

By Email:

Ned Sharratt
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

18 January 2016

Dear Mr Sharratt

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1591](#) (Major redesign of healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross)

Thank you for your letter of 15 December 2015 concerning petition PE1591 (Major redesign of healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross). The Petitions Committee has asked the Scottish Health Council to confirm whether the learning points identified in our report on NHS Highland's consultation had been accepted by NHS Highland and whether the Scottish Health Council has seen evidence of those learning points informing any subsequent consultations NHS Highland has conducted.

Learning points highlighted in the report published in October 2014 mainly related to the consultation stage of the engagement process. NHS Highland has yet to undertake any further consultations however, through our ongoing involvement, we are aware that NHS Highland has applied the learning from the earlier stages of the process to recent community engagement and option appraisal.

In relation to the redesign of healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross, NHS Highland has kept us informed of progress with the development of the business case. They have sought information from the Scottish Health Council on how other NHS Boards have involved and communicated with people through the design and development of the business case.

We are also included in the distribution list for the project group, who are taking forward the detailed design and clinical specifications for the proposals. The steering group completed the option appraisal on the location for the Hub within Broadford.

This communication and engagement activity follows on from the suggested next steps outlined in our report and is similar to the activity being undertaken for the development of the new Community Hospital in Badenoch and Strathspey.

The Public Petitions Committee has also requested the Scottish Health Council's view on what we understand to be the focus of the petition, which is a call to reverse the Scottish Government's approval of the proposed major service change to healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross.

The Scottish Health Council does not comment on clinical or financial issues but provides a focus on the NHS Board's engagement with patients, the public and stakeholders on the design and delivery of healthcare services.

We published our report in October 2014 and stated that the Scottish Health Council was satisfied that NHS Highland had followed the guidance on involving local people in its consultation. The report details the range of activities and feedback that took place to inform our view.

The consultation materials provided a wide range of detail in relation to the case for change, patient flow, proposed models, financial considerations and potential impacts of proposals. These materials were available through NHS Highland's website and supported through the publication of full and summary consultation documents. The documents were circulated widely, with the summary documents and consultation survey with free post envelopes sent to every household.

Transport and Access were highlighted as a key issue as part of NHS Highland's pre-consultation Equalities Impact Assessment work. This is highlighted in the consultation materials, and further information was included such as travel survey results and travel times to Broadford. The Scottish Health Council highlighted transport and access as a recognised concern from communities in our report, particularly from North Skye. A transport and access sub-group was formed with representation from the steering group and Highland Council to develop potential joint solutions to improving transport and access to both the proposed 'hub' in Broadford and 'spoke' in Portree.

During the consultation the Scottish Health Council were aware of some issues and concerns that were raised, which were noted in our report. In terms of NHS Highland's consultation process, the guidance states that: *"An inclusive process should encourage and stimulate discussion and debate. While it may not result in agreement and support for a proposal from all individuals and groups, it should demonstrate that the NHS listens, is supportive and genuinely takes account of views and suggestions. Ultimately, Boards should demonstrate that there has been a wide ranging consultation, which has taken all reasonable steps to take account of differences of view"*. We feel that NHS Highland made appropriate steps to ensure that this took place, however we have highlighted some specific areas where concerns had been raised.

Steering group membership

Some feedback stated that there was bias in the group with a feeling there was more representation from South Skye. From our attendance at the meetings, and discussions with members of the steering group, our view is that the steering group invite list and option appraisal membership was broadly representative, and that people viewed the models and locations objectively in terms of the overall benefits for the whole population affected.

Perception that a decision was already made

The option appraisal process in March 2014 identified Broadford as the preferred location for the 'Hub', and Portree for the 'Spoke' with regards to the model. We are aware that at the time a local newspaper¹ ran a story on the 14th March 2014 that Broadford had been "chosen" for the new hospital. Despite the article clarifying that a recommendation would be made to the April 2014 Board meeting to support formal consultation we are aware that the headline caused confusion within some communities.

¹ West Highland Free Press: [14 March 2014] <http://www.whfp.com/2014/03/14/broadford-chosen-for-new-hospital-but-site-still-has-to-be-confirmed/>

It may have been perceived that the option appraisal had resulted in a decision rather than preferred option for public consultation. NHS Highland took steps to clarify that no decisions were made through press releases, news articles and social media. This information was also included in the consultation documents and at the meetings we attended.

Our report reflected the role of the option appraisal and consultation in stating that *“Whilst option appraisal should be used to inform the decision-making process, it does not in itself identify the definitive solution. The results of the option appraisal, financial and risk appraisals will be used alongside the results of the public consultation; which is the main mechanism for obtaining stakeholders’ views”*.

Discussions about the future of the community hospitals in the area go back a number of years. Feedback during the public consultation indicated that this may have had an influence on how some people viewed the consultation and process.

Consultation methods and meetings

It was suggested that there were more meetings in South Skye and South West Ross than North Skye. Highlighted below is a summary of public meetings, community council meetings and drop-in sessions that took place during the consultation period. This is broken down to geographic areas of; Lochalsh, South West Ross, Skye South, Skye Central and Skye North.

	Lochalsh	South West Ross	Skye Central (inc. Portree)	Skye North	Skye South (inc. Broadford)	Total
Public Meetings	0	1	2	1	1	5
Community Council Meetings*	1	2	2	3	1	9
Drop-In sessions	3	5	6	1	5	20
	4	8	10	5	7	34

*Some of these meetings included a range of local community councils coming together.

We are satisfied that there was an equal spread of meetings and engagement opportunities provided during the consultation.

In summary, it is the Scottish Health Council’s view that the learning points from the Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross report have informed both the next stage of this work and of following change proposals currently being progressed by NHS Highland.

From the approach taken to the engagement and consultation activities we are satisfied that NHS Highland has complied with Scottish Government guidance and that NHS Highland had sufficient evidence of public views when making their decision.

Yours sincerely

Richard Norris
 Director
 Scottish Health Council

www.scottishhealthcouncil.org

The Scottish Health Council is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland