



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01472

Name of petitioner

Councillor Gordon Murray and Councillor Rae Mackenzie on behalf of Protecting Inter-Island Transport Links

Petition title

Inter-island air services

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review its national policies on the provision of lifeline air services between Scotland's islands, consider the impact on local communities by the withdrawal of subsidies which enable such air services and to develop air transport public service obligations in the Hebrides and throughout Scotland.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

The issue has been raised via the local authority.

The issue has also been raised via the local press - see related media articles.

The local MP and MSP have been kept informed of the situation and they made representations to the local authority, in support of these air services.

There is a Facebook campaign- <https://en-gb.facebook.com/SaveTheBarraToBenbeculaAirService?>

A paper petition has been gathering signatures in local shops and outlets.

Petition background information

The petitioners believe that the decision by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to remove support for services between Stornoway, Benbecula and Barra are an example of this problem, risking as it does the future of all internal flights within the Outer Hebrides, severely undermining the transport connections which have been built up between the islands over the last forty years, with serious implications for the local economy and community.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has for many years subsidised the inter island air services and this has now been largely been withdrawn. Public Service Obligations have also been imposed on routes within Shetland, Orkney, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Argyll and Bute Council, all of which are subsidised by the local authorities. The subsidy ensures that these isolated communities have air links with a main centre. Within the air routes operated in the Highlands and Islands there are several which without support would not be commercially viable.

The air service are a lifeline link for patients travelling to the Western Isles Hospital. The flights also link with the Stornoway to Inverness flights which enable patients to be taken to Raigmore Hospital for vital medical treatment which cannot be accessed on the islands. Travel times will increase considerably which could endanger patients health and possibly lives. Flights from Barra to Benbecula take 20 minutes whereas travel by car and ferry will take in the region of 2 hours. Onward travel to Stornoway will add another minimum of 4 hours to the journey including a second ferry crossing, all dependant on favourable weather conditions.

As detailed above the only other transport option is the ferry. Ferries are often subject to distruption due to weather.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/interislandairservices>

Related information for petition

Related media articles-

http://www.hebrides-news.com/uist_stornoway_plane_service_cuts_16213.html

<http://www.stornowaygazette.co.uk/news/local-headlines/barra-calls-for-air-service-shake-up-1-416357>

<http://www.stornowaygazette.co.uk/news/local-headlines/call-to-safeguard-island-flights-1-2788359>

Review of Outer Hebrides PSO Air Services, report August 2012-

<http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/techservices/documents/PSO%20Air%20Services%20-%20Refecon%20Final%20Report-August%2014.pdf>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

10

Closing date for collecting signatures online

08 / 03 / 2013

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Importance of inter islands flight to islanders and visitors.

How can Local Authorities expect support for better transport links with mainland Scotland when they cut their own inter island links with peripheral communities?

Do local authorities take account of the economic impact of withdrawal of the inter island air service, especially in terms of tourism and local businesses?

