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Maureen Watt MSP  
Convener, ICI Committee  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



28 June 2013

Dear Maureen

Thank you for your letter of 11 June regarding Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) negotiations, in particular issues relating to Glasgow to Stranraer links.

The European Commission published proposals for a revised TEN-T network and corresponding regulations in October 2011. Since that time, my officials have worked closely with counterparts in the Department for Transport and the other devolved administrations to seek a final regulation that best reflects our individual and collective interests.

We support the principles of TEN-T and share the Commission's ambitions to improve standards, increase connectivity and reduced congestions and emissions. We also support the new dual layer approach – Comprehensive and Core – which enables distinction between major national transport connections and those routes which are also of greatest strategic importance for European connectivity.

Core network classification brings with it additional requirements. For the Glasgow to Stranraer rail route specifically, this would mean the Commission seeking full electrification of the lines and deployment of European Rail Traffic Management System technology, both by 2030. This raised the prospect of mandatory requirements for significant Scottish Government investment that is not one of our strategic transport priorities. We therefore requested that the route be reclassified to the TEN-T Comprehensive network, which we have always believed would be more appropriate and proportionate, relative to the passenger numbers for the route.

TEN-T negotiations have progressed at pace since Danny Kennedy MLA wrote to me. You will therefore wish to note that the Commission have agreed to reclassify the Glasgow to Stranraer rail passenger route to the Comprehensive Network, and that the regulation has effectively now been finalised and will be officially signed off by Member States shortly.

We recognise that the reclassification from Core to Comprehensive means that the Belfast to Larne route is treated similarly by the Commission. However, I understand that the Northern Ireland Executive's main concern was the retention of the Core road connection between Scotland (and the rest of the United Kingdom) and Northern Ireland. It has now been confirmed that the A77 and A8 shall both remain on the Core Network. This supports vital freight connections in both countries and we hope provides a satisfactory solution for both administrations.

I have written to Danny Kennedy explaining the Scottish Government's position and offering to discuss the issue further if required.

Kind regards



**KEITH BROWN**