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Enclosure Number	Description	
1	Email containing a letter from the Chair of Castlebay & Vatersay Community Council to the Deputy First Minister - 19 November 2020.	 Document 1.pdf Attachment:  Document 1 - Attachment.pdf
2	Response letter from the Deputy First Minister to the Chair of Castlebay & Vatersay Community Council - 21 December 2020.	 Document 2.pdf

From: Cllr. Donald Manford <dmanford@cne-siar.gov.uk>

Sent: 19 November 2020 12:34

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: Cllr. Donald Manford <dmanford@cne-siar.gov.uk>

Subject: Response A. Macneil MP Ref No AM6747.docx

For attention of Deputy First Minister.



Document 1 -
Attachment.pdf

Sent from my iPad

Dear Deputy, First Minister John Swinney,

Subject: Response to letter written to yourself on the 26th of October Ref No. AM6747 from Angus B MacNeil MP.

I am writing to you in a state of urgency as I having just received a copy of the above-mentioned letter. My Name is Brian Currie I am the Chair of Castlebay and Vatersay Community Council on the Isle of Barra. I undertook this role some time ago with the intention of taking the views, concerns, and ideas of the local community to local authority and national government as required. In this time our local community council has gained good traction amongst the community and with our 8 other community councillors we have never better been placed to gauge the feelings and concerns of the local people of the Island.

I was absolutely flabbergasted to read the letter sent to you by Angus B MacNeil on the 26th of October. I will be frank and honest, during my time of tenure Mr MacNeil has not once attended a Community Council meeting. He has not attended one of our economic recovery meetings, nor has he attended any of our Castlebay Community Hub local empowerment forums. There are several other areas of the community were Angus is absent and has very little if any input, therefore I am very annoyed that Angus feels that he is well positioned to comment the way he has regarding the community's want for the Local Hub.

I and others including local Councillor's, other CC Chairs, and interested parties have spent dozens of hours facilitating Q and A with health board and Education officials. We have openly run a form sometimes on a weekly basis if required to engage with local parties and business to discuss and develop the HUB benefits, short and long term, the additional service job opportunities during construction to completion. And not to mention the legacy opportunities of the HUB.

The Hub on Barra has raised many a heated debate, regarding everything from a service point of view to the layout and aesthetics of the building, this is what I would regard as healthy debate amongst our community, at our last community council meeting all of our community councillors were united in agreement that this flagship HUB was the most positive addition to the Island as a whole. The needs for the HUB have become even more apparent with the recent work done to the local Hospital totalling some 150k.

If Angus had taken any time to coordinate with local people; I am worried and disappointed he did not engage at a Community Council level first and foremost. We are all elected representatives and share the same ethos to represent our constituents.

I would like to personally guarantee you that this HUB is welcome, and I believe absolutely vital to achieving and maintaining the standards which the Scottish government tries so hard to set out. I would greatly value the opportunity to meet with you (virtual/in person) with Angus; along with Alasdair Allan, Donald Manford and our other elected representatives to hear why Angus's view and his feedback is wildly different to those we have engaged with.

Best Regards,
Brian Currie
Chair Castlebay & Vatersay CC



Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Education and Skills
John Swinney BPA/MSP

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Our Reference: 202000117487
Your Reference: FW: Response A. Macneil MP Ref No AM6747.docx

21 December 2020

Dear Mr Currie

May I apologise for the delay in responding to your letter raising concerns relating to correspondence from Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil MP regarding the Castlebay Community Hub.

As you will be aware, in September 2019, the First Minister, COSLA's Councillor Macgregor and I announced the first phase of projects to benefit from the £1 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's priority project, a new Castlebay Community Hub, was considered to be innovative in the way it aims to deliver on the principles of the Learning Estate Strategy and was identified by Ministers as a project to form part of the initial phase of investment.

I absolutely recognise the high level of engagement in developing plans for the delivery of the Hub, and it is very positive to hear that all of your community councillors were united in agreement that the Castlebay Community Hub is a positive addition to the Island as a whole.

I am happy to inform you that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have also reported that considerable engagement has been undertaken with representative bodies and the wider community on Barra and Vatersay, and that they are confident that there is a good and continually growing understanding of the wider value and benefits of undertaking such a significant investment in a collaborative manner.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot



In relation to Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil MP's original correspondence, I have outlined the Scottish Government's position as above, and advised that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has a statutory duty, under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, to manage and maintain their school estate. As such, I have also encouraged him to discuss any concerns regarding the Castlebay Community Hub directly with the Council.

If you feel it would be beneficial to discuss any of this further, please let my office know and my officials will work to identify a suitable date for a meeting.

Yours sincerely



JOHN SWINNEY

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