

## **Justice Committee**

### **Commission on Women Offenders**

#### **Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to the Convener**

During my appearance before the Justice Committee on 16 December 2014, I indicated that I wished to reflect on the proposals that have been developed for a women's prison in Inverclyde, and on the wider concerns regarding the female prison population, before deciding what the configuration of the female prison estate should be.

I can now advise the Committee that I have decided that the current plans for a prison for women in Inverclyde should not go ahead. I have decided that they do not fit with my vision of how a modern and progressive country should be addressing female offending, and that we need to be bolder and take a more radical and ambitious approach in Scotland.

The Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service will now undertake a period of extensive engagement with key partners with a view to investing in smaller regional and community-based custodial facilities across the country. The proposals will also consider whether there is scope for a smaller facility within the prison estate for the low number of serious female offenders who pose a risk to the community and are given long-term prison sentences. These developments will be more closely aligned with the recommendations of the Commission on Women Offenders.

Michael Matheson  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
26 January 2015