May I record this firm’s interest in the Committee’s review of SFT, with the following summary comments on points that we believe are relevant to SFT’s interaction with our activities in the property, planning and development sectors:

- **Securing additional investment** - in our property advisory and planning consultancy dealings with the SFT, the Trust has been noted for its ability to secure added investment interest in projects. The SFT has been involved in some important land and property portfolio initiatives across the public sector estate. Its role could be expanded, to help resource preparatory planning, infrastructure and delivery exercises. This is particularly relevant on complex sites that have potential to attract added value and land purchase investment interest; if critical pre-planning exercises are undertaken by experienced teams.

- **Fostering innovation to improve outcomes/ collaboration to improve efficiency** – we support the SFT in its ability to innovate on funding, infrastructure and development solutions. The skills in-house and contacts with the development industry make the Trust an important central source of fresh ideas for funding and delivery in Scotland’s planning and development sector. We believe there should be more resources invested by Scottish Government in the Trust’s centrally-gathered expertise and knowledge on costing, risk, and delivery - particularly in support of local authorities’ local development plans and action programmes. Recent increases in development activity in some key urban locations have been frustrated by uncertainties over up-front funds for big ticket infrastructure. The SFT could be more involved here – to help secure the forward funds for the likes of education and transport facilities. Developers generally accept a ‘pay as you build’ tariff, once developments are under way, but the planning system in Scotland is in urgent need of some simple, central, common rules - particularly on the likes of front-end education funding. The SFT could play a helpful central role in resolving many of the obstacles that vex the ‘minded to grant – subject to agreement’ stage of the planning process.

We trust these comments will be helpful in the Committee’s deliberations.