

PE1862/N: Introduce community representation on boards of public organisations delivering lifeline services to island communities

Transport Scotland written submission, 1 October 2024

Scottish Ministers understand the importance of ensuring the views and experiences of island residents inform the delivery of lifeline ferry services in Scotland. In this regard, I am fully committed to ensuring that we continue to do all we can to attract diverse and well-functioning Boards that can support the needs of our island communities.

Since the onset of the Petition in March 2021, Scottish Ministers and officials have taken proactive steps to review and improve the processes involved when preparing for Board appointment campaigns. This has been designed to encourage uptake of applications from a wide range of backgrounds to include island communities. This has included making sure vacancies are made visible to as wide a range of potentially interested candidates as possible, making clear that the required knowledge and skills can be gained in a variety of ways. Adding to this, on every occasion, regardless of what other skills may be required, applicants are also asked to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of how lifeline services affect our island communities.

I can confirm that progress is being made. Recent campaigns have resulted in David Beaton, Murdo MacLennan and Jamie Manson being appointed to the Boards of David MacBrayne Ltd, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd and Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. These individuals have successfully demonstrated that they either have a lived experience or have a knowledge and understanding of how lifeline services affect our island communities. It is encouraging to see that these Boards now include individuals who can represent the views and the needs of our island communities.

Ministers are clear that Board appointments must be based on the experience and abilities of each candidate and reflect the outcome of an open and fair recruitment process. The Cabinet Secretary for Transport has been clear to officials that more needs to be done to attract and appoint island residents to our Boards. She is also clear that moving forward any new general Board appointments, as opposed to appointments and re-appointments for specialist roles, will have a stronger focus on appointing island residents who can demonstrate that they have the required skills, knowledge and experience to satisfy the criterion for that particular Board position.