Further to the above evidence session for officials on the Forth Road Bridge Bill, and as agreed by the Committee, I wish to provide a written response to a query raised.

The Bill’s Policy Memorandum and Business Regulatory Impact Assessment refer to three possible options for the management and maintenance arrangements of FETA and the Forth Road Bridge. The Committee queried the absence of costs associated with “Option 3”:

“Responsibility for managing and maintaining the new Forth Crossing is delegated by Scottish Ministers to FETA, in addition to their responsibility for the FRB.”

Mr Jim Eadie MSP put the following question: “...what I am seeking to understand from you is whether option 3 has been tested for cost effectiveness or whether it has been excluded because of the state procurement rules that apply.”

Ministers chose not to cost this Option because:

- FETA was unable to demonstrate Value For Money (VFM) of its existing operation of the Forth Road Bridge; and,
- there was no mechanism to extrapolate how FETA would achieve VFM in a twin Bridge management strategy. Any benchmarking assessment to compare FETA’s potential VFM in managing the new bridge along with the existing bridge would have to be with other Bridge Operating Companies (eg the Severn River Crossings). However, it was considered that such comparisons would not provide an effective indication of VFM due to significantly differing functions, traffic combinations, scale, age and varying conditions of each structure involved.

Accordingly, in order to establish and ensure VFM, a decision was taken to have a competition for the right to manage and maintain the bridges. Although the possibility of FETA competing for that right was considered, it was discounted due to procurement and State Aid considerations arising as a result of FETA’s public funding.

In summary, although options were considered that would have involved FETA having responsibility for managing and maintaining the new bridge, none was considered feasible. Ministers chose not to cost Option 3 due to the lack of an effective mechanism to assess VFM.
Forth Bridges Forum

At Committee, officials also agreed to provide a copy of the Forth Bridges Forum terms of reference. A copy is attached.

I hope this is helpful, and if you do have any further queries on these or any other issues, do not hesitate to contact Raymond Convill (0141 272 7377) or me.

Yours faithfully,

Graham Porteous

Head of Special Projects

FORTH BRIDGES FORUM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose: The Forth Bridges Forum is a Transport Scotland-led management Forum, established to ensure local stakeholders remain at the core of the management and operation of the Forth bridges. In addition, it provides a mechanism for the collective promotion of the Forth Replacement Crossing (FRC), Forth Road Bridge (FRB) and Forth Bridge.

Membership: The core members of the Forum are 1 or 2 senior officials from each of the organisations listed below.

- Transport Scotland
- Network Rail
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Fife Council
- West Lothian Council
- Historic Scotland

FETA will be represented on the Forum by Barry Colford, Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster. Additional bodies may be invited to join the Forum dependent on specific workstreams which are to be discussed. For example, bus and train operators may be invited to the Forum to discuss measures to promote cross-Forth public transport.

Classification and Proposed Powers of the Forum: The Forum is managed by Transport Scotland, on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Unlike the Forth Estuary Transport Authority Joint Board, the Forth Bridges Forum is not a legal or independent entity.

Functions of the Forum:
1. To establish and oversee a strategic approach to the operation and maintenance of the Forth bridges;
2. To maintain effective engagement with local communities on issues that may affect, impact or be of interest to them;
3. To promote the location of the bridges spanning the Firth of Forth as a unique tourist destination;
4. To support the Forth Bridge’s application for World Heritage status; and
5. To develop and support schemes and measures to encourage an increase in cross-Forth active and sustainable public transport.