Dear Convenor,

NORTHERN ISLES FERRY SERVICES

Earlier today, I answered a Government Initiated Question (S5W-21732) confirming that the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the Northern Isles Ferry Services was issued to CalMac Ferries Ltd, Förde Reederei Seetouristik GmbH & Co. KG (FRS) and Serco NorthLink Ltd on 17 January.

The ITT will also be published on Transport Scotland’s website today, accessible through the following link:  https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/ferries/ferry-services/#45751

I also advised that Pentland Ferries has lodged a Petition for Judicial Review of a decision of the Scottish Ministers, published in the OJEU on 27th September 2018, to subsidise the provision of public services in relation to Northern Isles Ferry Services to or from harbours located at Aberdeen, Kirkwall, Lerwick, Scrabster and Stromness. In addition, Pentland Ferries have lodged a related complaint with the European Commission.

I can confirm that I and fellow Scottish Ministers will defend our position in relation to the continued provision of subsidy in support of these lifeline ferry services.

Given the importance of ensuring continuity of lifeline services from 1st November onwards, and minimising the risk of disruption that could arise from any delay in procurement, the procurement process will continue as planned, pending the outcome of the Judicial Review and complaint to the European Commission.

I would be grateful if you could circulate this letter to members of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.
Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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