Dear Stuart

Thank you for your letter of 17 September, seeking a written response to the issues raised in the Public Petition PE1425. I have replicated the Committee’s specific question below in bold, followed by the response.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport announced on 4 July 2012 that DVLA will press ahead with its proposals to close its local offices and published a formal response to the consultation. The Committee would be grateful for an update on the fuller discussions Transport Scotland intended to have with the DVLA and UK DfT regarding this decision, the consultation results, the impact assessments and crime issues, with particular reference to the local offices in Scotland.

Scottish Ministers and Transport Scotland officials were informed of the decision to close all DVLA local offices on 4 July 2012. Since that time, we have engaged with the DVLA to seek greater detail on the potential implications for Scotland, including on those issues previously raised by the Committee.

Scottish Ministers will shortly be writing to the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Stephen Hammond, to set out our objection to the closure of the five Scottish local offices by the end of 2013, and to any compulsory job losses resulting from the broader DVLA transformation programme. We will also be reiterating our request for further details of specific options and locations that will be made available to Scottish staff, should there be a need to explore redeployment and voluntary redundancies.

We have a further specific concern around DVLA’s plans to close local enforcement centres by the end of March 2013, one of these being in Glasgow, and officials have requested details on where staff might be relocated. We have yet to receive a response from the DVLA and will continue to pursue this matter.
In terms of the broader transformation proposals themselves, the Scottish Government supports a move towards more online services for drivers, and is in the process of our own programme to increase the use of digital technology as set out in our strategy: Scotland’s Digital Future – Delivery of Public Services. Our “digital first” approach will mean that the public sector will deliver online as a first priority wherever possible, through a wide range of devices and through a single public sector portal.

With regards to the crime issues raised by the Committee in May, DVLA have informed us that enforcement for licenses, insurance and tax discs is carried out almost entirely from their central record rather than by police pulling over vehicles without a tax disc. Police also have access to the record so can quickly check it if they spot a suspicious vehicle.

I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

James Simpson
Transport Strategy Unit