

**From:** Ron Lyon [mailto:ron.lyon@highland.gov.uk]

**Sent:** 13 February 2007 13:27

**To:** Anne Jolly

**Cc:** Robert.Andrew@stagecoachbus.com

**Subject:** Scottish City Link Inquiry

Ms Jolly, my son worked for Stagecoach for several years, latterly running Stagecoach East in England before returning to the Highlands as MD of Highlands and Islands Airports and I have as a consequence had a continuing interest in Stagecoach's fortunes. I have been invited to express a view on the inquiry referred to above.

You may know last year Scottish Natural Heritage was forced by the Scottish Executive to move their headquarters from Edinburgh to Inverness in the teeth of opposition from everyone consulted and at a cost of many millions. They did so to meet a commitment they would spread jobs around the country; I doubt they will try anything on that scale again. I see a parallel here where, rather than political dogma, the driver is a commercial tenet which is unfriendly, if not hostile, to a monopoly situation, not because it is unfair but simply because it is a monopoly. The adoption of behavioural undertakings rather than a forced sale seems a sensible way forward; competition, as I have seen in other fields, leads to fragmentation and a concentration on profitable areas to the detriment of the vulnerable. I am totally opposed to monopoly that stifles choice and exploits the service user; I am equally against the break up of a successful business which retains within a tight organizational framework a service which successfully meets the needs of its customers.

Ron Lyon