



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**The Presiding Officer**  
Tricia Marwick MSP

To: All Members

15 November 2011

Dear Member,

### **Planning application for an external security facility at Holyrood**

I am writing to update you on the decision taken by the SPCB earlier today to apply to the City of Edinburgh Council for planning permission to construct an external security facility at Holyrood.

Today's decision represents the latest step taken by the SPCB and follows the same prudent approach taken by the previous Corporate Body that a staged process with break points at suitable intervals be adopted in order to progress decision-making on this important issue.

As yet, we are still some way from a decision on whether to proceed to the construction tender process and, ultimately, a decision on whether to build the facility, but the SPCB is committed to keeping Members fully informed as progress is made.

The proposal to build an external security facility stems from clear and consistent advice received by the SPCB from the Parliament's security advisers and from Lothian and Borders Police. The security review, which was conducted in 2007, made a number of recommendations to improve the security of the Parliament and the key theme was the need to extend the security perimeter beyond the immediate building.

Most of the recommendations have already been implemented, including the installation of turnstiles at the Queensberry House and Canongate entrances, a new vehicle entry system and importantly new bollards and other streetscape measures designed to improve resistance to vehicle attacks. The SPCB decided at the time that these measures were the initial priority to protect the Parliament, coming just after the Glasgow Airport attack, as they addressed the most likely threat at that time.

The one major recommendation not yet implemented is the provision of an external security facility to provide a significantly safer and more secure environment for screening visitors while also protecting over 400,000 visitors per year, up to 1000 daily passholders and the infrastructure of the Parliament building. The measures which have already been implemented have ensured the extension of the security perimeter, with the exception of an external security facility; building it would complete the extension of the security perimeter.

Earlier this year we asked our security adviser to review the recommendations received in 2007. In response, we received clear advice from the SPCB's security adviser, other official security sources and the police that the original recommendations remain every bit as valid in today's security context.

In view of this, and bearing in mind the legal duty of care placed on the SPCB to take all steps "reasonably practicable" to ensure the safety both of those who work at Holyrood and the many thousands of visitors who come through our doors each year, the SPCB has decided to progress to the next stage of applying for planning permission.

Once the planning process has been completed, and the detailed design completed the SPCB will consider whether to tender for the construction of the facility and, subsequently, following the completion of any tender process, the SPCB will take a decision on whether to proceed with the construction. These final decisions are likely to be taken in the latter part of 2012 and will take account not only of our security and legal advice but also whether the cost and timescale for building the facility are acceptable.

The SPCB is fully committed to keeping Members, staff and the public informed of its decisions at all the key points of this process. I have therefore enclosed with this letter a copy of the paper which the SPCB considered earlier today and which informed their decision to proceed to the next stage. Also included for your information is one of the design images provided by our contracted architect. Key to the design is to maintain the sense of openness and accessibility that the public feel when they come to Holyrood. The SPCB believes that this design does so and that it is also in keeping with the original Miralles concept.

I hope the information contained both in this letter and in the paper aids Members in understanding the steps which have been taken and the rationale behind them. I have also asked senior officials to make themselves available to attend your party group meetings over the coming week to answer any questions you may have.

By its very nature, security is an evolving issue. The level and nature of the security threat at Holyrood has changed since this building was designed some ten years ago and certainly since the attack on Glasgow airport in 2007. The SPCB has a duty to review the threat levels to Holyrood in light of such changes and to assess what the appropriate response should be. We take those responsibilities seriously and will ensure that Members and staff are fully informed of our decisions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tricia Marwick". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

**TRICIA MARWICK**