



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Devolution (Further Powers) Committee

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21 January 2016

Dear Deputy First Minister

As you are aware, earlier this week, the Secretary of State for Scotland published a Written Statement in the House of Commons on the Smith Commission's non-legislative and additional issues for consideration.

This Statement makes a reference to a number of areas where there would appear to have been discussions between the two governments and, in some, on-going discussions that may reach agreements. Specifically, the Written Statement highlights:

- **Agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Maritime and Coastguard Agency**

The Written Statement indicates that "The UK and Scottish Governments are in the process of agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will set out how consultation with Scottish Ministers on MCA's activities within Scotland will work in practice, as well as those recommendations that did not require legislation. These included the appointment of a Scottish representative to the official-level MCA Advisory Board; and confirmation that the MCA will submit reports to, and appear, before committees of the Scottish Parliament.

A representative from the Scottish Government attends quarterly meetings of the MCA Advisory Board. Discussions with Transport Scotland on the MoU are well advanced."

- **Medicines and medical supplies**

The Written Statement indicates that "UK and Scottish Government officials have held discussions on strengthening cross-government working in relation to medicines pricing and licensing."

- **Levy raising (red meat and seafood)**

The Written Statement indicates that “the UK Government is working with officials from the Scottish Government to explore what options might give Scotland greater involvement in deciding how the levy is spent. Good progress has been made in developing joint recommendations for revised administrative arrangements on the management of Seafish levy raised in Scotland, which have been put to Ministers with responsibilities for fisheries in the four Administrations to consider, with a view to consulting industry on these options.

On 11 December the Great Britain (GB) levy bodies submitted joint proposals on how to collect and distribute red meat levy within GB Countries. In brief the proposal is for red meat levy to be distributed between GB countries that takes account of where an animal has resided and where economic value has been added. The UK Government will be considering these proposals carefully and will consult with officials in Devolved Administrations about next steps. The UK Government is happy to look at alternative systems of levy collection and distribution so long as they are fair, cost-efficient and all the levy bodies and payers agree.”

The Committee expressed some disappointment at its meeting earlier today that it was not aware of these discussions. This is an issue of importance to Members given our recent report on parliamentary oversight of intergovernmental discussions.

I would be grateful for an update on the current position on the issues listed above and for you to keep the Committee abreast of developments in the future, particular if agreements are reached.

I am writing in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener