

Prof Boyd Robertson
Chair of NHS Highland
NHS Highland
Assynt House
Beechwood Park
Inverness
IV2 3BW

23 January 2023

Dear Boyd

Breast Screening

At a recent meeting of the Council, there was a discussion over the importance of breast screening in the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer for women across the Highlands.

The following motion which I have attached to this letter highlighted concerns over geographical exclusion of breast screening provision and requested that I write to you to ask that the breast screening unit is available in villages and communities such as Helmsdale to ensure that every woman have access to this vital service.

I would be most grateful if you could give consideration to the terms of this Council motion.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Raymond Bremner
Leader of The Highland Council**

**An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner
Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

Council Motion

This council recognises the importance of Breast Screening in the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer for women across the Highlands. It also recognises that to be truly effective it has to be available and accessible to all woman who meet the agreed criteria.

That being the case it is incumbent on the council to ensure that the breast screening mobile facility is available to all women within the appropriate times scales.

However, it is known that in some areas access to the unit is difficult and indeed sometimes impossible for some women to access and this in particular refers to women who have restricted mobility or have no access to private or public transport. As an example, one such location is the village of Helmsdale on the East coast of Sutherland. Helmsdale shares a GP practice with the village of Brora which is located 12 miles south of Helmsdale. The Breast Screening unit that attends this area only operates from Brora and as such women from Helmsdale have to arrange personal travel or use public transport to access the unit. In some cases, neither of these options is available if an individual has poor mobility and no access to private transport. As a result, some women are denied access to the unit by virtue of geographical exclusion and in one known instance there has been a gap of 16 years since breast screening has been accessed.

This example highlights the inequity of this service in the remote and rural Highlands and as such the council calls upon the Leader to lobby NHS Highland and the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport, to ensure that the breast screening unit is available in villages and communities such as Helmsdale to ensure that every woman has access to this vital service