

Full steam ahead as CMAL launches major new vessel

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Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) has launched a major new addition to its fleet in Flensburg, Germany, today (Friday 21st March). The 116 metre long MV LOCH SEAFORTH was launched into the water following a short launch ceremony and was officially named by her Godmother Joan Murray. Joan is the eldest daughter of the late Captain John Smith, of the original MV LOCH SEAFORTH which was the MacBrayne mailboat that linked Stornoway with Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh from 1947 until 1972.

The new vessel will operate between Stornoway and Ullapool and has significantly greater capacity than the previous ship.

The 116m roll on roll off vehicle passenger ferry will be capable of operating 24 hours a day and will have capacity for up to 700 passengers and 143 cars or 20 commercial vehicles. The ship is being financed by Lloyd's Banking Group, leased to CMAL and operated by CalMac Ferries Ltd. It is expected to come into service in late summer this year following fitting out, testing and certification.

Commenting on the launch of MV LOCH SEAFORTH, Grenville Johnston, Chairman of CMAL said: "The launch is a very exciting stage of MV LOCH SEAFORTH's build and it is wonderful that we are also joined by the competition winner who helped name the vessel.

"This vessel is a fantastic new addition to the fleet and will serve one of our island communities for many years to come. We look forward to welcoming her to Scotland later this year.

"Today demonstrates CMAL's commitment to providing lifeline ferries to communities on the Western Isles and the west coast of Scotland."

A specially labeled version of Gordon and McPhail single malt whisky has been produced to mark the launch of the ferry, a bottle of which was smashed against the vessel to officially launch it.

Over the coming months, the engines will be fitted and outfitting will begin, followed by harbour and sea trials before the vessel is completed in late summer 2014.

The vessel was named MV LOCH SEAFORTH following a competition launched by CMAL last year, with the name winning 40 per cent of the votes. The winning vote, picked at random from almost 2,000 people was Mary Davidson from the Isle of Lewis who attended the launch as a special guest. Loch Seaforth is a sea loch between Lewis and Harris.

Transport Minister Keith Brown said: “Today’s launch is an exciting landmark for the MV LOCH SEAFORTH as she moves a step closer to entering service.

“The vessel will offer passengers, cars and commercial vehicles using the Stornoway-Ullapool route a faster, quieter and more comfortable service and has been designed to accommodate the forecast demand on the route. I am sure the vessel will serve the future needs of all local users and the many visitors to the Western Isles.

“I look forward to the MV LOCH SEAFORTH taking to Scottish waters later this year and making use of the planned harbour upgrades at Stornoway and Ullapool.”

Brian Fulton, Operations Director of CalMac said: “It is fantastic to see the progress made on the build of the MV LOCH SEAFORTH. She is looking very impressive. We at CalMac cannot wait to have the MV LOCH SEAFORTH join our fleet later this year – she will be a welcome addition”.

A video of the launch will be available on the CMAL website (www.cmassets.co.uk) shortly after the event which takes place at 12.15pm Central European Time (11.15am GMT).

Photographs are also available.

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For further information please call Golley Slater:

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Notes to editors

1. Key ship information:

- LOA 116m – Breadth 18.4m
- Service speed of 19.2 kn
- Passengers – 700
- Cars – 143
- Commercial Vehicles – 20

2. MV LOCH SEAFORTH is being financed by Lloyds Banking Group and will be leased to CMAL.

3. CMAL own property at piers and harbours at more than 24 locations throughout Scotland and is embarking on a programme of investment and improvements, which will create better facilities.

4. In addition to its pier and harbour facilities, CMAL own 31 ferries, which are leased to CalMac

Ferries Ltd for use on ferry services on the Clyde and Hebrides.

5. CMAL is a publicly owned company with Scottish Ministers as the sole shareholder.

6. For more information about CMAL visit: www.cmassets.co.uk