

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1862](#)

Main Petitioner: Rona MacKay, Angus Campbell & Naomi Bremner on behalf of Uist Economic Task Force

Subject: Introduce community representation on boards of public organisations delivering lifeline services to island communities

Calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce community representation on boards of public organisations delivering lifeline services to island communities, in keeping with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

Introduction

The petition focuses on the representation of communities on public boards, specifically on the board of [Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd \(HIAL\)](#).

This briefing gives an overview of reports and legislation relevant to community representation, and sets out the role of HIAL and the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS).

Background

Christie Commission

The Commission on the future delivery of public services was launched in 2010, and reported in 2011. The Commission was asked to:

- address the role of public services in improving outcomes, what impact they make, and whether this can be done more effectively;
- examine structures, functions and roles, to improve the quality of public service delivery and reduce demand through, for example, early intervention; and
- consider the role of a public service ethos, along with cultural change, engaging public sector workers, users and stakeholders.

As part of its key recommendations, the report of the Christie Commission recommended:

- Maximising scarce resources by utilising all available resources from the public, private and third sectors, individuals, groups and communities.
- Working closely with individuals and communities to understand their needs, maximise talents and resources, support self-reliance, and build resilience.

The report gave examples of instances where local authorities and health boards had taken steps to increase community participation in the management of services. It also recommended that core partners, including Regional Transport Partnerships, participate in community planning, and that Scottish Ministers promote and encourage community planning. The expectation was that the (at the time) proposed Community Empowerment Bill would “embed community participation in the design and delivery of services”.

The role with HIAL in working with HITRANS as a partner is unclear.

Our Islands, Our Future

In Spring 2013, following the announcement that there would be a Scottish Independence Referendum, Scotland's three island authorities - Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar - formed a joint constitutional working group. The aim of this working group was to consider the relevance, potential impact and opportunities posed by possible constitutional reform.

On 17 June 2013 the three authorities launched a joint campaign - Our Islands Our Future (OIOF). The campaign was "non-partisan, and took no position on the outcome of the Referendum, but sought to engage and negotiate with political leaders and decision makers on either side of the independence debate to ensure that the particular nature and needs of Scotland's Island groups were recognised and taken fully into account"

On 25 July 2013 the former First Minister, Alex Salmond, announced that a new ministerial working group would form to look at further empowerment for Scotland's island communities. The group would include representatives from the Our Islands Our Future campaign. The work of this group culminated in the publication of its prospectus, Empowering Scotland's Island Communities, on 16 June 2014.

As well as setting out the aspirations for a potential Island Act, the prospectus set out a vision for jointly-delivered public services. Much of which was later delivered as part of [the Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) Scotland Act 2014](#).

Legislation

[Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

The [Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 29 May 2013 and aimed to enact the Scottish Government's commitment to integrate adult health and social care.

The policy ambition of the Bill was to:

“...improve the quality and consistency of services for patients, carers, service users and their families; to provide seamless, joined up quality health and social care services in order to care for people in their homes or a homely setting where it is safe to do so; and to ensure resources are used effectively and efficiently to deliver services that meet the increasing number of people with longer term and often complex needs, many of whom are older.”

[Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Bill](#) aimed to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings, and by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services.

The [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#) set out the Community Planning Process, which aims to help public agencies to work together and with the community to plan and deliver better local services.

Part 2 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act set out the public authorities which take part in community planning and places new duties on them. These authorities form a Community Planning Partnership (CPP) for each local authority area.

HIAL is not named as having duties under Part 2 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, [however HITRANS is](#).

The Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2015, and Part 2 came into force on 20 December 2016.

[Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

The [Islands \(Scotland\) Bill](#), introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 9 June 2017, focussed on provisions designed to strengthen and protect Scotland's island communities.

The Bill was passed on 30 May 2018 and became law on 6 July 2018.

The Islands (Scotland) Act does not suggest or create duties which specify that there should, or must be community representation on boards of public organisations. It does, however, introduce duties, placed upon Scottish Ministers and other relevant public bodies, to have regard to island communities in exercising their functions. Under the Bill, the 66 public authorities cited, when introducing a new or revised policy, strategy or service, would have to prepare an island communities impact assessment when the impact on island communities is likely to be significantly different from the effect on other communities.

HIAL is named under the [Schedule](#) as one of the bodies covered by these duties, and these duties were [enacted by SSI](#) and came into force on 18 April 2019.

To date, the only Island Communities Impact Assessment carried out by HIAL has been on its [Air Traffic Management Strategy](#) in March 2021.

Scottish Parliament Action

Relevant questions

On HIAL

20 June 2018 - [S5O-02294](#): Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands), Scottish Liberal Democrats.

3 June 2020 - [S5W-29596](#): Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands), Scottish Liberal Democrats.

3 June 2020 - [S5W-29597](#). Asked by: Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands), Scottish Liberal Democrats.

16 December 2020 - [S5W-34106](#): Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands), Scottish Liberal Democrats.

16 December 2020 - [S5W-34107](#): Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands), Scottish Liberal Democrats

On community representation on boards

9 March 2021 - [S5W-35870](#). Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East), Scottish National Party

Ailsa Burn-Murdoch
Senior Researcher
[22/04/2021]

SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP