Dear Joan,

EU Engagement Strategy: Committee Annual Reporting

Thank you for your letter of 09 December 2016 outlining the annual reporting process on EU engagement and scrutiny of the committees of the Scottish Parliament. I would like to provide you with an update on the planned activities of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.

As you will be aware the outcome of the referendum has caused great uncertainty for many stakeholder organisations. As such, the Committee agreed to allow stakeholders sufficient time to consider and form initial views on the referendum result as the situation develops. In order to continually monitor this process the Committee appointed Mike Rumbles MSP as EU reporter to assess the impact on the REC Committee remit.

The Committee anticipates that by spring 2017 stakeholders will be in a better position to be able to more effectively inform the Committee on their developing thinking. As such, evidence sessions to provide a preliminary status report on stakeholder views are proposed in March and April in order to hear from key organisations and individuals.

This initial piece of work will focus on the three main areas of impact for the Committee – Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The Committee has then agreed to receive a further update on these issues, in addition to issues around transport, digital and food and drink later in the year.

The Committee proposes to complete this first set of meetings with an invite to Michael Russell, Scotland’s Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland’s Place in Europe as well as George Eustice, Minister of State at the Department for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It will then determine its next steps upon reflection on the views heard.

In addition to this element of work the Committee has also agreed to mainstream ‘brexit’ throughout all other appropriate aspects of business. The EU reporter will also continue to monitor the subject and meet with organisations and individuals on behalf of the Committee as agreed.

Kind regards

Edward Mountain
Convener