

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Finance and Local Government
Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear agus Rùnaire a' Chaibineit
airson Ionmhas agus Riaghaltas Ionadail
Jenny Gilruth MSP



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Mr Patrick Harvie MSP
Convener
Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Scottish Parliament
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By email: EEAC.committee@parliament.scot

15 July 2026

Dear Patrick,

I wrote to you on 22 June to alert the committee to the twelfth meeting of the Interministerial Standing Committee (IMSC), which took place on 24 June in Belfast. The meeting was co-chaired by the Northern Ireland First Minister Michelle O'Neil MLA and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly MLA, in line with rotating chairing arrangements.

I am now writing to report on the Scottish Government's contribution at the meeting and provide you with the link to the Joint Communiqué agreed by the participants.

The other ministers attending were:

- From the **Welsh Government**: Dafydd Trystan Davies MS, Cabinet Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution.
- From the **UK Government**, via video link: Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations; Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Scotland; Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales; Rt Hon Hillary Benn MP, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Committee discussed priorities across the four governments of the UK. I highlighted the First Minister's priorities, reaffirming the Scottish Government's focus on delivering economic growth and expanding opportunities for every child in Scotland through the eradication of child poverty. I also emphasised that public sector reform and the exploration of new ways of working will be central to my portfolio.

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In this context, I reiterated the Scottish Government's commitment to working collaboratively on matters of common interest across the UK and stressed that engagement across the intergovernmental relations (IGR) structures must be meaningful and consistent with the principles of good intergovernmental working.

During the discussion, I highlighted that the timing of this year's King's Speech, in close proximity to the Scottish Parliament's elections, had proven particularly challenging to navigate. I noted the example of the Steel Industry (Nationalisation) Bill, which was introduced without prior engagement from the UK Government, and noted the limited engagement that took place ahead of the introduction of the National Security (State Threats) Bill. The expedited passage of both bills, raised significant challenges for the Scottish Government and constrained the time for scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament.

The Committee also discussed the European Partnership Bill. I reiterated the Scottish Government's support for closer alignment with EU law and emphasised the importance of the UK Government engaging closely with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, to ensure sufficient time for scrutiny of the bill and its associated legislative consent requirement.

The Committee received an update on the Middle East situation and its domestic impacts. I highlighted the importance of close intergovernmental working and information sharing as the situation evolves, so the Scottish Government can respond and adapt at pace if conditions change. In this regard, I emphasised that the Scottish Government's priority remains protecting households, supporting businesses, and ensuring resilient public services as stability returns.

There was also a discussion on community cohesion. I unequivocally condemned the violent and racist incidents that have taken place across the UK. I highlighted the Scottish Government's commitment to an approach centred on safety, human rights, inclusion, and to working collaboratively with partners, including Police Scotland, COSLA and third-sector organisations to uphold these values. I also highlighted the First Minister's and my own engagement with affected communities to provide reassurance and support to those affected, including a visit to local mosques following the recent attacks in Edinburgh.

The official communiqué has been published on the UK Government website: [Interministerial Standing Committee - Meeting Communiqué - 24 June 2026 - GOV.UK](#) for your perusal.

During the day, I also had the opportunity to hold a number of introductory meetings in the margins of the plenary meeting. These were as follows:

- The Northern Ireland Minister for Finance, John O'Dowd MLA, with whom I discussed areas of shared interest across our respective fiscal contexts and budgetary pressures as well as our efforts to influence the UK Government's decision making, including through engagement at the Finance Interministerial Standing Committee.
- The Welsh Government Cabinet Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution, Dafydd Trystan Davies MS, with whom I reflected on the formation of our respective governments and the electoral outcomes in Scotland and Wales. We discussed opportunities to build on the already strong and constructive relationship between our governments, including through collaboration in pursuit of a fairer and more progressive society.

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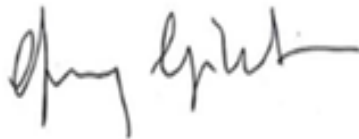


- The Northern Ireland First Minister Michelle O’Neil MLA and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly MLA, with whom I emphasised the Scottish Government’s position to work constructively and positively with the Northern Ireland Executive. We discussed our shared government priorities, particularly in relation to community cohesion in light of recent events.

The next IMSC meeting, which I am due to chair, is being planned for the autumn. I will notify the committee of the date in due course.

I hope you have found this update useful.

Yours sincerely,



JENNY GILRUTH

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