

Christine Grahame MSP  
Convenor  
Justice Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
Holyrood  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



17 November 2015

Dear Christine,

## SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – PRINCIPAL OFFICE LOCATION

Following consideration by the SFRS Board I received a letter from Pat Watters, Chair SFRS Board on 4 August 2015 requesting Ministerial approval to locate the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) principal office at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Training Centre, Westburn Drive, Cambuslang.

Scottish Ministers have a key role in approving the location of the SFRS principle office (i.e. national headquarters building) under section 101(2) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, which states that:

*Any determination by SFRS as to the location of the principal office premises of its members or its Chief Officer is subject to the approval of the Scottish Ministers.*

The Board members and the SFRS Senior Leadership Team undertook a full options appraisal in accordance with HMT Green Book guidance to develop a proposal for a national HQ for the SFRS. The preferred option first put to Scottish Ministers for approval in March 2015 was for a new HQ to be built in Kildean Business Park, Stirling, however in light of continuing austerity and the need to spend public money wisely I requested that an alternative option be looked at within existing SFRS properties.

I took time to review the second evaluation and the associated paperwork, which can be accessed using the following link, noting the range of options which had been identified including a number of the legacy service HQs as well as the training facility at Cambuslang.

[http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/831373/09\\_150730b.bs.07\\_15sfrshqoutcomesofoption\\_sappraisal.pdf](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/831373/09_150730b.bs.07_15sfrshqoutcomesofoption_sappraisal.pdf)



The evaluation demonstrated that the training facility in Cambuslang met the requirements not only of the SFRS Board but also the criteria set by Scottish Ministers, and would be a cost effective location for the SFRS HQ. The criteria set by Scottish Ministers was published on the Scottish Governments' website and can be accessed by the following link: <http://www.Scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/policies/police-fire-rescue/fire/HQ-location>.

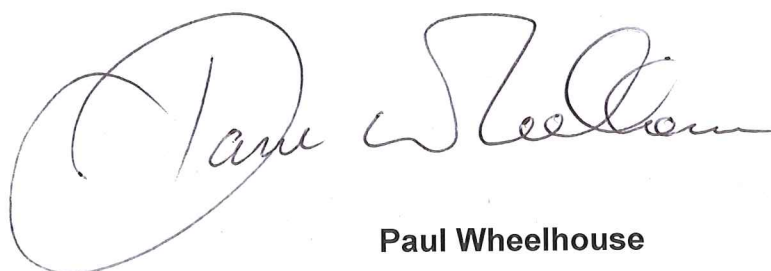
I am acutely aware of the perception, or potential for such a perception, that locating the HQ at a legacy fire and rescue Service building may bring. I wish to stress that this was an issue I considered in my own deliberations, as I wanted the choice of HQ location to be one that could be supported by all within SFRS if at all possible.

The site of Cambuslang was developed by a legacy service, but only operated as a site by that service for a very short period of time and has been operated by SFRS for the overwhelming majority of the time since it was first opened. At no point has it served as a legacy HQ site – and already functions as the national training centre for the service.

Taking all of this into account and following discussions with the Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, I was content to approve the Board's decision. I am confident that having a permanent national HQ will assist greatly in ensuring the SFRS continues to develop its own culture and identity, as they look to the future of the fire service in Scotland.

The SFRS Chief plans to inform all his staff of this decision on Thursday 19 November.

*Kindest regards*



**Paul Wheelhouse**