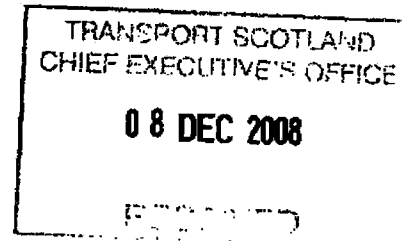


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The Scottish
Parliament

Mr Stewart Stevenson MSP,
Minister for Transport,
Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh.
EH



Friday 28 November 2008

Dear *Stewart,*

Scotrail re-franchise enhancements

I write in support of local north-east responses to your government's recent consultation on the £70m re-franchise fund.

We have had extensive correspondence about the Aberdeen Crossrail project. While I acknowledge and welcome the small incremental changes you have recently made that will contribute to the long-term aims of Crossrail, I am frustrated by the snail's pace of progress. I urge you to accelerate the project by utilising some of the re-franchising funds for this important project. Providing an hourly service on the Aberdeen Inverness mainline service and opening the station at Kintore would be a real step forward and I urge you to earmark funds for that.

I also seek your support for The Tay Estuary Rail Study which will consider a raft of proposals and your commitment to ensuring that funds are available for improvements to services in that area.

Rail services should be properly integrated with other transport hubs, so I would urge you to use some of these funds to provide 2 new direct bus links between:

Dyce railway station - Aberdeen airport
Aberdeen railway station - ferry terminal at Aberdeen harbour.

I also believe that dedicated bus links between train stations at Dundee and Aberdeen and the regional hospitals in those cities should be developed.

I look forward to your response to these suggestions.

Yours sincerely

Alison McInnes

Alison McInnes MSP
Member for North East Scotland Region
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 248 5463

PO
4-12-8



The Scottish Parliament

Mr Stewart Stevenson MSP,
Minister for Transport,
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

08 DEC 2008

RECEIVED

Friday 28th November 2008

Dear Minister

I write with regard to the Scotrail franchise extension and the £70 million that has been secured for reinvestment in further rail services.

May I first reiterate my disappointment that the consultation has been carried out only after the decision was taken to extend the franchise. Audit Scotland's recent report confirmed my fears that the process followed in awarding First Group this extension was deeply flawed, with no proper consultation with external stakeholders and without a documented business case. It beggars belief that these simple first steps weren't taken before you made your final decision. This is the largest contract awarded by the Government - £800 million of taxpayers' money, and I am deeply perturbed that you did not see fit to consult with unions, passenger organisations or regional transport partnerships.

These mistakes cannot be undone but they can be learnt from, and I hope you will study in detail the consultation responses and engage closely with stakeholders before taking any decisions on how to spend the money secured from the franchise for reinvestment. I understand, however, that you have already committed the majority of the £70 million, so my pleas may be in vain.

Given that you are at least affecting a degree of openness at this stage of the process, I would like to offer my considerations on how the money could be most effectively invested. With much of the Government's recent rail improvements having focused on the central belt, the franchise return funds provide an ideal opportunity to redress the balance. I strongly believe that the resources could most effectively be deployed improving railway services outwith central Scotland, with benefits to be enjoyed across the whole of the country.

I recognise that finding appropriate transport solutions to meet the differing needs of Scotland's rural and urban areas is a challenge, and there is, of course, fierce competition for infrastructure funding. Investment in measures to improve rail services from, for example, Aberdeen to Inverness, Perth to Edinburgh or the south of Scotland to Glasgow would have a significant impact, however, and would be a real boost to the potentially limited public transport provision in these regions. This would enhance their attractiveness as places in which to live, work and invest and present a reliable and demonstrably attractive alternative to private transport.

As the consultation recognises, effective rail links are a key component of any integrated transport strategy. I hope you will ensure that links are improved between rail services and

Allison McInnes MSP
Member for North East Scotland Region
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5463

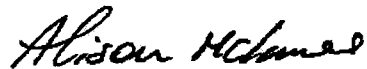
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ports and airports across Scotland, which would make an important contribution towards achieving a safe, integrated, effective and efficient transport system for Scotland.

The Scottish Government now has the opportunity to ensure that the fiasco of the procedure followed in extending the franchise is not repeated at this stage of the process. I believe that you could take a small step towards ameliorating some of the damage caused by your disappointing lack of openness by ensuring that the next steps are conducted with the greatest possible transparency. I therefore request that, following your close analysis of the consultation responses, you come before the Chamber to present your proposals so that the Parliament can give the plans due scrutiny before any final decisions are taken.

Yours sincerely,



Alison McInnes MSP
Liberal Democrat Transport Spokesperson

Alison McInnes MSP
Member for North East Scotland Region
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5463