



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Western Isles Transmission Project: Consultation on Final Needs Case and Delivery Model**

### **Response from Rhoda Grant, MSP for the Highlands and Islands**

I write in response to Ofgem's "minded to" response with regard to refusing a 600MW Transmission cable to the Western Isles, with a preference for a 450MW cable.

The Ofgem report makes mention of two large industrial windfarms from Lewis Windpower. The Western Isles is a unique rural and peripheral area where 60% of the land is community owned and 72% of the population lives on community owned land.

In addition to the two Lewis Windpower projects which could amount to 369MW, Community Energy Scotland has identified 65MW of wholly owned community energy in the early planning stages, a further 64MW having noted an interest and which are in early development and there is currently 21.3MW of wholly owned generation. This adds up to 519.3 MW immediately which clearly far exceeds the proposed 450MW cable, even before any proposed expansions or development which the industry may want to invest in. By installing a smaller transmission cable, these communities are having their ability to develop and their opportunities for investment curtailed and any sense of empowerment which has been provided to them through land purchases, clipped.

I have spoken to a number of constituents and Trust bodies within the Western Isles over the last few years, and I am confident that many community trusts would be looking to include energy generation projects in their development plans, however given their limited resources they are unable to commit formally to this until it becomes a tangible option and a sufficient transmission cable is installed, allowing them to submit funding bids. In addition there has been historical exploration for implementing other sources of renewable energy, such as wave power. These have then been abandoned when it was identified that no transmission cable was forthcoming,

The Western Isles is an area of great potential renewable benefit, however this minded to decision shows no consideration for the community sector and the challenges they face. I feel

that this minded to response is short-sighted and contrary to aims around socio-economic growth and environmental policies which are aiming for carbon neutral targets. The Western Isles could be a key area, which, with the right infrastructure would prove a draw to inward investment which would quickly meet the requirements for a 600MW transmission cable.