

# Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance  
Minister for the Public Service  
Minister for Social Investment  
Associate Minister of Climate Change



18 October 2024

Daran Ponter  
Chair  
Greater Wellington Regional Council

Nadine Taylor  
Mayor  
Marlborough District Council

Dear Daran and Nadine

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2024 regarding your Blue Connection investment proposal and the offer to discuss the proposal further. I appreciate the collaborative approach presented by the Marlborough District Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council to support the Government's efforts in ensuring reliable and future-proofed connectivity between the North and South Islands.

I am open to meeting to understand more about your proposal as we will need to work together closely to integrate port infrastructure decisions with the ship procurement process to replace Cook Strait ferries.

I note, however, that while I recognise your ambitious long-term goals for port development, I consider it essential that our focus remains on the immediate infrastructure needs to ensure that new ship procurement and continued ferry operations can proceed. In addition, the Government has significant fiscal constraints and considers that port development is primarily a matter for the port companies and their shareholders.

It is essential to sequence infrastructure developments to ensure that they are achievable and affordable for all stakeholders. I am comfortable with your councils considering short-term infrastructure requirements against their consistency with your longer-term plans. However, I do not want ambitious long-term proposals to hinder our ability to move quickly on replacement ships and the minimum port infrastructure required to operate them.

I will ask my office to arrange a further meeting to discuss our approaches.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Willis'.

Hon Nicola Willis  
**Minister of Finance**

Copy Hon Paul Goldsmith, Minister for State Owned Enterprises  
Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport