Dear Des,

I refer to my appearance before the Finance Committee on 11 January to report progress being made on improving the implementation of the Executive's relocation policy. A number of questions were raised at that meeting and I would like to take this opportunity to answer them.

Firstly, Mr Morgan asked about IT costs and who had claimed that they would have additional high IT costs in their relocation. The case in question was the Central Enquiry Unit and its relocation to Kinlochleven. The nature of the unit's work meant that IT costs were critical. The IT costs were for physical connection to the Executive's own telephone network, through the use of the broadband network.

Secondly, Mr Purvis asked about the numbers of Senior Civil Service (SCS) staff that had been relocated. Of the bodies who have been relocated there are four in which there are SCS staff. The total number of posts relocated in that four is 420, of which 18 are SCS staff. And, I can confirm that this includes the head of the Scottish Public Pensions Agency.

Thirdly, Mr Broicklebank asked about the cost of the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) move to Inverness, and I undertook to provide the committee with the latest estimates. As I explained we can only provide final costs for relocations once the relocation has taken place. However, the committee will be pleased to note that the sponsor department will make available through SPICE in the next fortnight a relocation project plan. This will provide reliable cost estimates. In this instance I feel it would be better to wait for this more accurate information.
Finally, Dr Murray commended the Executive's new relocation guidance paper and the way in which it clearly sets out criteria, indicators, and weightings to be used in relocation reviews. The committee felt that it would be useful to see how these were applied in practice, and Morris Fraser said we could provide an example of their application. In this regard, the committee should note the recent publication of stage one of the Transport Group's relocation review, which can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/transport/rrp1ar-00.asp