



The Open Letter to MLAs

To: Members of the Legislative Assembly

cc: Andrea Clausen, Chief Executive, Falkland Islands Government

An open letter: The Case for a Select Committee on the Future of Falklands Telecommunications

29th June 2026

Dear Members of the Legislative Assembly,

The Connected Falklands Group (CFG) welcomes the confirmation, provided by MLA Roger Spink in his Falklands Radio interview on 22nd June 2026, that an Executive Council paper on the future of telecommunications is expected in August 2026. We regard this as a necessary but long-overdue step toward resolving a matter that has been of considerable concern to the community for some time.

CFG, however, wishes to raise a serious concern about the process that will follow. It has been confirmed in the Falklands Radio interview that the ExCo paper will remain confidential and that a press release will be issued once decisions have been made. In CFG's view, a press release alone does not constitute adequate public accountability or satisfy the Assembly's commitment to open communication. For a decision of this importance and complexity, something more is required.

CFG believes that a Select Committee is not simply an alternative form of public consultation. FIG's public meetings are part of FIG's process — the agenda, format and use of responses are within FIG's control, and the process produces no binding output. More importantly, in the context of a confidential ExCo paper, public meetings would ask islanders to respond to conclusions without access to the reasoning behind them. A Select Committee is the Assembly's process. Members will recall that when Starlink licensing was under consideration, the Legislative Assembly established a Select Committee that could require witnesses, request documents and produce formal recommendations that FIG must respond to. That process gave residents, businesses and community representatives a genuine mechanism to contribute, and public support for the outcome was stronger as a result. The community deserves that same standard of scrutiny here.

The decision now before ExCo, concerning the future structure of telecommunications provision after December 2027, including whether to serve notice on Sure South Atlantic and what model should replace the current exclusive licence, is at least as consequential as the Starlink question, and arguably more so. These are not matters on which public confidence can be secured through a press release. CFG therefore formally requests that Members give consideration to the following:

- That a Select Committee be immediately established with a remit to examine the recommendations that lie behind the ExCo paper, the strategic options that were considered, and the implications for residents, businesses and public finances.
- That sufficient information about the basis for any preferred approach be made available to the public in advance of formal consultation, enabling islanders to engage substantively rather than simply respond to conclusions presented without context.
- That the Select Committee process be completed before any contractual or licensing commitments are entered into, so that democratic scrutiny precedes implementation.

Previous telecommunications reviews in 2005 and 2015 resulted in published reports that, despite their limitations, enabled informed public debate. The absence of any equivalent published material from the current review process is therefore a significant and troubling departure from established practice. Residents and businesses are being asked to respond to a decision about the Islands' digital future without access to the evidence on which it is based.

CFG is not seeking to impede or delay the process; a Select Committee could reasonably complete its work within a few weeks. We are fully aware of the financial and practical consequences of further delay and have said so on previous occasions. What we are seeking is assurance that when a decision is reached, it will be subject to proper democratic scrutiny and that the community will have a genuine opportunity to engage with it before it is implemented.

CFG's request is consistent with the views expressed by many Members in the CFG questionnaire before the 2025 election. Successful candidates repeatedly emphasised the importance of transparency, meaningful public consultation, open communication, regular public updates and engagement with independent community groups when decisions on telecommunications are being made. A Select Committee would provide precisely the mechanism through which those commitments could now be honoured.

We believe this is a reasonable and proportionate request, consistent with the standards of accountability that the Falkland Islands community has every right to expect.

Given the confirmed August timetable for the ExCo paper, CFG believes a response within 14 days would be both reasonable and necessary. As this is an open letter, we will publish the response in full.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Connected Falklands Group



Response from the Hon Jack Ford MLA

Falkland Islands Government

Office of the Legislative Assembly
Sullivan House, Ross Road
Stanley, Falkland Islands
Telephone: +500 27451
e-mail: assembly@sec.gov.fk

Wednesday 22 July 2026

Dear Connected Falklands,

Thank you for your open letter of 29 June 2026 regarding the future of telecommunications in the Falkland Islands and your suggestion that the Legislative Assembly establish a Select Committee to consider this matter. We welcome the interest shown by Connected Falklands and others in what is an important issue for the Islands' future.

We have carefully noted the points you have raised concerning transparency, public accountability and community engagement. We recognise that telecommunications services are of significant importance to residents, businesses and public services, and that decisions in this area attract considerable public interest.

At this stage, however, we do not consider that the establishment of a Select Committee would be appropriate. The work currently underway has been focused on identifying, assessing and evaluating the full range of telecommunications options that may be available to the Falkland Islands beyond the current arrangements. The purpose of the forthcoming Executive Council consideration is to review that analysis and determine an appropriate direction of travel.

Executive Council will, in August, consider a detailed telecommunications report prepared by FIG officers. This work has involved a comprehensive examination of the available options for future telecommunications provision, including consideration of technical, commercial, regulatory and operational factors. The report has been developed specifically to assist elected Members in making sensible, evidence-based and risk-minimising decisions on behalf of the community. Specialist advice has been received on relevant aspects, as well as information gained through the previous Select Committee process and ongoing work to understand the needs and usage patterns of residents, businesses and visitors to the Falklands.

The Assembly considers that a Select Committee is most appropriately used where there is a clearly defined proposal, policy or decision that requires examination and scrutiny. At present, the telecommunications work remains at the stage of evaluating options and informing strategic decision-making. ExCo's role in August will be to determine a preferred direction of travel rather than to approve a final implementation plan. The

Assembly does not consider that a Select Committee can effectively scrutinise proposals that have yet to be formulated.

We do not share the view that a Select Committee could complete meaningful work within a matter of weeks without affecting existing timelines. Establishing a committee, determining terms of reference, gathering evidence, commissioning advice, conducting hearings and preparing recommendations would inevitably require significant Member and officer resources and would delay progress on an issue where the community has consistently expressed a desire for greater certainty.

We do not accept that the circumstances are directly comparable to those considered by the Starlink Select Committee. That Committee was established to examine a specific and discrete question concerning the licensing of a particular telecommunications service. The current review concerns the wider future structure of telecommunications provision in the Falkland Islands and necessarily involves the assessment of multiple strategic, regulatory, commercial and technical options. The nature and scope of the two exercises are materially different.

We do not agree that a Select Committee is the only mechanism through which meaningful public involvement can be achieved. The Assembly remains committed to engaging openly with the community on matters of significance, and we intend that telecommunications reform will be no exception. As proposals develop, information will be shared as appropriate and engagement activities will be undertaken to ensure stakeholders have a genuine opportunity to contribute to the process.

For these reasons, the Assembly does not consider that establishing a Select Committee at this stage would materially improve the quality of decision-making, accountability or public engagement. Rather, it risks duplicating work already undertaken, diverting limited resources from the ongoing review and delaying the development of a long-term telecommunications solution. The Assembly considers it more appropriate to allow Executive Council to complete its consideration of the evidence currently before it and then determine the most suitable mechanisms for public engagement and scrutiny as more defined proposals emerge.

Whilst we do not support the establishment of a Select Committee at this stage, we fully accept the importance of public engagement as this work progresses. The form and timing of future engagement will depend upon the direction established by Executive Council and the nature of any proposals that emerge. However, the Assembly fully expects that there will be appropriate opportunities for stakeholders to understand and comment upon future proposals before significant implementation decisions are taken.

We appreciate the constructive manner in which Connected Falklands has presented its views and welcome the continued interest of your members in this important issue. As per the open nature of your letter to us, we are content for you to publish this response in full, as you see fit.

Yours sincerely,

The Hon Jack Ford MLA
Chair, Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly



Response by the Connected Falklands Group

To: The Hon. Jack Ford MLA, Chair, Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly

cc: All Members of the Legislative Assembly, Andrea Clausen, Chief Executive, Falkland Islands Government

Dear MLA Ford,

Thank you for your letter of 22 July 2026, which we have read carefully and will publish in full as agreed.

CFG welcomes the Assembly's commitment to provide appropriate opportunities for external stakeholders to understand and comment on future telecommunications proposals before significant implementation decisions are taken. We regard that commitment as important. However, we would respectfully but firmly observe that the ability to comment on proposals is not the same as being part of the process that shapes them.

The community that came together around the Starlink petition, that has followed these developments closely, and that will live with the consequences of these decisions for the next decade and beyond, deserves more than the opportunity to respond to conclusions already reached. We note that the letter does not specify what form that engagement will take, when it will occur, or how it will be structured. Given the Assembly's stated concern that a Select Committee would delay progress, we trust that the engagement committed to will be designed to allow the community to inform decisions rather than simply receive explanations of them after the fact.

The Assembly explains that the work currently underway has been focused on identifying, assessing and evaluating the full range of telecommunications options available to the Falkland Islands. That description closely reflects the role CFG envisaged for a Select Committee. Our proposal was never that a Select Committee should review an implementation plan after key strategic choices had been made. Rather, it was that elected Members should have the benefit of independent evidence, public testimony and recommendations while those strategic choices were still under consideration.

Against that background, CFG respectfully differs from the Assembly's central argument that a Select Committee is premature because proposals have not yet been formulated. In our view, that is precisely the point. The Assembly's letter acknowledges that August will determine a preferred direction of travel rather than approve a final implementation plan. There remains, therefore, a window in which a Select Committee could still provide meaningful independent scrutiny that helps shape that direction rather than simply commenting upon it afterwards.

The Assembly states that a Select Committee is most appropriately used where there is a clearly defined proposal, policy or decision that requires examination and scrutiny. CFG notes that, depending on what the August ExCo paper proposes in practice, that may turn out to be precisely the situation that emerges. Should a

clearly defined proposal follow from the August decision, CFG would expect the case for a Select Committee to be revisited accordingly.

We note the letter's assertion that a Select Committee risks duplicating work already undertaken. CFG is not aware of any published evidence that would allow the community to understand how competing options have been evaluated or why a preferred direction may be selected. The two Cambridge Management Consulting reports commissioned by FIG remain unpublished, even in redacted form. While we recognise that internal policy advice may properly remain confidential during development, the absence of any published analysis inevitably makes independent scrutiny impossible. The community is therefore being asked to accept that comprehensive work has been undertaken without being able to see the basis on which that assurance rests.

CFG does not share the Assembly's view that the Starlink comparison is as limited as the letter suggests. The principle that the community deserves formal, independent scrutiny before major telecommunications decisions are implemented applies regardless of whether the question is narrow or broad. Indeed, the broader and more consequential the decision, the stronger the case for structured scrutiny becomes.

CFG welcomes the Assembly's openness to future engagement and will participate constructively in whatever process is established. However, we will assess that process against a clear standard: not simply whether the community is allowed to comment, but whether residents, businesses and community stakeholders are given a genuine opportunity to influence, challenge and, if necessary, change the direction being proposed. Those are fundamentally different things, and the community of the Falkland Islands deserves the latter.

As this is an open letter, we will publish this response and any further correspondence in full.

Yours sincerely,

Connected Falklands Group