

Rural Economy and Environment Stakeholders

05 May 2017

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE RURAL ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT IN SCOTLAND

We have written to many of you previously about the ongoing efforts of the Scottish Government to protect Scotland's interests in Europe during the UK's negotiations to leave the European Union.

Events have been moving very quickly and we wanted to write to you to provide an update of our recent work to protect these interests.

The Scottish Government is continuing to look to the UK Government to agree a means by which the Scottish Government can play a direct and representative role within the UK's negotiations with the EU.

On top of existing day-to-day engagement with Whitehall, which of course is continuing, a new inter-governmental process has been established to this end. This process complements the work of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations that Michael Russell, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, attends.

Scottish Government officials are participating in five working groups which bring together the four UK administrations across key topics: marine and fisheries; farming and food; environment; animal and plant health; and legislative related issues. These groups have been set up to provide an opportunity to exchange factual data and analysis and to provide policy input to inform and help shape the UK Government's approach to exiting the EU.

The objective is to support discussion by Ministers across the four UK administrations on the substantive issues faced by rural communities and in relation to the rural economy and environment, and to ensure the approach to any EU exit negotiations is pursued on the basis of a genuine partnership between all four UK administrations.

On 20 April, Mr Ewing met with other rural and environment ministers from around the UK to discuss issues of shared interest relating to the impacts of Brexit. The UK Government agreed to our request to establish a new working group on forestry, along with an additional group on trade. The previous UK Government proposal was to consider forestry in a group on plant health. There was no progress on our request for assurances on long-term funding for the rural economy.

We also expressed concern at the lack of attention being paid to the environment in these ministerial meetings, given the substantial work that will be required as a result of an exit from the EU. Following the meeting, Ms Cunningham has written to the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom, asking her to provide her personal commitment to ensuring that environment policies are given the full attention they deserve during this process.

As well as this engagement between the administrations, we want to continue working closely with a wide range of stakeholders to help us develop and guide future policy on the rural economy and the environment.

Officials may be in contact with you on specific issues in support of our work with the working groups outlined above, and we are grateful in advance for your assistance with that. Your knowledge and insight will be fundamental to communicating Scotland's case and ensuring that we can continue to protect Scottish interests to the best of our abilities. In addition, many of you and your organisations have been feeding your views into us through your normal policy contacts in the Scottish Government. We are most grateful for the insights you have provided already and we would encourage you to continue doing so.

The next two years are hugely important. They will determine what kind of country Scotland will become. We are determined to ensure that you have a say in shaping it.



FERGUS EWING



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