

Last Updated: Monday, 10 March 2008, 09:20 GMT

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Clyde hovercraft trial under way

Hovercraft trials on the River Clyde in Glasgow could see some journeys being cut by up to 20 minutes, operators claim.

A permanent service would involve hovercraft with a capacity of up to 130 passengers, which could travel in the open seas at speeds of up to 40 knots.



The trial will be with a 12-seater hovercraft

The three-day trial, by Clydefast Ltd, will involve a Griffon 2000TD 12-passenger hovercraft.

Hovercraft were last seen in regular use on the Clyde in the late 1960's.

Two trips per day will run between the SECC pontoon in Glasgow, Braehead, East India Harbour in Greenock and Dunoon.

It will allow the Clydeport Harbourmaster the chance to assess the potential impact of a regularly operated service.

It will also give investors and local authorities the chance to experience for themselves what a hovercraft can offer in terms of alternative transport.

'Varied and fun'

Alistair Macleod, chief executive of Clydefast, said: "It will hopefully demonstrate the potential for a permanent hovercraft operation to be brought to the Clyde.

"The service will be fast. A service from Dunoon to Glasgow will reach the city centre in 52 minutes, over 20 minutes quicker than the present journey time of an hour and a quarter."

He added that Rothesay would be included in a permanent operation which would add a further 15 minutes to the journey.

Another bonus in using the hovercraft would be its ability to navigate through bridges which do not open, according to Mr Macleod.

Some of the current Clyde bridges restrict catamaran ferries getting directly to the city centre.

Councillor George Ryan, of Glasgow City Council, said he "welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate how the river can be utilised for regular passenger services".

Ron Culley, chief executive SPT, said the trial and the development of the Clyde as an additional transport channel helps the ongoing regeneration of the area.

He said: "By encouraging varied and fun ways to travel along the river, we can continue to make Glasgow a vibrant location for people to visit."

A hovercraft which was trialled across the Firth of Forth was used by more than 8,000 in less than a week last summer.