

The benefits to Dunoon and Cowal are clearly demonstrated and whilst the cost is likely to be considerable and contested by Argyll and Bute Council and the Scottish Executive pressure will have to be brought to bear on the political decision makers.

Assuming the Destination Dunoon and Cowal Steering Group committee agree with this proposal the following Continued Action will be required.

A feasibility study will be required to support the bridge and the Marine and Transport Group recommend that permission is granted to them to obtain Tender submissions from appropriate Civil Engineering design consultants to report the anticipated costs for such a bridge. In addition the Marine Transport Group further recommend early contact be made with Transport for Scotland to demonstrate the Cowal Bridge route would be a much shorter alternative if the A83 at the Rest and Be thankful is closed either due to snow, landslip or reconstruction. There are clearly difficulties in finding a solution to the land slip which occurred 2 years ago as traffic signals still control single traffic operation.

Thereafter a viability study will be required to show the cost benefit to the area of the bridge.

Assuming the above reports are positive and demonstrate the need for the Cowal Bridge, a detailed survey of the approach roads and design of the bridge by a consultant Civil engineering company will be required for the submission of a Planning Application. The approval of the Destination Dunoon and Cowal steering Group is also sought to contact Strathclyde Passenger Transport to seek their early opinion on the proposed rail link.

SUGGESTED CONSULTEES

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| MSP | \R.S.P.B |
| Argyll and Bute Council | SNH |
| Ministry of Defence – Queens Harbourmaster | SEPA |
| B.P Finnart | Visit Scotland |
| Scotrail | Scottish Power |
| SPT | Hydro Board |
| Clydeport | Scottish Gas |
| National Park L.L & T N P | B.T |
| Scottish Executive Transport | Forestry Enterprise |
| Transport Scotland | Road Haulage Association |
| Community Councils | McGills Coaches |
| Development Trusts | West Coast Motors |
| HIE | Argyll Timber Transport Group |
| Dunoon and Cowal Business Association | Inverclyde Council |
| Calmac | |
| MEP | |

ESTIMATED TIME SCALE FOR CONTINUED ACTION

YEAR:-

1. Continued debate on proposal
Seek written support or views from consultees
Compile list of interested Consultants for feasibility study and issue tenders
Obtain funding for Feasibility Study
Appoint successful Feasibility Study Consultant
2. Receive Feasibility Study
Issue Feasibility Study to Consultees seeking support and views.
3. Compile list of interested Consultees for Viability report and issue Tenders
Obtain funding for Viability Report
Appoint successful Viability Study Consultant
Issue Viability report to Consultees seeking support and views
4. Compile list of interested Consulting Civil Engineers for preparation of design of Cowal Bridge and access roads and rail connections.
Obtain funding for Environmental Impact Assessment.
Appoint successful Consulting Civil Engineers for design of bridge
5. Apply for Planning Permission
6. Allow for possible Public Enquiry
7. Lobby to have Cowal Bridge included in Appropriate Scottish Executive/Local Authority/SPT/Railway MUST HAVE list
8. Continue Lobby
9. Continue Lobby
10. Added to MUST HAVE LIST
11. Wait for start date
12. Wait for start date
13. Wait for start date
14. Wait for start date
15. Wait for start date
16. Construction
17. Opening of Cowal Bridge

In time of healthy economy