Dear Steve,

FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE FORTH REPLACEMENT CROSSING AND FORTH ROAD BRIDGE

As you know, the Forth Replacement Crossing (FRC) is currently under construction to safeguard a vital connection in Scotland's transport network by ensuring a new crossing is in place by 2016 before any restrictions are necessary on the existing Forth Road Bridge (FRB). When the new crossing opens, the bridges will operate as a managed crossing strategy: the FRB will be retained as a dedicated corridor for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists and the FRC will carry all other traffic.

As part of the Scottish Government's Programme for Government, primary legislation will be brought to the Scottish Parliament in 2012/13 to enable the most cost-effective and co-ordinated approach to the management and maintenance of the FRC and FRB.

The legislation will seek to dissolve the Forth Estuary Transport Authority (FETA) and to transfer its property, land and liabilities to the Scottish Ministers. The Forth Road Bridge will be trunked making the Scottish Ministers the roads and traffic authority.

This will allow Transport Scotland to hold a competitive tender exercise to award a single bridge operating company the 'Forth Bridges Operating Company Contract' to manage and maintain the two bridges. The Contract will also include connecting roads from the M90 Junction 3 Halbeath in the north through to the M9 Junction 1a in the south.

The contract will mirror the arrangements for Scotland's existing trunk road and motorway network: the Scottish Ministers will be responsible for the bridges and the roads over them, with the day-to-day operation and maintenance functions carried out by the bridge operating company.
The contract will deliver value for money, operational efficiencies, and we anticipate that it will be attractive to industry. It is anticipated that the procurement process will begin in mid-2013, that a preferred bidder will be announced by the end of 2014, with the contract commencing in mid-2015. The dissolution of FETA will take place at the point of the new contract commencing.

The skills, knowledge and professionalism of FETA staff are greatly valued. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 will apply meaning that FETA staff will be transferred to the Bridge Operating Company appointed by Transport Scotland. Throughout the development and passage of the Bill, Transport Scotland will work closely with FETA employees to ensure a smooth and fair transition to the new arrangements.

FETA has established a positive relationship with stakeholders including local community groups and bridge users. Following the dissolution of FETA, Transport Scotland is committed to ensuring that thorough and effective stakeholder engagement remains at the heart of the operation and maintenance of the bridges. The Forth Bridges Forum, set up by Transport Scotland in 2011, will play a central role in this.

The Forth Bridges Special Project Team will keep the ICI Committee informed of progress with the legislation and the procurement of the Forth Bridges Operating Company. If you would like to discuss the project then we would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,

Carron Flockhart
Bill Team Leader
Forth Bridges Special Project Team