RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY

ISLANDS (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM KIERON GREEN

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?

Significant issues of depopulation and access to be tackled on islands but not at expense of remote and isolated mainland areas.

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?

Along with impacts on other communities affected by geography.

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?

No

Comments:

There should be a presumption but not absolute restriction regarding island constituencies. Isolated geography, identity and culture all important but for example linking with Skye should not be completely ruled out.

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?

No

What are your views on this proposal?

Feel that this needs to be considered extremely carefully as there is a disbenefit to proportionality involved in reducing ward sizes. Many islands would not even fulfil the quota of electors for one councillor, and to have a lower quota for island than mainland areas within the same council area could lead to perceptions of unfairness. This is particularly important when neighbouring mainland areas may face similar
issues with being remote and isolated. Clear evidence would need to be provided for individual wards showing that there has been a lack of island representation within them, and balancing this with the possible effect on political balance within a Council. Given the above, a ward of 2 Councillors would be preferable to 1, but 3 or 4 would generally be more reflective of diverse political perspectives.

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

Yes

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

Local input and control of this would be 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

Kieron Green
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