

Ongoing concerns about provision and delivery of ambulance services in the Northwest Highlands

* letter from Durness Community Council to North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust 10 November 2022 *

Dear Mr Mochrie

I am writing to you on behalf of the Durness Community Council to express our concerns about the provision and delivery of ambulance services here in the Northwest Highlands. While our concerns focus on the Durness area, we are assured that these experiences and concerns are felt in communities across the Northwest Highlands.

We would draw your attention to the following:

Overall lack of provision – There is no resident ambulance in Durness. Given that Durness has a broad demographic in terms of population, this means that neither our younger residents nor our adult or older residents are being well served.

Unacceptable waiting times for ambulances – An ambulance must itself make a journey of at least 45 minutes to respond to an emergency in Durness (assuming that our nearest ambulance in Kinlochbervie is not already in use). It is not unknown for an ambulance from Bettyhill – almost an hour away - to have to link up with an ambulance from Kinlochbervie in order to proceed.

Staffing levels – Many ambulances are currently operating with only a technician/driver and no paramedic or medical support. This is unacceptable in terms of pressure of responsibility on the technician and the potential for the deterioration of an untended patient en route.

It would seem that provision for the Northwest Highlands is decided using the criteria which apply to city demands and accessibility. Unfortunately, these criteria are of little relevance to residents here.

We accept that times are tight and that services are constantly under review. However, the provision for Durness and the surrounding area has been in decline and unaddressed for some time. We would ask that you consider and then respond to our concerns re provision and manning levels and offer suggestions as to how our residents and community can be better served by the Ambulance Service.

Yours sincerely

Ron Tucker

Secretary, Durness Community Council