Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy
Fergus Ewing MSP
F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Edward Mountain
Convener
Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

28 Oct 2019

Dear Convener

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update on progress made to deliver the recommendations proposed in the National Council of Rural Adviser’s (NCRA) final report, published in September 2018.

As you will be aware I convened the independent group in 2017 to provide Scottish Ministers with evidence-based advice on the potential impact of Brexit to the rural economy and to recommend future actions to sustain a vibrant and flourishing rural economy.

The NCRA final report contained over fifty recommendations which were examined in detail by officials and advice was subsequently provided to Cabinet.

Last month I was delighted to publically confirm that more than 90% of the recommendations made in the final report have now been accepted by Scottish Government and that work has begun on the delivery of these through existing pathways across government.

An important recommendation was the establishment of a Rural Economy Action Group (REAG) to drive forward change and ensure the delivery of the recommendations and effectively mainstream rural policy throughout Scottish Government’s areas of responsibility.

I was pleased to attend the first meeting of the REAG earlier this month (3 October 2019).

I have made it very clear that to address the challenges in rural Scotland a cross-portfolio approach is crucial. Membership of the group therefore includes key Scottish Government Directors, the Chief Executive of Transport Scotland and Chief Economic Adviser as well as Iain Docherty, Dean of the Institute for Advanced Studies - University of Stirling; Jeremy Philipson, Professor of Rural Development, University of Newcastle; and Johanna Dow, Chief Executive, Business Stream. The group is chaired by Carol Tannahill, Chief Social Policy
Adviser and will meet quarterly over the next two years, with the next meeting held in early 2020.

The initial meeting was a success and there was a clear emphasis on delivering the outcomes for rural Scotland. I look forward to updating the Committee on the progress of the group in due course. In the meantime further information on the work of the REAG can be found at the Scottish Government webpage https://www.gov.scot/groups/rural-economy-action-group/

Yours sincerely,

FERGUS EWING