

Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and
Connectivity
Fergus Ewing MSP



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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee
Scottish Parliament
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7 November 2017

Dear Edward,

I write to confirm my announcement in the Chamber this afternoon about the outcome of discussions with the UK and Welsh Governments on new collaborative cross-border arrangements for forestry. The Committee requested an update on discussions with the rest of the UK in its Stage 1 report on the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill.

Some aspects of forestry by their nature require co-ordination and co-operation across boundaries. These include the commissioning and delivery of forestry research and science, protection of trees from pests and diseases and agreement on codes and standards for the sustainable management of our forests.

I have agreed with my UK and Welsh counterparts new arrangements for sharing responsibility for these matters, with one Government co-ordinating delivery of each function on behalf of all three. The Scottish Government will take the lead on the UK Forestry Standard, the Woodland Carbon Code and forestry economics.

The Committee's report commented on the cross-border nature of Forest Research's work and on the agency's future. I can confirm that Forest Research will remain intact, ensuring that expertise in forestry science, statistics and inventory is maintained.

The report also recommended that an appropriate cross-border framework agreement should be agreed and in place before the relevant sections of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill come into force. We are committed to maintaining continuity of delivery as we transition to the new arrangements by April

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2019. Delivery will be underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding, which will include details on shared governance and funding. As covered in our response to your Stage 1 report, we would be happy to provide updates on progress at appropriate points in the Bill's process.

I am copying this letter to the Convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fergus Ewing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end of the word "Ewing".

FERGUS EWING