



THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

FERRY SERVICES

REPORT TO HITRANS BOARD

16 APRIL 2004

1. Last week Nicol Stephen announced the decision to re-tender the Northern Isles ferry contract early, and to include freight and livestock transport in the new tender specification. In view of our response to "Scotland's Transport", HITRANS should be seeking a major role, along with the affected local authorities, in formulating this new specification. We should not be just another consultee. It is important to be proactive and to agree the issues that the new contract needs to address, and to draft proposals for inclusion in the specification, so that these can be presented soon to the Scottish Executive.
2. In Brodick, at the Convention of the Highlands and Islands, Nicol Stephen indicated that the Clyde Hebrides ferry services will be tendered soon, and that the Altmark case is unlikely to apply. Comments on the consultation document for these services were made by HITRANS and partners at the end of 2002. Debate has continued since then regarding issues such as the rerouting of services from Lochboisdale and Barra to Mallaig and Mull; the timing of the Tiree and Coll services; the large size of vessels and poor frequency of crossings on the less exposed routes to Mull and Arran; and road equivalent tariffs. The time might be appropriate to revisit these consultation responses for a further presentation to the Executive.
3. A short term commission for a consultant to assist in pulling this together would be helpful.

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