



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

- 1.1 Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2BW
2. *Steornabagh, Eilean Leodhais, HS1 2BW*

DONALD MANFORD (SNP)
Councillor, Barraigh, Bhatersaigh, Eirisgeigh agus
Uibhist a Deas
29 Eoligarry
Isle of Barra
HS9 5YD
Mobile: (Redacted)
E-Mail: (Redacted)

Date: 12th November 2020.

Dear John

BARRA AND VATERSAY HUB DEVELOPMENT

I hope you are keeping well in what I know are very challenging times. It gives me great pleasure to say that you, and the First Minister, continue to have the support of our community in the Western Isles. I feel both locally and nationally that you are doing a great job.

As you are aware the Hospital project in Castlebay had a long and difficult history; a history which created significant distrust and suspicion within the community. An island community remote from even local government is always prey to fear that change - traditionally a cloak for service reduction – would be a cover for abandoning the critically needed infrastructure.

I must commend our MSP Alasdair Allan and MP Angus MacNeil for ensuring that along with our Community Cllrs and fellow Ward Cllrs, no stone has been left unturned to represent our community. I feel certain this has influenced the pace with which this project has progressed.

I am delighted to say that moving to a combined project provided us the undreamed of opportunity of daring to believe that wornout buildings could be replaced with new modern structures within one campus.

The Comhairle progress has been significant and I have to commend all those involved in bringing it forward to the stage we are now at.

From our initial aspiration we have worked with others to build something unique in the public sector which, although costly, I am convinced will in the longer term:

- Redefine service delivery on Barra and Vatersay.
- Demonstrate effective public sector collaboration and procurement.
- Be more efficient and effective.
- Be seen to be a catalyst for community, social and economic regeneration.

ANNEX A

The partnership and engagement with the project was facilitated locally by our Area Forum which has worked effectively at a community level to manage community anxiety, engagement and, I am now please to say, participation.

The Forum evolved to be the local mechanism for managing our response to the pandemic and for developing a Social & Economic Regeneration Plan to complement the opportunity provided by the Hub development.

All of this has taken place in the context of public sector service redesign, citizen empowerment and partnership in the provision of public services.

Our relationship with the private sector continues to develop and, for the first time in my life in politics, I am seeing the potential for real community empowerment in the context of a model of municipal entrepreneurship as promoted by the Scottish Government and the Comhairle.

I am aware that our proposal for funding is currently being checked by SFT and will be submitted to Government by the end of the week. In that context I wanted to record my thanks to yourself, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and the First Minister for continued support for the project. It is only fair, having been a critic of NHS when I believed things went wrong, that now when things are going so well I commend all those responsible for the delivery of the current project and for all the excellent work. In particular I want to commend Andrew Dailly and Alan Morrison for their support and direction. We are all indebted to Grant Robertson, SFT, who has worked tirelessly to engage SFT, Hub Co, Scottish Government, NHS Western Isles and the Comhairle to work together at pace. I would also commend Alan Proctor at SFT for his engagement with Paul McGirk at Hub Co who together were instrumental in working with us to pull the delivery team together. Our local team, Moira Anderson, NHS, Iain Mackinnon, CnES, Ann McCarlie and Ewan Fowlie, Hub Co who as officers on the ground have engaged the community, maintained high levels of communications and acted professionally at all times.

I am sure that you are aware of the work of Bernard Chisholm, Director of Education, Skills and Children's Services who has promoted this project from the beginning and provided the outstanding leadership which has enabled us to reach the stage we are now at.

I am aware that there will be a shortfall in funding but I know colleagues are working to address that.

I hope with your continued support we can resolve any challenges and move forward to the next phase of the project.

Yours sincerely

Donald Manford
Councillor

Barraigh, Bhatersaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas