Dear Chris

Thank you for your letter of 21 August 2017 setting out how the Scottish Government plans to respond to the Local Government and Communities report on the Draft Climate Change Plan (RPP3).

In your letter you respond to the Committee’s recommendation that the Scottish Government should review the time available for parliamentary consideration which currently stands at 60 days following publication of the draft plan. I note you have written to the other Committees relevant to RPP3 in similar terms.

In its report the Committee recommended that the Scottish Government should review the time available for parliamentary scrutiny and use the opportunity afforded by the forthcoming Climate Change Bill to either remove the fixed period or extend the current 60 day restriction. These constraints when combined with the very short notice of the publication date of the draft Climate Change Plan hampered the Committee’s scrutiny and stakeholder engagement of RPP3.

As a result we recommended that there is merit in considering whether a date for the Plan’s publication should be set in statute, to provide certainty for Committees and stakeholders, as well as maximise the time available for scrutiny.

In relation to how many days should be provided for Parliamentary consideration of future draft plans, the Committee is of the view that prescribing in legislation a specific timescale during which scrutiny and reporting should be concluded would be unhelpful. For consultation and scrutiny to be meaningful the time available should reflect the significance and impact of the matter under consideration.
You highlight the suggested timescale of 120 days however we would observe that this timescale could be insufficient if the draft plan was published immediately before the summer recess. For the reasons set out above we would not recommend the inclusion in statute of a fixed timescale for Parliamentary consideration. We strongly urge the Scottish Government to consider whether the date for the draft Plan’s publication should be set in statute.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Doris MSP
Convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee