20 October 2016

Dear Convenor,

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM BILL

The current Scottish Government was elected with a clear mandate that the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold an independence referendum if there was clear and sustained evidence that independence had become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish people – or if there was a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will.

Given Scotland’s strong and unequivocal vote to remain in the EU, Scotland is now faced with one of the specific scenarios in which this government pledged that the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold an independence referendum.

In the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government, ‘A Plan for Scotland 2016-17’ published on 06 September 2016, we said that we would publish for consultation a draft Referendum Bill, in order that it can be ready for introduction should we conclude that independence is the best or only way to protect Scotland’s interests in the wake of the EU referendum.

I am writing to let you know that the draft consultation paper, which seeks responses by 11th January 2017, has now been published.

/The...
The consultation can be accessed at https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/elections-and-constitutional-development-division/draft-referendum-bill/ and I have arranged for printed copies to be available through the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.

DEREK MACKAY