

PE1421/F

Petitioner Email of 11 November 2013

Dear Chris,

Could you please ensure that the Petitions Committee get this for tomorrow's meeting?

Apologies it is so late in being sent to you.

Since the Committee last met, the Petitioner, Gail Robertson along with 2 other Members of the Outer Hebrides Commerce Group (OHCG) met with Keith Brown, Minister for Transport. Mr Brown agreed to go away and look at pricing for hauliers in regard to empty trailers and various other suggestions made at the meeting, as a matter of urgency and ahead of the Fares Review currently being set up. The OHCG has had no response from Mr Brown since the meeting and would suggest that the Petitions Committee follow this up.

The fares to the Western Isles has been reported to be three times higher than any other subsidised Island Routes throughout Europe. We suggest that the fares across Europe are looked at in depth to ensure that our Islands are not disadvantaged.

The removal of RET was instigated due to speculation that the savings from RET were not passed on through the supply chain. This speculation has been disproved in the Scottish Government's commissioned study into the impact of the removal of RET from the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree. The level of subsidy introduced by means of RET was said to be measured against our local economies being fragile and disadvantaged. The introduction of RET actually put us on a level playing field with the rest of Europe and removing it again has put us in a more disadvantaged and fragile position than previously.

The removal of RET has had a huge detrimental effect on the Islands' economies and this has to be rectified by means of fairer ferry fares being reintroduced immediately.

Regards,

Gail Robertson
Co-ordinator
Outer Hebrides Commerce Group