

# Minister for Transport submission of 6 April 2023

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

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2023, addressed to Ms Gilruth. I am replying in my new role as Transport Minister. You have asked us to explore all available options to formalise the role of community representation on the boards of public organisations providing lifeline services to island communities.

As agreed previously, hearing from, and including the views and experiences of people, businesses and communities on our islands is key, not just for our islands but also for the more rural and remote communities that are connected to our islands.

I whole-heartedly agree that we need more islanders to be involved in decision making on lifeline services. I am pleased that we have already made progress on this, improving the way we advertise and promote Board opportunities. This has involved taking some pro-active and direct actions to ensure vacancies are visible to as wide a range of potentially interested candidates as possible.

In relation to CMAL and DML we have made clear in all of our recent recruitment paperwork that applications from island representatives are welcomed. We have advertised our vacancies on CalMac vessels, travelling to and from our island communities. We have written to key organisational and local island contacts asking them to encourage applicants from within their communities and made clear that an understanding of island life is considered to be a key criterion. A good knowledge of island life is fully explored and assessed throughout the entire recruitment process.

Details of the opportunities have been shared on social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Members of each Board have also been asked to circulate the advert to their own contacts.

You are aware that these recent steps have already led to some success, with the most recent CMAL recruitment exercise leading to the appointment of an island representative. You will also be aware that the

same, or a similar approach, was taken in the most recent recruitment exercise for DML.

Turning to HIAL, it should be noted that the HIAL Director of Finance, Jamie Manson, is a member of the HIAL Board and is a resident of Shetland. In addition to his expertise in finance and the other skills he brings to the Board, Jamie is able to reflect his lived experience as an island resident on decisions made by the Board. HIAL have a location neutral policy for Head Office posts enabling staff undertaking Head Office functions to be based at any of HIAL's sites. This increases the employment opportunities for residents of our remote and island communities.

When recruiting for the Chair and Non-Executive Director roles at HIAL we will continue to actively encourage applications from island residents through pro-active advertising of the vacancies. This includes not only online and newsprint media but also through bodies such as the Scottish Islands Federation.

All three (DML, CMAL and HIAL) are regulated public bodies, and I can confirm that each recruitment process is independently regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner and overseen by the Scottish Government's Public Appointments Team.

I want to make clear my commitment moving forward is that islanders' voices will be better heard and represented across our Boards. Scottish Ministers are committed to ensuring that we attract diverse and well-functioning Boards. I am keen to continue to do everything that we can to encourage applications from our island-based residents who have a desire and the necessary knowledge and skills to become a member of our boards.

We will continue to review and consider any further steps necessary to promote available Board opportunities when preparing for future individual recruitment campaigns and will introducing further change, if required.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**KEVIN STEWART**