



Department  
for Transport

Cllr Marian Bennett  
FRIST Coordinator  
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From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State  
Norman Baker MP

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13 November 2012

Dear Councillor Bennett,

Thank you to you and your colleagues for attending the meeting on 1 November, which I found very informative. I thought it would be useful to write to you to confirm the Department's position, which I set out at the meeting.

I appreciate that the cessation of the helicopter service makes this an uncertain time for the residents of the Isles of Scilly. As you are aware I have been watching developments with close interest, and will continue to do so.

As you know, historically there has been no revenue support from Central Government for travel to and from the islands as services have always been undertaken on a commercial basis without subsidy. We would like to see that continue. At present the market is adjusting and we wish to encourage the positive response of the existing operator, and indeed the efforts of the Council of the Isles of Scilly to attract other operators.

You also mentioned the possibilities for replacing the Scillonian III. Following our decision not to fund a new vessel as part of the Route Partnership Scheme the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company has said that it intends to invest in the Scillonian to keep it in service until 2018, and to explore the acquisition of a second hand replacement passenger vessel without support from the public purse. I fully encourage that approach.

You mentioned the opinion you had received from Clarkson's to the effect that there were no suitable replacement ships available on the second hand market. As I said at the meeting I am happy to look at any information from Clarkson's on the availability of second hand ships, as I am happy to look at any information relevant to transportation to and from the islands. However, you confirmed that the question you asked them related only to the

replacement of the Scillonian III and the Gry Maritha with a single vessel, which is, of course, not the only option open to the Steamship Company. Our position remains that, as long as the private sector is willing and able to provide and operate suitable vessels we will not be considering Central Government intervention in this matter.

We have, however, as you know, set aside funding for harbour improvements at Penzance and St Mary's and I look forward to receiving firm proposals from Cornwall Council. One of the aims of this scheme is of course to allow the berthing of deeper hulled vessels and, thereby, widen the range of vessels that can use these ports.

I am copying this letter to Mike Hicks, Chairman of the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Norman Baker', written in a cursive style.

**NORMAN BAKER**