

Luing Community Council (LCC) – Participation Request to improve the Cuan ferry timetable – note for OLI Community Planning Group meeting, August 14th 2024

Early in 2023, Luing Community Councillors heard about the statutory Participation Request (PR) process during a training course run by Argyll & Bute Councils' Community Development team. In July 2023, after a joint meeting with senior Councillors and Council Officers, our Participation Request was formally accepted, with the intended outcome of 'an improved ferry timetable, which better meets the needs of the island community, especially those using it for education, work, business, health and care'.

In Jan/Feb 2024, LCC, in collaboration with the Council and as part of the PR process, undertook a ferry users' survey. We sent a report of the survey findings to the Council's marine operations officers in April, following its acceptance at a community meeting. We followed up with further attempts to obtain a response from the marine officers and we contacted other Council officials and a Councillor responsible for transport.

To date we have not received any response to the survey findings, and the PR process has been at a standstill.

After intervention by a Community Development officer, we have finally been offered one date for a meeting with the marine operations team on August 30th.

We are aware that the marine operations officers have other responsibilities and demands on their time, and we have accepted – as a consequence – that the Participation Request process may take longer than the timescale set by the legislation. Luing community has been exceptionally patient given the expectations of a structured, statutory process to deliver improvements to a service that affects the lives and livelihoods of everyone on the island. We understood from the beginning the constraints facing the Cuan ferry service, with an ageing vessel and limited resources, and that any improvements would need to take these into account. The marine operations manager appeared keen to undertake the PR process as this fitted with his proposal to establish a permanent ferry users' forum, which we supported wholeheartedly.

LCC and Luing community went into the PR process with positive hopes about collaborating with the Council and about the outcomes. The high response rate to the survey is a demonstration of the community's engagement. The long-drawn-out process, the lack of response to the survey and the difficulty of obtaining responses from the Council officers have been exceptionally disappointing. Luing residents and businesses are the ferry's most important customers and deserve to be treated in a manner that

We think the PR process in general has the potential to structure Council-Community collaboration to improve services, but it needs the active support and engagement of Councillors and Officers to achieve the desired outcomes.

August 6 2024