

Correspondence from Angus Campbell, Chair, Ferries Communities Board, 27 May 2024

Dear Mr Mountain

Thank you for contacting us on the very important issue of the proposed CHFS3 contract.

On the matter of direct award I can confirm that the majority view from our consultation was that the operator function should continue to go out to tender to test the market for best value and encourage innovation and best practice. This response from communities was very much in the context of real anger and disappointment at how the existing contract was managed and also the decision making at senior management level both at CalMac and Transport Scotland. There was particular anger at the failure to put islanders needs at the heart of the process and include local knowledge to improve the output for users. A common sentiment was that not to change the culture of management and the priorities it works to would be rewarding failure and not bring necessary change.

It must also be highlighted that an equally strong response was the appreciation of front line staff both in ports and on vessels and the need to protect them in any new arrangement. That remains a priority for islanders.

Regarding the new arrangements going forward our board have been clearly informed that there will be a direct award. This includes assurances that improvements and innovation will be part of that and most importantly that community input to decision making will be embedded in the new set up. In good faith we have been inputting our suggestions to Transport Scotland as to how that might operate within a new contract. This exercise has been going on since the end of last year.

As of now no definitive proposals have come forward and we are concerned that time moving on does not bring the change that communities had hoped. It is accepted that there will be an extension of the present contract due to time constraints and as a board we will continue to push for the necessary change to make this a more effective and responsive arrangement. This is essential to ensure we don't enter a long term way of working that is then hard to change to meet the needs of islanders and the economies that support island populations.

We hope this information is useful to you and we are happy to interact further if that is thought necessary.

Regards

Angus Campbell on behalf of Ferries Community Board