

**MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING
COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD
on WEDNESDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2018**

Present: Councillor David Kinniburgh (Chair)

Councillor Robin Currie	Councillor Donald MacMillan
Councillor Lorna Douglas	Councillor Roderick McCuish
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Sandy Taylor
Councillor George Freeman	Councillor Richard Trail

Attending: Charles Reppke, Head of Governance and Law
Graeme McMillan, Solicitor
Allegra Evans Jones, Trainee Solicitor
Mr Belina, Applicant

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gordon Blair, Rory Colville, Mary-Jean Devon, Graham Archibald Hardie, Jean Moffat and Alistair Redman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982: APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF TAXI OPERATOR LICENCE (L BELINA, BOWMORE, ISLAY)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. He then outlined the procedure that would be followed and invited the Applicant to speak in support of his application.

APPLICANT

Mr Belina advised that he lived and worked on Islay and wished to establish a taxi company in addition to those already on Islay. He advised that he had noticed a knish in the market for this type of business on Islay. He advised that he had collated some evidence on the increase of demand and made reference to a number of new businesses which included the Machrie Hotel with 50 bedrooms, whose customers looked to hire taxis on private hire as well as on demand. In the next two years there were plans to reopen it fully as well as the Ardnahoe distillery which would encourage an increase in numbers to the island for whisky. He advised that there was another proposal for a distillery outside Port Ellen and for a tourist centre at Lagavullin. He advised that from March 2018 Logan Air would be providing an additional flight to Edinburgh taking up to 34 passengers. He advised that quite often there was no availability on flights due to demand. He said that Caledonian MacBrayne had plans to replace the Hebridean ferry, which was the smaller ferry, with one of a similar size to the Finlaggan which would mean an increase in passengers to the island. Mr Belina provided the Committee with some statistical information on the increase of visitors to the island from passenger information he had collated from both the airport and Caledonian MacBrayne. He advised that it

was difficult to establish the correct number of tourists to the island but added that Islay was becoming more popular as a tourist attraction. Mr Belina told the Committee that there were currently a lot of private hire companies on Islay and car hire companies and that they were still struggling to meet demand. He advised that he could not give the correct number of private hires but there were approximately 21 vehicles on Islay. Mr Belina advised that during the summer tourists hire would taxis for a full day which meant that the company was tied to one customer for whole day and not able to pick up other customers therefore causing an increase in demand. Mr Belina told the Committee that he would like to offer free Wi-Fi for every customer on board his vehicles and to maintain a 24 hour operation which was currently not available on Islay, adding that it was hard to get a taxi after 1am at weekends. He added that eventually he would like to adopt or increase his fleet with a vehicle that supports disabled people and that there were currently no disabled vehicles on Islay. He advised that he would like to use electric vehicles and that there were currently 2 charging points on Islay, which would reduce his carbon footprint and the effect on the environment.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Douglas referred to the research that Mr Belina had undertaken and asked how long he had been a taxi driver for. Mr Belina advised that he had only applied for a taxi drivers licence to allow him to apply for a taxi operators licence.

Councillor Currie advised that he was very impressed by the research undertaken by Mr Belina and asked Mr Belina if he agreed that there had been a large influx of visitors to the island and that there was a large demand for taxis on the island, many of the customers of which money was no object. Mr Belina agreed that this was correct.

Councillor Taylor made reference to the fact that Mr Belina was not yet operating but asked him how easy it would be to get a taxi in Bowmore. Mr Belina replied that he worked 8am until 7pm but he had only ever seen one taxi on the rank at any one time and that this was in the evening hours.

Councillor Kinniburgh asked Mr Belina to confirm that this was just from his observations and not from working as a taxi driver. Mr Belina confirmed this was correct.

Councillor Trail asked Mr Belina how he planned to operate a 24 hour taxi service if he was currently employed. Mr Belina advised him that from March his roster would be changing to 4 days on 4 days off and that he planned to employ the person that would be working the other half of his shifts as a taxi driver, therefore, there would be 24 hour cover provided.

Councillor Kinniburgh asked Mr McMillan how many operators licences there were on Islay at the moment. Mr McMillan advised that he had figures for the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay area but did not have a breakdown for Islay alone. Mr Reppke advised that although he did not have figures he could confirm there were a large number of private hire vehicles on Islay.

SUMMING UP

Applicant

Mr Belina thanked the Committee for listening and said that he hoped he had answered all their questions correctly. He added that he hoped the grant of his licence would be positive.

When asked, Mr Belina confirmed that he had received a fair hearing.

Councillor George Freeman left the meeting at this point.

DEBATE

Councillor Taylor advised that he had been very impressed with the information and knowledge that the applicant had provided and had been moved by what Councillor Currie had said about the increase in visitors to the island and that money was often no object. He advised that he was minded to grant the application.

Councillor Currie advised that he had been blown away by the quality of information provided by the applicant. He added that there was a huge demand for taxis on the island and that he had no hesitation in awarding the applicant his licence.

Councillor Kinniburgh said that it was clear that there were big things happening on Islay that were bringing people to the island. He advised that normally he would like to consult the Halcrow report when determining an operator's licence but had felt that this was a unique situation, and therefore he moved that Mr Belina be granted with the licence.

DECISION

The Committee agreed to grant a Taxi Operator's Licence to Mr Belina.

(Reference: Report by Head of Governance and Law, submitted)