I refer to my submission to your committee’s inquiry.

Having keenly followed the course of the inquiry over the past few weeks I am grateful that the committee found my submission of interest and that it was considered useful to put two of my main points to the witnesses at the meeting of 3 February.

The answers from both John Evans and Peter Hill to your first question, my first point, were along the lines I would have expected, however, I was surprised that Richard Fish did not want to comment as this is one of the principles in the Code of Practice for the Management of Highway Structures which is promoted by the UK Bridges Board. From the line of the questioning up to that stage, the committee seems to have a clear understanding of the reasons behind my points and had clearly established my second point that a funding request would not have been denied to FETA if there was an unacceptable risk to the bridge user if the works in question had not been carried out.

The main reason for raising my third point with the committee was that the question has already been posed in some parts of the media that if Barry Colford considered there to be a danger to the bridge user and he was refused funds then why would he risk public safety when he could have resigned and brought the issue directly into the public domain. Barry Colford has, of course, already given his answer to the committee in that he considered the risk to be operational not structural.

That said, I have to take issue with Richard Fish’s comment that resignations would be taking place all over the country. In referring to it being a resigning matter, I am talking about funding being refused in a particular circumstance which the committee has already established would be extremely unlikely. I am not talking about everyday maintenance funding being refused and, in my opinion, the comment was trivialising a very serious matter.

Finally, Peter Hill made the comment that he did not consider it a resigning matter – he would simply close the bridge. That is an understandable position for a bridge master with that degree of delegated power, however, my comment was from the position of a bridge manager who would be advising a public bridge authority where that power is normally retained by the authority. I am grateful to John Evans for his supporting comments on delegated responsibility.

My comments, as before, are intended to assist the committee and are again offered in that spirit.
Bob Hopewell, MICE, C.Eng
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North Ayrshire Council (retired)
16 February 2016