Finance Committee
Scottish Futures Trust/ NPD Programme
Submission from Jmarchitects

Jmarchitects employ 125 staff across the UK with 80 based between our Edinburgh HQ and Glasgow studio. For a number of years we have been actively involved in the health and education sectors and we welcome the opportunity to comment on the SFT and NPD programme.

- **Securing additional investment.**
  From our knowledge as architects we feel the SFT has proven successful in securing additional investment into the Scottish economy. This week at a national infrastructure conference various contracting and investment bodies repeatedly referred to the success of the NPD programme and the overarching influence of the SFT securing investment while other parts of the UK are failing.

- **Securing better value for money and improved public services.**
  As architects we witness the work being done through the NPD and hub programme to drive value for money and while the construction metrics are challenging, with the right team and right client we have proven it is possible. The savings resulting should then be able to fund additional projects.

- **Fostering innovation to improve outcomes.**
  We have found the work done by SFT in producing innovative schools exemplar designs for both secondary and primary schools has benefitted the process enormously. Authorities can feel and touch a real building and use the benchmarks established to influence their own projects.

- **Encouraging collaboration to improve efficiency.**
  The work done by SFT we have witnessed through the hub programme in breaking down barriers between authorities and different agencies has proven successful. Standardising contracts, design approaches and processes can drive value for money.

- **Securing better outcomes including job creation, training and apprenticeships, environmental sustainability, broader community benefits and digital connectivity.**
  While as architects in the process we cannot comment definitively on all these issues we have certainly witnessed a far greater emphasis on community benefits though all stages of our projects and can attribute the creation of over 30 new jobs within our practice to the hub programme.
• Any other comments you might have on the SFT’s work towards achieving its key aims.

We have two significant concerns about our experience of the hub programme as managed and devised by the SFT.

1. Commercial Terms – While architectural fees always reflect the economic climate of our industry and the wider economy we feel that the continued suppression of fee levels will soon drive many of the best practices away from the hub programme as the economy improves and other sectors offer better terms. More significantly however we feel the continued deferral of fees or in some cases no fee draw down at all until the financial close stage of projects is completely unacceptable and effectively means SME’s are funding the process while least able to do so. Irrespective of SFT guidance on this matter there appears to be little consistency across the hub programme. In one case our practice has been working for more than two years on a large healthcare project with no fees forthcoming.

2. Design Quality – As stated above with innovative approaches and an experienced and engaged client the hub process can deliver high quality designs within the cost metrics. However in our experience these outcomes are the exception rather than the rule. We see a need for a fundamental restructure of the procurement to remove the contractor from the controlling influence in the design process. While a contractor lead process can deliver innovation, cost efficiencies and better buildability in our experience the reality is a process of risk mitigation and resultant degradation of the design and quality of the building. Our most successful experiences of the hub process have involved strong independent project management and the contractor as an equal rather than controlling partner in the process.