Mr Steve Farrell  
Clerk to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
c/o steve.farrell@scottish.parliament.uk

Dear Mr Farrell,

FORTH ROAD BRIDGE BILL – INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT (ICI) COMMITTEE EVIDENCE SESSIONS - SUICIDE (REDUCTION)

This note provides the Committee with an update on the proposed approach by Transport Scotland towards the issue of suicide, and its prevention, at the Forth Road Bridge locations. This issue is an extremely important one, and has been of interest to the ICI Committee as part of its scrutiny of the above Bill.

In 2012, NHS Health Scotland published "Guidance on action to reduce suicides at locations of concern". Along with a number of other public bodies, Transport Scotland subscribes to the principles and practices described in this Guidance, and the need to manage the suicide risk at particular locations of concern. The latter includes Bridges because of the opportunity that heights afford those considering taking their own life. There are a number of practical measures outlined in the Guidance that can be taken to address this issue including suicide prevention training, physical barriers, and monitoring of locations.

It is also clear to Transport Scotland that FETA has a number of excellent procedures in place, notably its staff training, which has helped to mitigate this risk at the Forth Road Bridge.

I therefore wish to notify the ICI Committee that, subject to Parliamentary approval of the Bill, Transport Scotland will therefore stipulate within the Forth Bridge Operating Company Contract requirements to which the Company must adhere to reduce and/or prevent instances of attempted suicide at these locations. This will involve applying the NHS Health Scotland Guidance, FETA's experience, and Transport Scotland's own experience from elsewhere in Scotland. I hope this will be in keeping with the wishes of the Committee.

One further aspect of the NHS Health Scotland Guidance concerns restrictions on media reporting due to the impact on the bereaved, those who may be vulnerable to risk of suicide; and residents affected by such incidents. The Guidance refers to suicides which "involve 'spectacular' acts, such as jumping from landmark locations", and discusses limited media reporting.
I hope this is helpful, and if you do have any further queries on this issue, or indeed any other issues in respect of the Forth Road Bridge Bill, do not hesitate to contact Raymond Convill (0141 272 7377) or me.

I am copying this letter to Mr Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Transport and Veterans.

Yours faithfully,

Graham Porteous
Head of Special Projects