

## SUMMARY FOR PRESS

### FRIENDS OF IOS TRANSPORT (FRIST) MEETING WITH BARONESS KRAMER, MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT 23 JANUARY 2014

Attendees: Baroness Susan Kramer, Minister for Transport  
Andrew George M.P.  
Nigel Blackler, Cornwall Council  
Lord Tony Berkeley, FRIST  
Marian Bennett, FRIST  
Nicholas Jenkins, FRIST  
Bob Collins, Department for Transport  
Staff member, Private Office

The meeting was held in London on 23 January in response to a letter from Marian Bennett, Co-ordinator of the Friends of Isles of Scilly Transport Advisory Group.

Marian Bennett and Nicholas Jenkins outlined the continuing problems of transport between Scilly and the mainland, particularly in terms of affordability and accessibility for the travelling public, both local people and visitors. They described the substantial decline in numbers of visitors and its relation to fare levels as demonstrated in the responses to the recent IOS Council commissioned survey on travel preferences. There was a fear of a downward spiral with higher fares resulting in smaller passenger numbers leading to yet higher fares. A summary of fare increases over the past two years was circulated.

The benefit of proposed infrastructure improvements of harbours and airports was welcomed as likely to improve reliability, except for delays caused by fog, or wind. The infrastructure improvements were however unlikely to lead to any reduction in fares. Andrew George MP reported on ongoing efforts to reintroduce a helicopter service but there was difficulty in achieving what he believed to be viable fares.

Examples of the personal and economic impact of delays and disruption were provided to the Minister.

There is a persistent problem for the health services. Both Lord Berkeley and Andrew George MP had put down Parliamentary Questions to draw attention to the problems and help identify solutions.

There was discussion around the likely source of funding for support for the transport service, and whether a replacement vessel could benefit. Nigel Blackler summarised the objectives of the unsuccessful major project (the Route Partnership) which had included public sector funding for the vessel and the proposal, favoured by the Government, of an entirely private sector funded solution based upon the purchase of a suitable second-hand vessel which had not proved to be deliverable.

The formula by which new vessels on Scottish islands' routes had been financed had been provided to the DfT at a previous meeting with FRIST. The Minister had been informed that the Scillonian had a further 5 years of life on the route. Marian Bennett and Nicholas Jenkins pointed out that there

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few vessels of similar age on comparable EU or Scottish PSO routes. FRIST feared the cost of replacing the current ferry posed an insurmountable obstacle for the operator without public financial support.

The Minister believed any support, either for the vessel or for any heliport development, should in the first instance, be sought locally, possibly via the LEP and the Local Growth Fund. It should be a local decision with support from both Cornwall Council and the IOS Council. The Minister did not rule out any options but stated that there needed to be a clear and united view from Scilly on what was needed. It was agreed that FRIST should facilitate a round-table discussion to aid this process. Andrew George MP and Nigel Blackler agreed to attend and the DfT would provide a member of staff.

### **Notes for Press**

Details of fare rises since 2012 are available on the FRIST website below.

<http://www.frist.org.uk/2014/01/fares-to-scilly-continue-to-rise.html>

Comment on the IOS Council Transport Survey and a link to the report can be found in the FRIST website below:

<http://www.frist.org.uk/2013/12/news-update.html>

The majority visitors to Scilly travel by air. Numbers have been declining over the past decade and have dropped off steeply since 2012. The estimated number of air passengers for 2013/14 has been revised downward from 108,000 to 92,000. (-19%). In 2010 the number 145,478 (1) and in 2003 it was 182,078. (1) Note 1. 2003 and 2010 figures includes Tresco and St Mary's helicopter passengers.