

Dear Mr Carson,

Scottish Budget 2023/24

Thank you for your letter of 1 July 2022 seeking feedback on the Islands Programme.

1. *How the competitive process is working.*

The direct allocation of funding in 2021/22 was welcome, but a challenge, because we had to commit our allocation between the date of notification in December 2021 and 31st March 2022 which was a very short timescale in which to get projects pulled together and get governance over the spend, together with making a commitment by 31st of March 2022. The competitive process brought different challenges of getting the application form completed and submitted. The tight timescale was probably the greatest challenge.

2. *Views on Criteria used to Assess Bids*

The criteria used to assess bids don't seem unreasonable however at a high-level "deliverability, engagement, need and opportunity, and critical and or transformation outcomes" don't seem particularly focused on any particular island need or priority. The application form does however break these criteria down so that a greater understanding of the projects being applied for will be obtained by those who will assess the applications.

3. *Previous Islands Programme Funding*

The first allocation of funding received by Orkney Islands Council was a direct allocation that we did not have to bid for. The competitive process does present councils with a bit of a dilemma - if the project is the highest priority project for the Council the Council won't want to run the risk of an unsuccessful application to the Island's Infrastructure Fund, however, if the council were to allocate funding to the project it would be unlikely to have any success in applying to the Island's Infrastructure Fund.

4. *Community Contribution to Bids*

Island communities contributed to the application made by Orkney islands council in 2022/23 through their lobbying activities to make their feelings known that a nursery facility was a critical but missing piece of islands infrastructure following the closure of the previous privately run facility

5. *Complimentary Funding*

The match funding requirement for the project we have applied for would come from the Council's General Fund capital programme. We have written to the community planning partnership seeking a contribution towards the new nursery provision but haven't received any offers of financial support to date.

6. *Impact on Population Level in vulnerable islands and communities*

The project that the council has submitted an application for in 2022/23 is seeking funding towards a new nursery building in Kirkwall. This project would

certainly serve in retaining population levels on the mainland of Orkney. There has been market failure and the provision of a nursery service with the closure of the previous private provision. Working families have been citing this failure has a reason why they have had to move away from the area or have been unable to return to work following the birth of their children. Success in the award of funding for this project would therefore help in the delivery of suitable premises for a children's nursery and provide families with a service that is critical to their everyday needs.

Kind regards

Gareth

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