Lilian Greenwood MP
Transport Committee
House of Commons

4 January 2018

Dear Lilian Greenwood,

I am writing to you about the appointment of Professor Stephen Glaister as the Chair of the Office of Road and Rail, which is subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by your committee.

Professor Glaister was appointed as Chair, without open competition in November 2015, his term has now being extended twice. Further details are set out in the attached notice, which I have published on my website.

It is important to stress that the Secretary of State for Transport is permitted to make this exceptional appointment under the Governance Code 2017, under paragraph 3.3, subject to my being consulted. In view of the unusual and exceptional circumstances I have raised no objections though have stressed that this must be the final extension.

However, given that Professor Glaister has now been in post for three years, without the Transport Committee having had the opportunity to exercise scrutiny, I wanted to bring this to the Committee’s attention.

Peter Riddell
Commissioner for Public Appointments

Website: http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk
8 January 2018

Dear Chris,

I write in relation to appointment of the Chair of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

The Department has recently announced that Professor Stephen Glaister, whose term as Chair was due to end on 31 December 2017, would continue in the role until the end of 2018. I understand that the recruitment exercise that was run during 2017 to find Professor Glaister’s successor did not identify a suitable candidate.

As you will be aware, the Chair of the ORR is the only post where candidates are subject to a pre-appointment hearing before the Transport Committee. As Professor Glaister was initially appointed on an interim basis from the beginning of 2016 and his term has since been extended twice, neither this Committee nor its predecessor has had the opportunity to conduct a pre-appointment hearing with him. Given the importance of this role, it is regrettable that parliamentary scrutiny has been avoided in this way.

I understand that another recruitment exercise will be run in 2018. Please could you set out the steps that you intend to take to ensure the exercise does not again fail to identify a suitable candidate.

The Committee will be setting aside time in its programme to conduct a pre-appointment hearing with your preferred candidate later this year. As the new process progresses, I would be grateful if your officials could provide the Committee Clerk (Gordon Clarke, 020 7219 6242, ClarkeG@parliament.uk) with regular updates.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Lilian Greenwood MP
Chair of the Transport Committee
Thank you for your letter of 8 January 2018 regarding my announcement that Professor Stephen Glaister is to continue as Chair of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) for a further year.

As you mention in your letter, the appointment of the ORR Chair is an important one – it has a significant impact on passengers, freight users, the rail industry and the Government. This is particularly the case at the current time, with major ORR decisions upcoming this year to secure a more efficient, effective and customer focussed Network Rail for Control Period 6. It was therefore particularly important that the right person, with the skills and experience required at this important time, was appointed. While the recent recruitment campaign did not identify a suitable, permanent replacement, Professor Glaister’s extensive experience and expertise make him very well suited to continue to serve as ORR Chair as these important decisions are taken, continuing the excellent work he has been doing.

However, it is important that we learn the lessons from the recent campaign to help ensure that the next campaign leads to the appointment of a suitable successor to Professor Glaister. To that end, my officials are currently conducting a focused “lessons learned” exercise to understand the reasons a suitable candidate was not identified. This will inform the next competition, which I expect to commence by early in the Spring. The successful candidate will then available for Transport Committee scrutiny, which I agree is an important part of the appointment process, by early Autumn. My officials will, of course, provide the Committee Clerk with regular updates, as well as provide him with a briefing on the lessons learned process when it has been completed.