

ISLANDS TRANSPORT FORUM

Fifth meeting - supplementary Telecall – 19 December 2018

Note of meeting

Attendees

Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands
Iain Mackinnon, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Graham Sinclair, Orkney Islands Council
Gavin Barr, Orkney Islands Council
Michael Craigie, Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans
Ranald Robertson, HiTrans
Brian Gordon – Transport Scotland
Paul Flynn – Transport Scotland
Michael Bratcher – Transport Scotland
Val Ferguson – Transport Scotland (note taker)

Item 9 – Decentralisation of key transport posts to Islands

1. Iain Mackinnon summarised the purpose of the report and highlighted that:-
 - a. Some admin and management posts are best suited to on site location to provide better service to the communities and that the creation of such jobs would be more beneficial in the islands than on the mainland.
 - b. Centralisation such as in Inverness contributes to the demographic challenge, however it's the location of new posts and vacancies in the islands that is sought not relocation of existing posts.
 - c. A policy intervention proposal is sought for this to happen and help keep young people in the islands.
 - d. It was noted that in compiling the report, CMAL had been less willing to share information than other stakeholders.
 - e. Disappointment was expressed that the tendering process for the new NIFS contract was unable to provide for reservation of posts in the islands.
2. The Minister had had discussions on this earlier in the day and highlighted that there were legal sensitivities around the tendering process at present and he recognised that the scale of job impacts is more significant in remote communities

Action Point – NIFS working group (including some on this call) is due to meet on 20 December and will explore these matters further.

Action Point – Minister will discuss further with Mr Matheson as HIAL is his portfolio responsibility.

Action point – Minister to take up Erik Ostergard and Kevin Hobbs of CMAL on information sharing .

3. It was confirmed that HIAL do not underestimate the potential impact their Air Traffic Modernisation Strategy may have on island communities. Their proposal is at an

early stage and the developing people strategy will explore ways to retain island residency before coming to any final decisions. It was noted that, at present, over half of HIAL's staff are based in the islands.

4. The Minister confirmed that it would be island proofed in terms of the Islands Act which could apply retrospectively in this case given that decisions were made prior to the Act coming into force.

Item 10 – Skye Air Service

5. No change in the funding position from Scottish Government was confirmed and as there was no representative of Highland Council on line Ranald Robertson provided a summary of the paper.
6. He highlighted that a pilot opening of the airport could have a lower capital cost but the decision on how/what to take forward would be made by the Highland Council, possibly early in the New Year.

Item 11 – Northern Isles Internal Ferry Service Funding and Delivery

7. Mr Wheelhouse acknowledged that several councils operate internal ferry services in their areas and that affordability remains a challenge. He confirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to the principle of fair funding and has had discussion with council teams on this and hopes for budget continuity for next year.
8. Gavin Barr raised the funding for the outline business case for the current year on which a decision is still awaited. Mr Wheelhouse confirmed he was in discussions with officials on this and it would be included in tomorrow's discussions with council leaders.

Item 12 – Island passport

9. Ranald Robertson summarised the report and acknowledged the recognition for this initiative within the Programme for Government. A Leader funding application is expected to be made in January.
10. It is hoped that the Islands Passport will be in place for the themed Year of Coasts and Waters in 2020 and that it will encourage more travel in the off season and to less visited locations.
11. The Scottish Government lead is within Tourism policy with ferries also engaged.
12. Mr Wheelhouse acknowledged capacity issues particularly in the summer including on car parking provision.
13. Concern was expressed on the impact on already constrained ferry services and it was hoped that alternate travel methods would be utilised where possible

Item 13 – AOB

There was no other business