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Ms Love

Thank you for your letter of 22nd November regarding the Scrabster Harbour Development. I have been asked to thank you for your correspondence and to reply.

As you are aware Mr Mather has a keen interest in this project and visited Scrabster over the summer where he had discussions with key stakeholders on progress. Following this meeting Highlands and Islands Enterprise made available some £225,000 to fund the appointment of Halcrow as funding facilitator and to support ground investigations and engineering fees related to the tender process.

Ministers and the Scottish Government are very aware of the need to diversify the economy of the area to ensure future opportunities as Dounreay decommissions. I am delighted that the SG form part of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership who aim to take diversification forward. The Pentland Firth has been identified as having major potential for marine energy development and we must work together to ensure we maximise these opportunities. Developing Scrabster Harbour to accommodate the industry could provide significant agglomeration opportunities for the North of Scotland and Island communities.

As you may be aware the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Richard Lochhead, recently spoke to Scrabster Harbour Trust to advise them that their application to the European Fisheries Fund had been deferred. This deferral will allow time to bring together the various interests across the Scottish Government, the wider public sector, and with Scrabster Harbour Trust to take a holistic approach in examining the deliverables of the project and how best to take matters forward. In making this assessment ministers want to ensure that they maximise the leveraging effect of SG/HIE funding.

I understand that SG officials and the Scottish Futures Trust will meet with Scrabster Harbour Trust on Monday 20th December to discuss how best the public sector can support the Trust in moving forward. Ministers have asked that they are kept fully aware of progress.

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