

Chris Connelly  
Managing Director  
Direct Rail Services  
Regents Court  
Baron Way  
Carlisle  
CA6 4SJ



DSG(2020)C047

**Date:** 15/10/2020  
**Our ref:** TM/CTF/2020/CC01

Dear Chris,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the Caithness Transport Forum and Dounreay Stakeholder Group to propose an alternative solution to allow the proposed commercial freight trial at Georgemas Junction to proceed.

We recognise, as per your previous letter to us in August of this year, that COVID-19 has presented a range of unforeseen challenges and that, as an organisation, you rightly put safety as a first priority. We also recognise that the timing is not right to carry this trial out at this time of year, due to concerns around weather and other business priorities.

However, our concern is that we reach the new proposed time of Spring 2021 only for some further complication to arise. It is becoming clear that the effects of COVID-19 will be with us for some time, and that it may not be possible to gather a large group of people together safely by that time.

We are also aware that commercial freight operations are ongoing elsewhere in the country, including those operated by DRS, and that a recent six week trial has taken place in the North Highlands to establish the feasibility of transporting timber by rail.

In light of this, we would propose that DRS look at an alternative way to deliver the trial in a manner which is both safe and satisfactory to local stakeholders. Our suggestion would be to minimise the number of people physically present, either by filming the trial and presenting highlights to stakeholders, or by using livestreaming technology to allow virtual attendance.

This would allow a trial to be scheduled for a confirmed date and proceed in safe fashion, while allowing stakeholders the insight into the process that would previously have come with on-site access. Both the Caithness Transport Forum and Dounreay Stakeholder Group would be happy to work with your team on the logistics of delivering such a virtual trial.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

**Trudy Morris Chair, Caithness Transport Forum**  
**Struan Mackie Chair, Dounreay Stakeholder Group**

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