26 October 2018

Dear Gillian

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL: 09 OCTOBER 2018

I am writing to provide you with a report on the outcomes of the EU Environment Council meeting which I attended in Luxembourg on 09 October 2018.

On climate policy, the Council discussed, and agreed, Council Conclusions on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) COP24. On environment policy, Council discussed, and agreed, a General Approach for CO₂ emission standards for cars and vans, agreed Council Conclusions on the Convention on Biological Diversity COP14, and discussed CO₂ Heavy-Duty Vehicles Regulation. In addition, there were a large number of AOB items on the agenda, including an update from the Austrian Presidency on the Directive on Single Use Plastics.

My participation in this Council provided an opportunity to further demonstrate Scotland’s ambition in addressing climate change domestically and internationally, to reinforce key messages from Scotland’s Climate Change Bill, and to highlight the work Scotland is doing to tackle single use plastics and waste.

Alongside the formal Council agenda, I met with Claire Perry, UK Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth, and Thérèse Coffey, UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment.

With Ms Perry, I raised the issue of future UK participation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). I also highlighted our strong interest in appointments to the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and our interest in continuing to receive CCC advice. We talked about a range of climate issues, in the context of the IPCC report, published the day before Council.

In my conversation with Dr Coffey, we discussed statutory frameworks, and current priorities for Defra and the Scottish Government on this substantial area of work, environmental
principals and governance, Deposit Return Schemes, including the close of Scotland’s DRS consultation, and the upcoming COP24 in Katowice.

I have attached a brief summary of the main discussions that took place in the Council for the interest of the Committee. I am copying this letter to the Convener of the European and External Relations Committee for information.

ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM
SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

1. The Council opened with a discussion on the setting of CO2 emission standards for cars and vans. After negotiations throughout the day Member States agreed a General Approach which involved a 35% reduction target for 2030 as well as strengthened incentives for low emission vehicles and a review process to look at binding 2035 and 2040 targets.

2. The Council also agreed Conclusions to prepare for the UNFCCC meeting in Katowice (COP 24). The debate focused around the EU’s level of ambition, references to common timeframes and the commitment to review and update Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

3. Council Conclusions on the Convention on Biological Diversity COP14 were also discussed and agreed with less difficulty that for those for COP 24 in Katowice. Member States stressed the need to prioritise action on biodiversity as well as climate

4. During the AOB discussions, the Austrian Presidency and the European Commission updated the Council on the Single Use Plastics Directive. All MS strongly welcomed the thrust of the proposal but views were mixed on scope and targets.

5. Other AOB points discussed included the Berlin Declaration on nanomaterials and a proposal from Easter European Member States to restrict the possibility of exporting highly polluting second hand cars.

6. The next Environment Council will be held in Brussels on 20 December 2018.