

Joan McAlpine MSP
South of Scotland Region

Oliver Mundell MSP
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Our ref: JM/RC

09 May 2016

Dear Oliver,

Congratulations on your success in winning the Dumfriesshire Constituency. It must be particularly satisfying to represent the area in which you grew up and I am sure your family are very proud of your achievement.

I was heartened to hear you say in your acceptance speech that you hoped to talk to me about the ideas I raised to take Dumfriesshire forward. My three main campaign ideas were:

- a) Campaign for city status for Dumfriesshire as a way of securing a "city region" deal from the UK and Scottish governments. You will be aware that the Scottish Government has also funded such deals.
- b) A Transport Summit to raise ambition for the area's road and rail connections – something the Deputy First Minister has already committed to chair.
- c) A strategy to improve mobile connectivity now that the Scottish Government has committed to 100% broadband for all premises.

I hope you can use your influence at UK level to reverse the discrimination against rural areas in the regulation of mobile phone companies.

With regards to the Transport Summit, the poor road and rail connections in the region have emerged over decades, as Dumfries and Galloway has failed to keep up with the rest of Scotland – something that long precedes the establishment of the Scottish Parliament let alone SNP governments. I believe Dumfries and Galloway has fallen behind because the local strategy has long lacked ambition. For example the local transport plan dates back to 2008 and every upgrade to the A75 it proposed has now been completed. The local authority also failed to ask the government to include any major "national" projects in Dumfries and Galloway in the most recent National Planning Framework.

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The success of the A9 dualling campaign and the Borders Railway followed many years of local campaigning for a clear local goal. I believe a Transport Summit could help us set those goals -

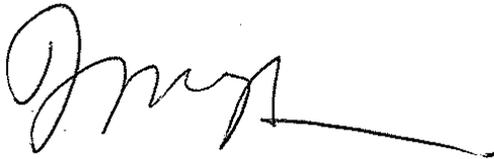
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with A75 improvements and better linking Dumfries to the M74 already identified by the deputy First Minister as key priorities.

However if we are to achieve more we need to acknowledge the severe financial constraints on the Scottish Government and look at ways to access additional capital. For example if A75 dualling emerged as a priority then could the North West of England and Northern Ireland be involved in upgrades that benefit a key trade route?

While we will always have our political differences I hope that we can work together to deliver for the region and its people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan McAlpine', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joan McAlpine
MSP for South of Scotland