



Embargoed till 01:00 Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005

**Press Release**

**SNP TO SHOW COMMISSION ALTERNATIVE CAL MAC PLAN**

***"This is a positive step on Cal Mac, if the Commission will listen to us we may get further than the Executive ever have"***

Alyn Smith, SNP Member of the European Parliament will today meet with the European Commission to present an alternative plan for the future of Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services.

Mr Smith will be joined by Strathclyde University Professor Neil Kay who has produced a paper outlining an alternative to the Executive's plans to tender lifeline Clyde and Hebrides ferry services.

They will be meeting with the senior officials responsible for State Aid and Maritime competition at xx.xx GMT (xx.xx Brussels)

Speaking ahead of the visit Mr Smith said

"This saga has been dragging on for years and it is about time the situation was remedied. Those who rely on ferry services for transport, supplies and for work are entitled to have this situation remedied. We are taking advantage of the parliament's rejection of the Executive's proposals to go to the Commission with an alternative plan. Communities do not want to see these vital lifeline services put out to tender. While the minister waffles about European rules we are taking the opportunity to assess the situation and find constructive ways to work out the future of Caledonian MacBrayne.

We believe the alternative presented by Prof Kay is within European rules and will leave the islands with a secure and viable ferry service. The continual claim that there is a need to tender is incorrect. The European Commission only say that tendering is preferred not that it is the only way. Instead of burying their heads Nicol Stephen and the Scottish Executive should be looking for answers."

The SNP have listened to the problems raised by those connected to Caledonian MacBrayne and to points made by the experts in the field. As a result of this we welcome Prof Kays contribution and fully support his ideas."

**Edinburgh:** SNP Headquarters, 107 MacDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NW

**Inverness:** Highland Railhouse, Station Square, Inverness , IV1 1LE

**Glasgow:** Suite 298, 3rd Floor, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD

**Brussels:** European Parliament, 60 rue Wiertz, 08H149, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: 0032 (0)2 284 5187; Fax: 0032 (0)2 284 9187



Professor Kay, who has been working on the Cal Mac issue for several years and is a regular user of ferry services

Comments from Neil Kay  
xxx

Fergus Ewing – Transport Spokesperson

XXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Note to Editors

Professor Kay's proposal

- Ring fence the leasing of Cal Mac vessels from Cal Mac's operational activities
- Set out Cal Mac's public service obligations route by route with regard to pricing and service specifications
- Appoint an independent regulator for Clyde and Hebridean ferry services (this could be extended to include Northern Isles services)
- Procedural review of Cal Mac by Auditor General to ensure it meets designated responsibilities
- Instruct Cal Mac to pursue operations on a least cost – non profit basis with 100% clawback of any profit made

A copy of the report, detailing the current problems of the tender and the acceptability of the proposal in the light of European Regulations can be obtained from

CONTACTS

Alyn Smith MEP  
Liz Lloyd Adviser  
Professor Neil Kay

**Edinburgh:** SNP Headquarters, 107 MacDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NW

**Inverness:** Highland Railhouse, Station Square, Inverness , IV1 1LE

**Glasgow:** Suite 298, 3rd Floor, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD

**Brussels:** European Parliament, 60 rue Wiertz, 08H149, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: 0032 (0)2 284 5187; Fax: 0032 (0)2 284 9187