RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY

ISLANDS (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM JOHN HUNTER

1. The Bill says that the Scottish Government should publish a national islands plan and then the Scottish Parliament should look at the plan. Do you agree with this?

Yes

What are your views on having a national islands plan?

There are circumstances where what works on the UK mainland does not work in remote areas that do not have a physical connection to the mainland.

2. The Bill will require Scottish Ministers and certain Scottish public authorities to prepare islands impact assessments. Do you agree with this provision?

Yes

What are your views on this provision?

They do need to consider this. Eg flexibility in letting social housing can result in migration of people with no local connections to an island to the detriment of locals on the waiting list who don't have the option to move a few miles into the next authority area. Having procurement mechanisms that are led by the economies of scale in central Scotland can become more expensive for projects on the isles. The import and accommodation of labour will be expensive. Local smaller firms can lose out meaning expertise on local conditions is not available.

3. The Bill suggests that the Scottish Parliamentary constituency boundary of Na h-Eileanan an Iar (the Western Isles) should be protected from any future changes. Do you agree with this?

Yes

Comments:

I agree if the Western Isles are in agreement. It is up to them.

4. Each local government electoral ward usually elects 3 or 4 members. The Bill suggests that island areas may need fewer members (1 or 2). Do you agree?

Yes

What are your views on this proposal?
At present the islands of Unst, Yell, Fetlar, Whalsay and Skerries share three council members. The electoral system means that in theory all three could come from one island. These islands have very diverse economies. Whalsay and Skerries have a large dependence on fishing. The other islands depend on service industries. Travel between the islands is time consuming. Going from Yell to Whalsay involves two ferries with a 20 minute drive between. Having one dedicated member for an island like Whalsay would mean better representation.

5. The Bill will say that Scottish Ministers should be able to create a marine licensing scheme for coastal waters. Do you agree?

No

Do you have any comments on how it should be used?

The Shetland Islands Council already has its own locally based licensing system. Local knowledge is far better.

6. Are you in favour of the Bill overall?

Yes

7. Do you have any comments on the bill in relation to human rights or equalities?

No Response

John Hunter
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