Colintraive National Marine Plan Policy Assessment

6. Scotland's National Marine Plan

Provide details of how the proposed activity is in accordance with Scotland's National Marine Plan including references to relevant policies. This should include consideration of the General Policies and any Sector Polices.

GEN 1 General planning principle:

Tourism is an essential boost to the economy of the Scottish islands, it stimulates related sectors including food and drink, retail, heritage sites, transport, and accommodation. CalMac ferries play a crucial role in the facilitation of transport to the islands, and as a result is a critical component in the economy. One of the benefits of the proposed development will facilitate a more reliable electric ferry service to the Isle of Bute, the ferry service is a lifeline for not only tourists but for local residents too, whilst already an established activity, investment into futureproofing the ferry service adheres to GEN 1, (4.6) as it will allow for growth of the tourism industry of the Isle of Bute serviced by Colintraive ferry port.

GEN 2 Economic benefit:

The proposed development aims to increase reliability of the ferry services to the Isle of Bute. When ferry services are disrupted, the costs can ripple through the islands economy, with turnover losses of up to 50% during peak season across the industry including accommodation, food, taxi, cultural events and retail businesses[1]. Due to the highly seasonal influence on the island's economy, any losses during the peak season could be financially devastating.

Uncertainty in transport can underpin the security of investments in business. Confidence in supply chain planning and event reliability. The proposed development which will allow the facilitation of the introduction of electric vessels will provide a more reliable service, as electric vessels have a simpler propulsion system which requires less maintenance downtime and lower risk of mechanical failure. The capacity for onshore charging avoids the idling of engines in port which in turn reduces wear and tear, and mechanical downtime.

GEN 3 Social benefit:

The proposed development aims to boost the island economy and the social benefits associated by providing the necessary infrastructure for electric vessels. Introduction of

[1] Island economy 'scarred' by Covid-19 restrictions - BBC News

a more reliable ferry service will not only benefit the coastal community but will also benefit those who travel to and use the marine and coastal environment of the island. The electric ferries are anticipated to provide a cleaner and more reliable service, with less maintenance downtime and reduced likelihood of mechanical failure ensuring transport links for the island and mainland communities utilising these services.

Throughout the construction of the proposed development, any disruption to the passenger services will be kept to an absolute minimum, through use of the existing secondary slipway. Colintraive is only one of the ferry ports that services the Isle of Bute. The more popular and frequented route of Wemyss Bay to Rothesay, whilst longer than the Colintraive to Rhubodach still provides an alternative route for tourists and Isle of Bute residents to travel to and from mainland Scotland.

GEN 5 Climate change:

Ferry operations contribute to greenhouse gas emission, which contribute to climate change, both whilst in port overnight and vessels in operation. The decarbonisation of the vessels associated with this proposed development will see a considerable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The introduction of the electric ferries will be a significant step in the decarbonisation of Scottish transport links. The charging of the vessels in port is currently anticipated to be through the national grid, as the national grid moves towards decarbonisation, the proposed development will increase in sustainability.

The design of the proposed development has considered and placement of onshore power, future worst case scenario projections for sea level rise to prevent inundation of the infrastructure from either sea level rise or storm surges.

Whilst it is expected that isolated communities, such as the island community, economies are expected to be hit hard by the effects of climate change, so increasing the confidence in business investment within these communities and inside the tourism sector of the islands is likely to provide more opportunities from future climate change impacts.

GEN 7 Landscape/seascape:

Colintraive has been an existing ferry port since at least 1685, when the first recorded mention of the ferry was by James Boill. Whilst the port has seen many infrastructure changes since then, with the introduction of a 4-vehicle ferry in 1950 to the now 36 car, 200 passenger ferry that services the crossing to the Isle of Bute today. The coastal community of Colintraive will be used to the infrastructure of port in their coastal area, with increasing ferry traffic and adaptations to facilitate this, such as the development of the road in 1981 from a single track. The proposed development should have little

impact on the seascape of the existing port and will aid in the supporting of the tourism sector of Colintraive.

The existing port is situated within the Kyles of Bute National Scenic Area, which is a narrow sea channel that separates the northern end of the Isle of Bute peninsula in Argyll and Bute, on the Scottish mainland. The proposed development and subsequent introduction of the electric ferry is unlikely to have an impact of the National Scenic Area. The scenic value is for the extended area around the channel separating the Isle of Bute from the Scottish mainland, the existing port is only a very small part of this area, and the proposed development is unlikely to have an impact on the area's scenic value.

GEN 8 Coastal process and flooding

The design of the proposed development has been done in consideration of worst-case scenarios of coastal change and sea level rise. The shore power infrastructure, has been designed and situated to be less vulnerable to flooding, being above the 1 in 200 year flood level. There are no additional in-water structures that would affect coastal processes.

GEN 9 Natural heritage

There are two SSSI's within 5 km of the proposed development: North End of Bute SSSI which has qualifying features of breeding bird assemblage, upland assemblage and upland oak woodland. At its closest point is located 0.8 km from the proposed development. The Ruel Estuary SSSI has qualifying features of fen meadow, flood-plain fen, Saltmarsh, upland oak woodland. At its closest point is located 4.1 km from the proposed development.

A review of the data available on the Scottish Government National Marine Plan interactive map reports the following Priority Marine Features (PMFs) within 5 km of the port at Colintraive:

- Blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) – 0.35 km
- Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*) – 1.1 km
- Tide-swept algal communities – 1.5 km
- Maerl beds – 1.5 km
- Burrowed mud – 1.5 km
- Kelp and seaweed communities on sublittoral sediment – 1.8 km

The estimated population is low for grey seals and relatively high for harbour seals in the area around Colintraive (Carter *et al.,* 2022). The Lady Isle designated haul out site for harbour seals is approximately 50 km east of Colintraive.

Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoeana*) are regularly reported around Colintraive, including the area around Colintraive (Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, 2024). Other cetacean species commonly reported include bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncates*), short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus dephis*) and minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) and with other species including basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), recorded on occasion.

A preliminary ecological appraisal of the site was undertaken in November 2024. The field survey recorded only three habitats within 50 m of the site, modified grassland, littoral sediment, and developed land, and did not report any evidence of protected or notable species. The Argyll and Bute Records Centre (ABRC) provided records from within 2 km of the site, comprising one bat species (common pipistrelle), red squirrel, 33 species of bird, three species of fish and a variety of plants and invertebrates.

No impacts on protected sites or species are predicted as a result of the works. Standard best practice mitigation measures will be used along with an ecological survey report and Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), this will ensure that the potential impacts for species mortality, injury or disturbance are mitigated.

GEN 10 INNS

There are three species records of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) in the Argyll marine area, leathery sea squirt (*Styela clava*), common cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*), Carpet sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) and the ABRC noted seven terrestrial non-native plant species within 2 km of the site. Spread of INNS would be managed using standard mitigation measures in line with recommendations in the Scottish Government Code of Practice on Non-Native Species, a precautionary approach will be taken for materials/ equipment used.

GEN 13 Noise

The proposed development facilitates the use of electric vessels. The type of vessel anticipated for use in the SVRP is a small battery powered vessel with a traditional hull design. The main reduction in vessel noise pollution will be seen whilst the vessel is idling in port, diesel engine vessels produce a significant amount of airborne noise. The battery generation of the ferry's engine significantly and noticeably reduces the amount of airborne noise produced. The use of the battery powered engine in idling will see a reduction in underwater noise whilst the vessel is stationary in the port. Whist the underwater noise is marginally reduced in vessels with hydrofoil design due to their propulsion technology enabling them to "fly" over waves, reducing drag and wake, resulting in a smoother and quieter ride for passengers. Other designs have a reduced ability to lessen the underwater noise generated by their propulsion, as propulsion and engine noise is only a small factor in the underwater noise creation of vessels. The

battery powered vessel anticipated for use in the proposed development will still see a reduction in underwater noise generated by the current baseline levels of the diesel engine vessels.

The proposed development will create new infrastructure to facilitate the charging of the electric vessels in port. Facilitating the new electric ferries which provides a low-noise polluting energy solution for the ferry service. Whilst currently the vessels will be powered by the national grid instead of noisy diesel-powered generators.

Noise impacts to local residents during construction and not anticipated to be significant and will be managed through restricted working hours.

GEN 14 Air quality

The closest human receptor to the proposed development is 35 m away. During construction application of the standard dust control and management techniques, as laid out in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance document and CEMP would ensure that no significant effects arise in respect of dust or fine particulate matter. During operation, the proposed development will facilitate the introduction of electric ferries to service the crossing between Colintraive and the Isle of Bute, the introduction of the electric ferries will drastically reduce the emissions to air of the vessels through the elimination of diesel fuelled engines.