



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

2 Marsham Street

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Robert Francis
Chairman of the Council
Council of the Isles of Scilly
Town Hall
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
TR21 0LW

15th January 2024

Dear Robert,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November regarding the transport links with the Isles of Scilly.

I was grateful for the discussions that took place at the recent Islands Forum in October. Following that meeting, a task and finish group has been established to look into islands' connectivity. I am pleased that the Council of the Isles of Scilly is a member of that group and will be able to share in its discussions and exchange of information with other islands. This is an important step in addressing the challenges of connectivity felt by island communities throughout the country.

As per our discussion, I understand the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group (ISSG) has announced its intention to use private financing to procure two new vessels regarding the Sea Links project. While the ISSG is yet to confirm that the necessary contracts have been agreed, there is an expectation that this will be announced shortly. Once these contracts are signed, our expectation is that there will be no rationale for the Levelling Up Fund monies to be used to provide vessels for a competing service.

I can confirm, however, that until this happens the Levelling Up Fund money will continue to remain available. In recognition of the complexities outlined in your letter, my Department is pulling together a cross-government group of officials to work together on the challenges facing the Isles of Scilly. I hope that this assures you we are taking your concerns seriously.

My officials and I remain in regular dialogue with the Department for Transport and will continue to do so until this project is either completed or contracts are signed. I remain deeply committed to supporting the Levelling Up agenda on the Isles of Scilly. I was therefore delighted with the announcement at Autumn Statement of a provisional award of up to £6,000,000 for the Isles of Scilly Museum and Cultural Centre.

Thank you again for your letter, and I look forward to seeing you again at the next Islands Forum. I am copying this letter to the Department for Transport and Derek Thomas MP.

Yours,
Michael

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