

Minister for Transport submission of 6 December 2022

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

Thank you for your letter of 11 November 2022 seeking further information on the process for appointments to the board of David MacBrayne Limited (DML), and the work being done to encourage applications from island community representatives. You have also asked for an update on what communication I have had with Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL) in relation to the proposals set out within this petition.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on 26 October 2022 to discuss this important issue.

I can confirm that the advert seeking two non-executive directors for the Board of DML was published on Tuesday 8 November 2022, with a closing date set for Monday 5 December 2022. An understanding of island life is a key criterion for both roles, and this will be fully explored and assessed throughout the entire recruitment process.

To support the advertising campaign we have highlighted in all of the recruitment paperwork, including the advert itself, our encouragement for island residents to apply. We make clear our recognition that the required knowledge and skills, set out in the application pack, can be achieved in a variety of ways.

We have advertised these positions widely. A letter from the Director of Aviation, Maritime, Freight & Canals at Transport Scotland was sent to a wide range of organisations across Scotland and the UK. In particular, it was sent to the Chief Executives of Shetland Islands Council; Orkney Islands Council; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; the Highland Council; North Ayrshire Council; Argyll and Bute Council; the Ferries Community Board; the Scottish Islands Federation; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Scottish Crofters Federation; Community Inshore Fisheries Association; SCVO and to the Community Development Trusts Association, asking them to share with relevant interest groups on the CHFS route. In the letter to the six island local authorities, there was a specific request that

they share details of the appointments with local planning boards and other relevant community groups.

A copy of the advert was published in www.ampaipear.com. The advert also appeared in English and Gaelic on www.appointed-for-scotland.org website. Details of the appointments were also shared on social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn for DML, Transport Scotland and Scottish Government public appointments. Members of the DML Board were also asked to circulate the advert to their contacts. The adverts have been placed on the CalMac vessels travelling to and from our island communities. We have been keen to do all that we can to promote the opportunities available to island communities to contribute to the work of the Board.

In relation to HIAL, it is important to note that the role of the Chair and Non-Executive Directors on the HIAL Board is to represent Ministers' interests and ensure that the company is being run in line with Ministerial expectations. While my officials have discussed the terms of this petition with HIAL, making appointments to the HIAL Board is a matter for Scottish Ministers. An understanding of the communities in which HIAL's airports are located is an essential requirement of all HIAL Board members. They are required to demonstrate "an ability to understand Highlands and Islands issues, including the economic development and social inclusion of the regions' communities and stakeholders". In addition, all Board members must also show "an understanding of the role of transport, including aviation, in maintaining the economic and social integrity of the Highlands and Islands." The Board Skills Matrix is reviewed at each appointment round to ensure that the Board collectively has the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively carry out its functions. Ahead of the next appointment round, we will further explore how we can ensure that the Board has a thorough understanding of Islanders' lived experience in relation to their use of HIAL's airports.

I have noted above the methods used to advertise DML Board vacancies and similar methods have been used for HIAL. The methods used to advertise vacancies are reviewed at each appointment round in order to ensure as wide a candidate pool as possible can be attracted. For your information, HIAL has recently recruited a new Finance Director, Mr Jamie Manson, who I have also appointed to the HIAL Board. Mr Manson is a resident of Shetland and, in line with HIAL's

policy of encouraging the recruitment of Head Office posts across their estate; he will be based at Sumburgh Airport in Shetland.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the good engagement the HIAL Board and Executive Team already have with island representatives. HIAL dedicates significant resource to understanding the issues that affect the communities served by its 11 airports. The HIAL Chair and Managing Director host a four weekly call that is open to all local authority leaders, CEOs and Heads of Transport. The aim of this call is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, to raise particular matters of concern and to keep colleagues updated on a range of matters, including infrastructure projects such as the ongoing Barra terminal building enhancement work. Business development opportunities can also be discussed such as the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) based at Kirkwall Airport. This is in addition to one to one meetings that HIAL undertakes with local authorities as well as local MSPs and MPs.

HIAL Board meetings are undertaken across the HIAL estate in order to provide an opportunity for the Board to engage face-to-face with stakeholders. The most recent HIAL Board meeting took place in Islay in October. The Board met with local stakeholders including elected representatives, local business operators and representatives of community groups. This enabled the Board to hear first-hand the issues that are impacting the local community and to explore how HIAL can contribute to addressing these issues. The Board also met with staff at Islay Airport to hear directly from them about their experiences of delivering front line services. HIAL is continually looking at further ways that they can engage with local communities in order to ensure that the services they are providing meet those communities' needs.

I hope my reply is helpful.