

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mark Ruskell MSP
Convenor of the Rural Affairs Committee
Rural Affairs Committee
rural.committee@parliament.scot

04 September 2026

Dear Mark,

You will have seen media reports surrounding the ferry service that runs between Glenelg and Kylesha. These focus on a reported disagreement between the Community Interest Company who run the ferry service and the nearby landowner who owns the relevant ferry rights.

As I am sure you will agree, these press reports have been deeply concerning. The ferry is an important service for the communities involved.

Of course it is not possible or appropriate for Government to intervene directly in a contractual disagreement of this nature. I nonetheless would call upon all parties involved to work closely together to reach a solution that protects this service. In recent correspondence to both those parties, I have highlighted the work of the Scottish Land Commission in providing support, advice and guidance to communities and landowners.

As you will know, the right of ferry, like the right to fish for salmon, is a type of legal right that can exist separately from ownership of the land and can be sold or transferred to someone else. Ferry rights by default belong to the Crown but in some cases private landowners own the exclusive rights to operate ferries. The Scottish Government does not hold data on how often this is the case, but I understand this is a relatively uncommon occurrence.

Scottish Ministers do have the legal power to intervene for other property rights. In particular, Ministers can grant communities the right to buy land through the various Community Right to Buy routes. This is usually used for ownership of land, but can also be used for certain mineral and fishing rights.

I have asked my officials to consider whether it would be possible to add ferry rights to Community Right to Buy (CRTB) legislation; this could likely be examined as we look to implement the findings of the recent review of Community Right to Buy. Though any legislative change would not happen instantly, it may nonetheless allow communities in the future to have an appropriate avenue towards taking ownership of ferry rights.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

I understand Community Right to Buy falls within your committee's Land Reform remit. I therefore wanted to give you advance notice of the Government's intention to consider this change going forward.

Yours sincerely,



GILLIAN MARTIN

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver

