

New Vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides

Written submission from Dr Alfred J Baird, by email 13 April 2022

Dear Committee Chair/Members.

I refer to the recent Audit Scotland Report on CMAL ferries 801/02 procurement which I gather your committee may be investigating at some stage.

After reading this Audit Scotland report I could immediately see that it has regrettably ignored much of the crucial evidence given to the REC Committee at Holyrood, and has therefore inevitably duly ended up being rather biased in favour of CMAL and hence against FMEL, which would therefore seem to be its main purpose.

In particular, Audit Scotland's analysis did not only omit much of Commodore Luke van Beek's important expert evidence to RECC as to the actual events at FMEL, it also ignored evidence given by myself and [REDACTED]; as members of Scottish Ministers Expert Ferry Group, we informed RECC that we had both repeatedly recommended to Transport Scotland and its ferry agencies CMAL and CalMac the urgent need for these bodies to move away from over-specifying risky, costly, and highly inefficient one-off prototype in-house 'designs', towards ordering proven, validated, and hence lower cost ship design options, the latter readily available from specialist ferry designers globally.

To some extent the report mirrors previous Audit Scotland investigations into ferry matters (e.g. NorthLink I and II, CalMac) which likewise have tended to ignore and hence miss what arguably lies at the root of the problem with Scottish public sector ferry procurement - i.e. the dogmatic tendency of CMAL, CalMac and Transport Scotland towards specifying overly complex and costly conceptual designs, and thus seeking to procure and build their own in-house specified, unproven, unvalidated, untested prototype vessels, which frequently and inevitably results in a great deal of added risk and uncertainty for all concerned, and particularly for the shipyard contracted.

Any analysis of virtually all previous CMAL/CalMac ferry 'prototype' orders reveals a regrettably consistent picture whereby contracted shipyards have experienced major production delays and problems, leading to late deliveries of ferries due to owner-inspired design uncertainty and the inevitability of repeated changes having to be made, resulting in cost overruns and in several cases yard liquidation unfortunately. FMEL is merely the latest shipyard casualty in a lengthening list.

I would be happy to provide further evidence on this matter as required.

Yours

Dr. Alfred J. Baird