

Dear Cabinet Secretary

We learned over the weekend that Mull and Iona (together with many other islands) have been excluded from the 'Island Business Resilience Fund'.

You can read our full and public view on this decision here: [Scheme to compensate for ferry disruption excludes Mull & Iona – Mull & Iona Ferry Committee](#)

Mull and Iona have been struggling with a 22% reduction in vehicle capacity since March, as a result of the MV Isle of Mull having decayed and unusable emergency slides. This is a direct result of delays to vessel renewal. The MV Isle of Mull was supposed to have been replaced in 2019, according to the government's 2013 Ferries Plan.

This is the third successive year our main vessel has been redeployed, mostly in order to fill-in for problems elsewhere in the network. We can quantify the downturn in both capacity (22% this year) and carryings (10%) over the past four months. We find it bizarre and unjust that the government have chosen such blunt criteria for this scheme, resulting in many islands large and small being excluded. Aside from the obvious unfairness of the criteria chosen for the programme, we also question whether it is compliant with the Islands Act, since it clearly discriminates between islands quite arbitrarily. I have requested from Transport Scotland details of how compliance with the Act was assessed prior to announcement.

I am writing to ask that you re-consider the scheme, and open it to all islands in the CalMac network. Let HIE determine on a case-by-case basis whether each business has been impacted, and to what extent.

I would also like to repeat my invitation to meet with us to discuss this and other important matters - like for example, the need to develop the Deck Space Priority Pilot into a fully-fledged islander priority system, and the upcoming replacement ferries for our main route. We very much regret that two such recent invitations have been declined, and hope you can recognise the need to meet with us in person.

With best regards

Joe Reade



Mull & Iona Ferry Committee

www.mullandionaferrycommittee.org

Joe Reade, Chair.

joe@islandbakery.co.uk