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The Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP to make a statement to Holyrood to clarify why it loaned Ferguson Marine Engineering £45m of taxpayers money, without any parliamentary scrutiny.

Documents published under freedom of information legislation have shown that Ferguson Marine Engineering received two loans from the SNP totalling £45m; an initial loan of £15m in September 2017 and a subsequent loan of £30m in June this year.

The initial loan was kept secret due to 'commercial confidentiality' and has only just come to light.

Concerns have now been raised about why the two loans were needed when the firm has also received almost £100m from publicly funded Calmac to build two new ferries.

The Scottish Conservatives have therefore requested that the SNP makes a statement to the Scottish Parliament clarifying all the details.

The SNP has already come under fire for delays to the project, while the company itself is understood to be dissatisfied with ministers' handling of delays and budget difficulties.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative transport spokesman said:

"This SNP Government has a record of secrecy, cover ups, and behind closed-doors deals.

"There are now mounting question marks over its handling of this vital ferries contract, and the suspicion is that the SNP is once again trying to hide the facts from emerging.

"When huge sums of public money are at stake, the public has a right to know what is going.

"The Minister needs to come to the chamber next week and do just that."