



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1473](#)

Main Petitioner: Frances Anne Gillies

Subject: Wi-Fi on CalMac ferries

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that a universal system of Wi-Fi operates on all Caledonian MacBrayne ferries which service the Western Isles to the mainland and to provide a specific timescale for implementation.

Background

CalMac Ferries Ltd, which operates Clyde and Hebrides ferry services under contract to Scottish Ministers, announced on 8 March 2013 that:

"We are very keen to make a reliable and consistent 'Wi-fi' signal available on our ships and have undertaken a number of trials of several different delivery methods to do so, including satellite, point-to-point wireless and 3G. The geography in which we operate presents some challenges and we may have to apply different solutions in different areas, but these trials have allowed us to determine which technology is most suited to which area.

"This work is being carried out within the context of a major revamp of all onboard communications and we are working towards providing an 'always on' connection, allowing the ship to be permanently connected to the corporate network, which will allow us to operate safely and efficiently in delivering our services. Where there is sufficient capacity and network coverage this will allow us to deliver 'Wi-fi' services to passengers.

"We hope to tender and transition to a new service model during 2013 and the formal procurement process for this has started. We share everyone's frustration that we cannot progress this as quickly as we would all like but we hope that everyone will appreciate that there are significant technological challenges and costs associated with it and we have to get it right."

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not made any public comment on this issue.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not considered this issue.

Alan Rehfisch
Senior Research Specialist
11 March 2013

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