

**PE1746/B**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar submission of 1 November 2019

Members of the Committee are, I am sure, already aware of the policy position and active involvement of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as regards spacefaring development, and the Comhairle forms part of a consortium with other partners which is seeking to develop a Spaceport on the island of North Uist, a project which has now reached the stage of a planning application designed to enable test launches to be undertaken.

The potential for Scotland, particularly the Highlands and Islands, to develop as a spacefaring country is already well evidenced, and the Committee will also be aware that other developments at Unst in Shetland, and in Sutherland, are also under consideration. Scottish Government has shown itself to be very supportive of Space development throughout Scotland, and the Comhairle has enjoyed support from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and the Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, and their officials, in particular.

“Space” is currently a matter reserved to the UK Parliament and, although not therefore devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Administration, Scottish Government has already appreciated and demonstrated the benefits of a supportive environment for spacefaring developments, and the creation of a Scottish NDPB would be consistent with that approach. An NDPB could have benefits as regards the co-ordination of development activity, the criteria which could be developed to unlock financial support for projects, and the promotion of Scotland as a spacefaring destination for businesses from elsewhere.

Given the current reserved status of Space issues, however, a Scottish NDPB should seek to work collaboratively with the UK Space Agency, the Civil Aviation Authority and other UK-level organisations and actors, to ensure particularly that the necessary regulation, of which there will necessarily be much in this sector, is aligned across the UK and, wherever possible, the EU, in order to reduce duplication or confusion for businesses and developers. It would clearly not be helpful for a new body to be established which would signal overlap or confusion with existing bodies.