



**Aberdeen &
Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce**

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Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
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Via e-mail to psmichaelgove@levellingup.gov.uk

26 October 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

We have noted with great interest the Prime Minister's recent announcement of changes to the HS2 project and the redeployment of earmarked resources towards investment in regional transport infrastructure likely to add greater value to the economy. I am writing to gauge your interest in supporting strategic investment in North-east Scotland through the extension of the region's rail network.

As you will be aware, there is currently no rail network in North-east Aberdeenshire, to the detriment of residents, commuters, and the local economy. Rail connectivity could provide access to reliable, low carbon freight and passenger transport, and significantly enhance the region's strategic infrastructure in order to boost economic growth and meet the demands and opportunities presented by the transition to renewable energy and net zero.

Peterhead is the largest settlement in mainland UK furthest from a railway station, and Fraserburgh, further up the coast, the second largest. Both are places you know well.

The strategic importance of these port towns is only going to increase as the offshore renewables sector reaches scale in the coming years, and development of transport infrastructure to serve current and emerging needs is a high priority.

Peterhead is already home to the world's largest offshore support facility and is also Europe's leading white fish port. Both of these industries currently produce large quantities of freight with around 910,000 tonnes of freight moving out of the ASCO base at Peterhead alone by road each year. Meanwhile the fishing industry accounts for 150,000 tonnes of fish and seafood, all moved by long haul road freight.

With recent UK Government approval of the Acorn Carbon Capture Usage and Storage (CCUS) project at St Fergus, carbon dioxide will be transported there from other parts of the UK. While some of this will come via pipeline, much of it won't and rail would be the most efficient and least carbon intensive way to transport it.



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In terms of future developments, it has been suggested that the Acorn CCUS project might potentially result in the production of greener fuels such as hydrogen or sustainable aviation fuel, which would also require to be moved out as freight. More generally, the development of CCUS and the offshore renewable energy sector points to an increase in jobs and economic development in North-east Scotland with a commensurate need for investment in transport infrastructure.

Thanks to the Campaign for North-East Rail, proposals to connect this forgotten corner of Scotland to the rail network have been the subject of wide-ranging consultation and a full-scale feasibility study funded by the Scottish Government Just Transition Fund, is currently being undertaken by consultants AECOM/Stantec. Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is acting as project sponsor and coordinator and fully supports this initiative.

You can watch a short video here outlining the ambition:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_vv47CK0S4

I would welcome the chance to discuss this opportunity with you further and whether the UK Government might consider funding towards strategic investment of this nature. Perhaps you might find time to meet the next time you are in Aberdeen?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Russell Borthwick
Chief Executive