Proposed Government Bills

The Committee gave preliminary consideration to its approach to scrutiny of the proposed Government Bills at its meeting today. It agreed to carry out some preliminary evidence-taking prior to introduction of the two Bills, beginning early in the New Year. It also agreed to write to you seeking some further information about the content and timing of the two Bills, to assist in its forward planning.

In particular, the Committee is interested in confirming what provisions are to be included in the paving Bill. Although the Committee is clear on the policy objective of the Bill, it would be useful to have more information on the detail of what it will cover. Similarly, the Committee would be interested to know how far the Referendum Bill is likely to differ from the draft Bill that the Scottish Government published in January 2012, as part of the *Your Scotland, Your Referendum* consultation document.

It would also be helpful for the Committee if you could provide indicative timescales for both Bills. The Committee appreciates that the Bills cannot be introduced to the Scottish Parliament prior to the Privy Council’s meeting in early February where it is anticipated the Scotland Act 1998 (Modification of Schedule 5) Order 2013 [draft] will be made. Having your current thinking on when both Bills could be introduced and when they need to be passed in order to allow practical arrangements to be completed in advance of a referendum would enable the Committee to refine its timetable for consideration. The Committee is also aware that the original news release about the paving Bill suggested that the Parliament would be invited to “accelerate” its passage, and it would be useful to have an explanation of what this is likely to involve.
In order to allow Clerks to start making arrangements before the Christmas recess for Committee meetings in January, it would be helpful to have a response as soon as possible.

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener