



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Culture, Tourism, Europe and External
Relations Committee

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Dear Joan

**EU Engagement: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
Committee**

Thank you for this opportunity for the Committee to report on its EU engagement and scrutiny since June last year as well as its planned work for the coming year. As you will see this has primarily focused on the implications within the Committee's remit of leaving the EU.

Scrutiny since June 2016

In only its second meeting of the Session the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform on to discuss with Ms Cunningham her remit and priorities for the coming years. As the EU Referendum had only been held the previous week, the [very first question](#) from the Committee was on the potential effect of leaving the EU on the Cabinet Secretary's portfolio. As well as requesting regular updates at that meeting on the expected impact of Britain's exit from the EU, the Committee has also written to the [Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform](#) to reemphasise the its interest in this area.

In September the Committee [invited Andrea Leadsom, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#), to give evidence to the Committee on the expected impact of Britain's exit from the EU. While no date has been agreed as yet, the Committee's current understanding from the Secretary of State's office is that this may be arranged by the spring.

At its meeting on [20 September 2016](#) the Committee appointed David Stewart MSP as its European Union Reporter. Mr Stewart will often lead on the European dimension of issues under discussion during evidence sessions.

In its scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft budget 2017-18 the Committee focused its approach on the work of Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Marine Scotland. It was clear during evidence that each body accessed EU funding streams while also working in partnership with EU agencies. Many of their regulatory functions were also linked to the EU, such as the Common Fisheries Policy. In its [report](#), the Committee called on the Cabinet Secretary to provide further details "on the potential implications of the loss of EU funding on Scotland's landscapes, habitats and wildlife" as well as "to provide, in due course, updates on what the future regulatory and management responsibilities of SNH, Marine Scotland and SEPA will be once Britain has left the EU."

In much of the Committee's work, many of the same themes in relation to the implications for the UK leaving the EU have arisen. These have included: the repatriation of powers; the anticipated loss of EU structural funds; whether current EU funding is still able to be accessed prior to 2019; and, with the expected removal of European governance, what will be the final court of appeal.

Expected scrutiny in 2017

EU Exit

As well as the Committee's anticipated evidence session with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Committee will continue to seek updates from the Cabinet Secretary on the potential implications for her portfolio of leaving the EU. The Committee has also planned an evidence session in March with a number of academics and experts to explore the environmental and climate change implications for Scotland of the decision to leave the EU and it will review what further work is required following that session.

Commission Work Programme

The Committee has reviewed the Commission Work Programme and those aspects of the Programme that have relevance to the Committee's remit and priorities and it will continue to monitor the roll-out of the Programme through 2017 and the implications for Scotland, specifically in relation to Priority 1 and Priority 3.

Specifically the Committee will monitor Priority 1 - a New Boost for Jobs Growth and Investment in relation to the development and planned roll out of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and the Scottish Government response to that. This is significant in the context of the Scottish Government Plans and forthcoming legislation on the circular economy and in relation to the investigatory work of the Committee which has established an informal sub group to consider developments in deposit return and the requirement and scope for further Committee work in this area.

The Committee will also continue to monitor the development and implementation of EU action within Priority 3 – a resilient energy union with a forward looking climate change policy. The Committee will monitor the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the international Agreement on emissions from Aircraft and the Scottish Government response to this. This is significant to the Committee's work in a number of areas. For example, the Committee's early evidence on the draft Climate Change Plan (formerly know

as RPP3), has shown that some of the Scottish Government's assumptions between now and 2032 are based around existing EU rules. The Scottish Government's Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 is also rooted in EU regulation and the Committee will continue to consider the EU dimension in its work on this throughout 2017, specifically its work on: climate change mitigation and adaptation; the Climate Change Plan; the Biodiversity Strategy 2020; the forthcoming climate change legislation; and work on land use issues, embedding EU scrutiny in its work.

Finally, I hope you will get a sense from the Committee's work and future plans that I and my fellow Members take our EU scrutiny role seriously and look to explore EU implications in all our work. As you will know, the scrutiny of climate change is also primarily mainstreamed to subject committees and the Committee is keen for this to be similarly ingrained across committees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Dey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Graeme Dey MSP
Convener
Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee