Written response to the recommendations from OCPAS

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Committee’s report, ‘Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities’. The report provides a very useful and comprehensive analysis of the barriers faced by disabled people in Scotland and how those barriers might be addressed.

As noted in the letter of November 2006 from your predecessor, Cathy Peattie, it is recommendation 71 which relates directly to my work as Commissioner. As you know, I have recently published for consultation my proposed strategy for enhancing equal opportunities in the public appointments process. I believe that a number of the recommendations that I have made in the strategy, if adopted, will contribute to achieving the suggested actions under recommendation 71.

In particular, in the strategy I have recommended ways to raise awareness of the public appointments process and make the opportunities more attractive to a diverse range of people, with a particular focus on those groups currently under-represented in public appointments, including disabled people. My recommendations in this area include

- developing and delivering an on-going communication campaign
- developing a hub website for public appointments that is an exemplar of best practice in terms of disability accessibility (with alternative forms of information and contacts provided for people who do not use the internet)
- enhancing the content of material used to publicise appointment opportunities
- monitoring the impact of different forms of publicity on the diversity of applicants and using this information to inform future publicity strategies.

I have also made recommendations in relation to the appointments process itself, to ensure that the process inspires public confidence and embraces diversity from the application process to the boardroom. The recommendations in this area include

- establishing a centre of expertise whose members will advise on and administer the appointments process for the Scottish Government
- providing appointment-focused diversity training for all parties involved in the selection process
- providing support for chairs to maximise the benefits of a diverse board
- revising my Code of Practice to reflect the actions included in, and resulting from, the equal opportunities strategy
- increasing awareness of Scotland’s open and fair appointments process.

Finally, I have recommended in the strategy a programme of support for our future leaders, to provide development opportunities for everyone to achieve
their full potential; in effect, to provide the bridge from having potential to realising it. The recommendations in this area include

- providing an education programme for members of the public on becoming a board member
- attaching a specific public appointments development and shadowing programme to current management development schemes in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- co-ordinating the many existing opportunities for developing leadership potential in Scotland and signposting people towards these opportunities.

The development opportunities mentioned above include encouraging and promoting participation on school boards, community councils and charity boards, as a means of developing people’s governance skills. If this development programme is adopted, I hope it might assist the Scottish Government in achieving the first of the action points under recommendation 71 of the Committee’s report. Moreover, I hope that this, and other the measures contained in the strategy, will provide the mechanisms to increase the participation of disabled people in public appointments, as outlined in the Committee’s final point under recommendation 71.

Full details of all my recommendations can be found in the proposed strategy, which has been provided to the Committee under separate cover.

I hope that this information is of assistance to the Committee, however, should you need any further details please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Karen Carlton
Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland
OCPAS
6 December 2007