



Scottish Affairs Committee

**Alyn Smith MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
Scottish Parliament**

By email only

22 July 2026

Dear Alyn,

Congratulations on your recent election as the Convener of the Criminal Justice Committee. From my own time in the Scottish Parliament, I appreciate the importance of the scrutiny work done by MSPs to hold the Scottish Government and its related public bodies to account, and I wish you well in your new role.

The Scottish Affairs Committee agreed, at its first meeting following the 2024 General Election, that it would consider opportunities as they arise to work jointly with Scottish Parliament committees. I am keen, with the new Parliament now up and running, to explore opportunities for interparliamentary engagement on matters of mutual interest, and to build a constructive relationship between our Committee and the Parliament's subject committees.

There will, of course, always be matters which sit properly within the exclusive remit of either Westminster or Holyrood. However, I know that you will be aware from your own experience in the Scottish Parliament, just as I and my colleagues on the Scottish Affairs Committee have seen in the UK Parliament, that there are many policy matters where responsibility is shared between the UK and Scottish Governments, and many problems which cannot be solved without the two Governments working together.

As you will be aware, this overlap between devolved and reserved competence can create difficulties in exploring these issues, and in holding the two Governments appropriately to account for their work to tackle ongoing policy challenges. I am sure you will already be familiar with this dilemma from the discussions your Committee has had since its formation. Consequently, I would be happy to explore how our Committees might work together, to consider issues which cut across devolved and reserved boundaries in a joined-up and coordinated way, where our interests overlap.

The importance of the relationship between the two Governments is, of course, also reflected in the increasingly complex interaction of devolved and reserved matters in the legislation which Holyrood committees play a vital role in scrutinising (including scrutiny



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of legislative consent memorandums relating to UK Parliament Bills), as well as the potential for policy outcomes to be shaped through engagement between UK and Scottish Ministers and officials in intergovernmental forums and bilateral discussions.

Our Committee takes a keen interest in intergovernmental relations and the implications of UK Ministers' decisions for the Scottish Parliament's capacity to carry out its scrutiny and legislative functions – as seen, for example, through our work on the [proposed Section 30 Order relating to the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults \(Scotland\) Bill](#), as well as in our regular sessions with the Secretary of State for Scotland, the most recent of which was held [just before summer recess](#).

As such, I would be pleased to discuss how we might work together to consider not just the substance of policy and legislative proposals put forward by the two Governments in relevant subject areas, but also to scrutinise any engagement between the two Governments which may have contributed to the development of those proposals and the functioning of established intergovernmental processes.

In conclusion, I believe that establishing a strong working relationship between our two Committees would help us both in our work to ensure that both the Scottish and UK Governments respectively are delivering for the people of Scotland, and would reflect, [as the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee put it](#), "the increased interaction between devolved and reserved competence and the greater complexity and 'shared' space between the UK and devolved governments".

Should you be interested in an initial conversation to explore what this might look like, I would be pleased to meet at a time convenient for you, either in Edinburgh or London, or for our officials to liaise to arrange a virtual meeting. I have also written in similar terms to the new Conveners of the other committees, making the same offer.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Ferguson MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee